



# THE GUILDHALL PROJECT



*'To re-introduce the public to a unique and historic building which, along with inspirational and varied collections and events with contemporary facilities, will celebrate our local and national heritage from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present day'*

Since our last newsletter in February we have continued to consult about our plans. We have given presentations to the Bury St Edmunds Town Council, the Rotarians, the Athenaeum Club and the Baptist Church Friends. In the last year we have spoken directly in this way to over 500 people, as well as contributing to a number of newsletters and publications, and opening to the public.

On Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May the Town Council will hold its Annual General Meeting in the Guildhall. This meeting will mark an albeit brief return of the Guildhall to its former central position in Town life after decades of relative obscurity, and we hope that it will be the start of a sustained recovery over the next two or three years. The AGM will start at 7.00pm and will be open to the public.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July we hope to host the County Upper School as part of their curriculum enhancement week, when some students will receive the full story of the Guildhall. Our expert historians and archaeologists will take them through the history of the building up until the Second World War. The students will then be shown the Royal Observer Corps Operations Room where our friendly re-enactor will take them back to the days of the Battle of Britain and explain how local people played a critical part in the air defence of the country from inside the ancient building.

In preparation for our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) we worked with St Edmundsbury Borough Council on a paper in support of our project which was strongly endorsed by Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> March. This led to a Memorandum of Understanding, agreeing and detailing arrangements for the transition of the Guildhall site into a self-sustaining heritage centre, which was signed by the Borough, the Guildhall Feoffment and the Bury St Edmunds Heritage Trust on 16<sup>th</sup> May.

This was the final and essential building block which we needed to insert into our bid to the HLF. The bid application was submitted later that day.

We now have to wait until early September to learn whether we have been successful. If we are it will be thanks to your support, without which we would not stand a chance. To those of you who have sent letters of support, to those who have invited us to speak, and to those who have given advice or material, be assured that we have leant heavily on you. Fingers crossed!

Mike Jackson