

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

15 October 2020

COUNCILLOR BRIAN LONG – LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

For the period 10 September to 5 October 2020.

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Covid 19

Hopefully all Councillors will have received updates relating to our efforts in dealing with Covid 19.

Staff continue to work despite the pandemic and my thanks goes to each and every one of them for their resilience and determination to keep the Council and its services running.

Whilst we were considering reintroduction of more staff to Kings Court offices this has been curtailed as cases of Covid once again start to increase. Staff working within Kings Court have accepted that more air flow through the building, at this time of year will mean colder working environments, despite heating being increased, dress code has been relaxed, however at the time of writing this report we are arranging an investigation of air flow requirements to allow safe working. Windows within the building do not have any provision for “trickle” ventilation so some windows have been fully opened. Once the assessment is completed consideration will be given to providing more controllable appropriate safe ventilation, allowing better working conditions not just for Covid but also going forward.

Recovery has been hampered by the resurgence in numbers, however at the time of writing this area is better than some other areas of the country, case numbers are being monitored closely with outbreaks and clusters being locally traced by Norfolk Public Health officers.

We have paused the reopening of the reception at Kings Court, although everything to facilitate this is now in place.

Under the Governments scheme to assist local government with Covid related loss in income we are in the process of submitting our first claim. This is expected to be in the region of £1m I will advise Council of exact amounts once they are known and how this impacts our financial plan.

Staff Welfare

Each year we encourage all staff to have a Flu jab, however this year we could not run our usual day at Kings Court. To help folks we have provided voucher for jab to be done within Boots the Chemists and it is hoped numbers will be as high as we normally complete “in house”.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Waste Collection Contract

Following extensive discussions between the Council and our new contractor, various options to reintroduce food waste collections in April 2021 at the start of the new contract have been explored. The current specification of a separate food “pod” on each truck was the contractors preferred option, however concerns over social distancing within vehicle cabs led to the exploration of other options. Having normal RCVs without a pod and a separate vehicle for food waste was my preferred option, however additional costs for this service were prohibitive and so consideration of this option has had to be reassessed. Currently the default option of food pods will proceed with fleet of trucks ordered. If social distancing prevents staff being within the same cab we will have to keep food waste collections suspended and utilise pods for additional collection capacity.

Future Working / Collaboration

The White paper “Recovery and Devolution” looks set to be delayed until early 2021, this has not stopped discussions with neighbouring Councils on possibility of closer working and collaboration. We already share a number of services and sell services to others. However going forward we have to consider every area operation and whether or not we can have advantage in further working with others. This of course does not prevent exploring the potential within the white paper once published, but allows us to continue to get the best we can from services we offer.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

In addition to my usual round of Portfolio and Cabinet Meetings I have also attended the following:

Town Deal Board x 2

Visit To Mintlyn Crematorium

Alive West Norfolk Board

Kings Lynn IDB

Water Management Alliance

Liaison Meeting with Downham Market Town Council

Freebridge Community Housing AGM

Corn Exchange Cinema – Official Opening

College Of West Anglia Liaison Board Meeting
Freebridge / Borough Council Liaison Meeting
Briefing on New Planning Changes
West Norfolk Property Board