

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**8 JULY 2021**

### **COUNCILLOR STUART DARK MBE – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

For the period 20 May to 30 June 2021

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

Since having the honour of becoming Leader of the Council at the AGM on the 20<sup>th</sup> May I have been busy undertaking a number of briefings and meetings with members, officers, partners and stakeholders to familiarise myself with the role and ongoing, current and emerging issues, build effective relationships and establish actions, frameworks and priorities to move forward. Where these have been external facing, or beyond routine meetings with Cabinet colleagues, members and officers I have included them below under meetings attended...

#### **Cabinet and Senior Officer roles and responsibilities**

Cabinet Portfolio responsibilities and aligned officer roles had become less clear than we would like as people, understandably, stepped up and across to continue core service delivery, address additional demands and fill organisational gaps during the last fifteen months, the height of the pandemic. The current, welcome Covid situation and change in Leadership provided the opportunity to address this and Cabinet and senior officers have now taken the opportunity to realign into core, connected themes of work which the administration considers vital, supporting West Norfolk's:

People and Communities  
Environment  
Business, Tourism, Culture and Heritage  
Regeneration and Development  
Council Finances  
Council Property  
Council Services

Members will have access to the Cabinet paper on this realignment and will have been sent an updated list of relevant Cabinet and Officer contacts for each area. The Council's website will be updated to include this information with the intention of making us as visible, transparent and accountable as possible.

This is the first stage of an ongoing process of reviewing/refreshing the Council's Vision and Values, the Corporate Business Plan and associated Covid Recovery Plan, priorities, policies and delivery to make it the best it can

be. Member input will be invited and will take place through papers to relevant committees and members will have already noted the papers/policies being prepared to come forward on greater enforcement and assistance re Fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour, greater support to community litter-picking initiatives and a new devolved Local Member Fund for each member to support community initiatives on their patch (Cabinet Forward Decision list for August).

### **Towns Fund Funding**

I am delighted to mention in this report, the widely reported grant of £25M to Kings Lynn from central government to support several major transformational projects. This was the largest award possible under the scheme and the biggest external investment in our Council's principal Town for some time. It bears testament to both the strength of the bid and the local multi-partner board behind it. Officers and Cabinet members are now actively engaged with the Towns Board to bring these projects forward.

On a connected theme of funding and joint working, officers have helped Downham Market Town Council to conduct their recent survey of businesses, stakeholders and residents re their aspirations for the Town and officers and Cabinet members will be assisting them progress the findings either with this Council or through wider funding or focusing opportunities. I have also met with several leading businesses and the Mayor of Hunstanton and agreed to reinvigorate their meetings, curtailed due the pandemic, chaired by the Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Business, Tourism, Culture and Heritage to progress initiatives and issues there. I have also commenced dialogue with both MPs and officers re 'levelling up' funding bids (another major funding stream) with the intention of bringing these forward to support areas outside of Kings Lynn Town.

### **Summer of Play**

I was most pleased to sign-off, with the Chief Executive and portfolio lead for People and Communities our Council's pledge to support the national 'summer of play' campaign to provide play opportunities for children throughout the Summer holidays and to consciously extend this period for longer and go above and beyond the recommended commitment in partnership with 'Alive West Norfolk' to offer significantly reduced activities for all children and young people across our region – with costs reduced to just £1 per participant for all activities (inc. swimming, tumble tots, skate park, roller skating etc) or 50p with a concession card – as one way of our recognising the immensely difficult time many of our young people have experienced over the last few months and actively doing something to help them and families get out, socialise and get active once more. We have behind the scenes promoted the initiative, via NCC, in all of the region's schools to help maximise take up, helped 'Alive West Norfolk' distribute more concessionary cards in targeted locations to maximise discounts to appropriate young people and worked with 'Alive West Norfolk' and 'Norfolk Young Carers' (One of The Mayor's chosen charities) to ensure West Norfolk's numerous Young Carers, particularly impacted upon by the pandemic and related restrictions, have a concessionary card to maximise

discounts.

As an aside, I am also very pleased to report to Council that the staff at 'Alive West Norfolk' have been short-listed for a national leisure industry award in relation to the work they have undertaken supporting the region's Covid-19 response throughout the pandemic, including notably supporting vulnerable residents through Lily and welfare visits and preparing and staffing the Mass Vaccination Centre at the Corn Exchange.

### **COVID-19**

Whilst concern remains re the potential impact of new variants, the picture in Norfolk and West Norfolk remains positive. Infection rates, whilst showing an increase, remain low and vaccination rates are particularly high and continuing (with Norfolk and Waveney CCG remaining as one of the country's top performers – a position it has consistently held). Council continues to proactively play an active part in the multi-agency response, offering support to businesses (both in terms of grants and advice) and ensuring public spaces are as safe as possible. Members, Town and Parish Councils continue to receive regular updates on developments and key materials started several months ago.

### **QEH new Hospital bid**

Whilst this bid is rightly being led by the QEH senior management team, it is nonetheless a major issue for our residents and those beyond, due to the Hospital's vital role in the region's Integrated Care System (ICS). It is therefore right and essential that we take a proactive role in supporting 'our' hospital in this.

I, as the local Council Leader, have built on the Council's previously given support and seconded the recent unanimously passed motion at Norfolk County Council, putting their weight behind the bid, speaking alongside Councillors Kemp and Long in the associated debate.

I instigated and attended the first of what will now be ongoing meetings between the QEH Leadership, The Leader of NCC, Our MPs and myself bringing all 3 levels of the region's administration together to help strengthen, coordinate and magnify support of the bid and was present and directly lobbied the Secretary of State for Health and his team in his recent fact finding visit to the Hospital.

I am pleased to be bringing the motion formalising our continuing support of the QEH to this coming Council meeting and will continue with others to be actively and practically engaged in supporting the bid.

Members have in their diaries a scheduled meeting with the QEH Leadership Team in July when a more detailed update will be provided.

### **Parkway Development**

Members will be aware that I and Cabinet took the earliest opportunity to re-evaluate the proposed Parkway Development plan and amend this. A new

scheme, still delivering a significant number of high-standard 'green' homes and the intended benefits, whilst safeguarding the green space adjacent to them will now come forward through relevant committees.

### **Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

I, Cabinet colleagues and Officers will be continuing to imbed and develop the new/key portfolio areas and associated matters over the coming reporting period.

### **3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

In no particular order:

*Attended:*

Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board  
Norfolk Council Leaders Meeting  
Ongoing meetings with Leaders/Deputy Leaders of other Council Groups  
Meeting with Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Clerk of Hunstanton Town Council  
Meeting with Mayor and Clerk of Downham Market Town Council  
Separate 1-2-1 meetings with both of West Norfolk's MPs  
Meeting with Sam Chapman-Allen Leader Breckland Borough Council  
Meeting between Leadership Team of the QEH, Leader of NCC, James Wild and myself to coordinate support of the new hospital bid  
1-2-1 Meeting with Dr. Louise Smith, Norfolk Director of Public Health re the Covid response  
Multi-partner Towns Fund Board meeting  
Cabinet Meeting  
Multi-partner Norfolk Covid 19 Engagement Board  
Combined Cabinet and SLT 'away day'  
1-2-1 Meeting with the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk  
Attendance at Mayors Civic Service  
Attendance at Armed Forces Week flag raising service

*Scheduled in July:*

Several of the above meetings will reoccur. In addition I will be having 1-2-1 meetings with;  
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk  
The Leader of Norfolk County Council