

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

14 OCTOBER 2021

COUNCILLOR ANGIE DICKINSON - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

For the period 9 September to 14 October 2021

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

I have not made much progress since my last report owing to being away on holiday. However, whilst away I continued to attend meetings via Teams so that progress didn't grind to a complete halt. Major projects in the approved capital programme continue to be scrutinised, as does the operational element of the capital programme. It's crucial to have a critical review to ensure money is spent appropriately and that projects can be delivered in the timescale as stated. I have completed an initial draft of the Member Major Projects Board Terms of Reference as a starting point for that body to move forward and fulfil what it was created to do. The established major projects of Parkway, West Winch and the Town Deal have been very topical during this period and will continue to be so, especially in the initial concept stages.

The Leader/Cabinet are currently reviewing our corporate objectives to bring them into line with the new administration, which will have a direct bearing on the capital programmes and use of funds, etc.

Recruitment to bring the Finance Team up to full strength continues apace with the newly appointed Deputy S151 Officer having started on 6 September. A fully resourced Finance Team is crucial to restoring the Council's compliance with statutory requirements. It is hoped to have things back on track by the end of this financial year, subject to the Council's external auditors being able to fulfil their obligations. During the period of this report the draft (subject to being audited) Revenue and Capital Outturn reports were received. As might be expected, capital projects hadn't progressed as far as originally planned and the bottom line on Revenue showed that reserves had not been drawn upon to the extent originally expected. Neither aspect indicates a diminution of services beyond that dictated by lockdown and officers have continued to respond to the additional demands of dealing with the pandemic. A substantial amount has been put aside in earmarked funds so that residents and businesses aren't disadvantaged by the pandemic during which some services could not be provided.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

My programme of work remains largely unchanged from my previous reports. The first budget monitoring report of the financial year is eagerly awaited, which should produce the first indication of progress on capital projects and revenue activity. It is anticipated that monitoring will resume a normal timetable for the remainder of the year. The Member Major Projects Board is due to have its next meeting on 3 November. Such projects are still subject to review, especially the funding and long term financial implications.

Since my last report the Independent Remuneration Panel has met to review Members'

Allowances. Its members have met with councillors to elicit their opinion and I expect to see the Panel's report imminently.

The Procurement Strategy to govern the Council's purchase of goods and services to achieve best value continues to be under review and the specific activity of Procurement that is the tender for the Council's insurance business is underway.

The Risk Register and other Audit Committee related issues continue to be under review but haven't proceeded due to officer/member/meeting room availability but a meeting is scheduled for 12 October to start the ball rolling.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

- 6 Sep Portfolio Holder briefing with Assistant Director – Resources
- 8 Sep Portfolio Holder briefing with the Leader
- 8 Sep Additional Cabinet Sifting
- 9 Sep Council
- 11 Sep Meeting with Assistant Director – Resources re 2020/21 Outturn Report
- 11 Sep Cabinet briefing
- 15 Sep Cabinet briefing
- 20 Sep Cabinet Away Day pre meeting
- 21 Sep Cabinet (attending via Teams so active participation not permitted)
- 22 Sep Cabinet Away Day
- 22 Sep QEH/new hospital briefing
- 23 Sep Portfolio Holder briefing with Assistant Director – Resources
- 29 Sep Cabinet briefing
- 1 Oct West Norfolk Transport & Infrastructure Steering Group
- 4 Oct Meeting with Leader, Chief Executive and Assistant Director Resources to discuss Financial Planning
- 13 Oct Cabinet briefing