

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

1 September 2022

COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LAWRENCE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY

For the period July to September 2022

Progress on Portfolio Matters.

In my last Council Report I mentioned that we had commenced marketing a residential development site at Burnham Market and I am pleased to report that we received several expressions of interest in both the development land, and the adjacent residential property that we acquired to help create access into the development site*. We have assessed the informal tender returns and have provisionally accepted offers (subject to contract) on both the land and the house, with the total capital receipt being significantly above that which I reported previously. The respective sets of lawyers are currently working on the sale contracts and I am hoping that we will complete soon.

With regard to the commercial property portfolio, this continues to perform well. The industrial premises are pretty much all leased out, or under offer, and we also have two expressions of interest in the recently vacated retail unit in King's Lynn town centre. Interest in the speculative units at the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area is still strong, as mentioned previously, so we will be looking to advertise the opportunity for contractors to tender for the construction of phase 2 in the not too distant future. Phase 2 will be for between two and four light industrial/research and development (R&D) style premises, however delivering this phase of development will depend upon the level of tender submissions and the financial viability for the council. Note that Phase 2 has attracted a funding package from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and this will be factored into the viability appraisal that will be run once tender returns are received.

The property team has commenced discussions with a number of our commercial tenants that have rent arrears mostly arising from the coronavirus pandemic. The Commercial Rent Arrears (Coronavirus) Act 2022 has set out some rules, and arbitration procedures, that will hopefully help to smooth the process. Discussions so far have been constructive. As mentioned within my previous Council Reports, I am keen that we work with our commercial tenants and I am prepared to offer manageable payment plans, however we must not forget that we are dealing with public finances and that we have a statutory duty to seek the best outcome for the council and the borough tax payers generally.

The various projects that the Property & Projects department is dealing with are progressing well. We will be commencing demolition of the 1950'/1960's parts of the Sommerfeld & Thomas warehouse on the southern quay area soon, we have

received tender submissions for the roof replacement on the Princess Theatre in Hunstanton and these works should commence in September/October this year.

The Property & Projects team over the past few years has struggled with staffing issues with several important posts being vacant for a considerable period of time. However, the team is being rebuilt and a combination of successfully filling the Senior Valuer post and the Property Services Manager post together with the advancement of two Higher Level Apprentices in the Estates Team means that the department is starting to get back to full strength. Further work is required with the building surveying, facilities management and repairs and maintenance side of the department and this work is underway. The Projects element of the department is currently fully committed to the delivery of the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area Enterprise Zone road infrastructure and Phase 1, and potentially Phase 2, of the speculative commercial premises development, together with providing Project Management support for the Town Deal Guildhall project and acting as Project Management lead on the Town Deal Riverfront Regeneration project. As Council colleagues can see - the team is quite busy!

Meetings Attended

Full Council
Cabinet
Cabinet Briefings
Cabinet Sifting
Portfolio Meetings