

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR STUART DARK – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CHAIR OF CABINET

For the period 2nd December 2022 – 26th January 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

This is my first report to council since the Christmas and New Year holiday season. I hope that councillors had at least some time away from their duties and give my thanks to staff from this council and our associated companies who worked hard to support events and activities (such as the holiday reduced fee play scheme for children at our leisure centres) and keep essential help and services our community relied upon going during this period, alongside others in the public and private sector.

QEH

We remain committed to supporting and magnifying the Hospital's vital bid for a new, modern, safe QEH and remain in regular, close contact with them. Councillors had an update presentation during this period from the Hospital's leadership in which they thanked councillors and officers, our MPs, community and myself for our strong ongoing support. I have circulated to all councillors, earlier in this period, my formal letter to the Prime Minister (the latest of several letters and face to face briefings to Ministers) expressing the dire need for a new hospital and my concern at the ongoing delay to a positive announcement of funding and the community impact this was having and urging as early announcement as possible to end current uncertainty. I know from our earlier council's unanimous motion that this is an issue all councillors are behind and agreed upon.

County Deal for Norfolk

In my last report to council, I stated officers were arranging with their county counterparts a briefing for all councillors here upon the current situation. This has now been arranged and it is my understanding this will have taken place before our meeting. At the recent meeting of Norfolk County Council on which the 'deal' was a key item the underpinning paper submitted by officers (para. 3.5) reinforced the earlier letter sent to District Leaders including myself by the responsible Minister at DLUCH that nothing in the 'deal' proposed and now going out to consultation as a result of that Council meeting's subsequent vote impacts on the sovereignty or powers of Norfolk District Councils, including ours.

Levelling Up Funding bids

At the time of writing this report we have just received the short-notice, very welcome news that the £24m bid into Government's 'Levelling Up' funding stream re the Southgates has been successful. This will allow the once in a

generation transformational plan, to enhance and protect this vital route into and out of Kings Lynn for residents, walkers, cyclists and traffic which had a 77% approval rating in the recent public consultation, to come forward and link in to the wider projects of the already funded £25m 'Town Deal'. This successful bid, led by NCC (one of only two schemes submitted in the County) with considerable help from our officers in terms of local knowledge and local context, I believe effectively demonstrates the benefit of joined up, collaborative working and ambition.

Connected to the same round of announcements, we have just been informed that our other bid for £20m to support a new leisure centre in Hunstanton has not been successful. Councillors will have seen on the news that many councils across the UK were unsuccessful in their bids also, due in part to the level of submissions. Whilst disappointing, this is no way a reflection on the ambition shown locally to tackle the challenge and apply for funding and work by officers to create the bid. We remain heartened by the support of key stakeholders including Hunstanton Town Council, the Hunstanton Advisory Group and the local community and the fact that detailed feedback is to be given with at least one further round of this 'Levelling Up' funding to bid in to coming. We also have a clearer understanding of the issues and possibilities to build upon as we consider feedback, options and next steps.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

On the 22nd January I will be attending a Holocaust Memorial Event led by the Mayor, alongside many others.

On the 31st January it will be the 70th anniversary of the devastating 1953 floods. Several local communities are holding commemorative events over the days leading up to this, including a service at the Minster.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

In addition to attending numerous usual formal council meetings, development and review meetings with officers and cabinet colleagues, meetings with opposition group leaders and members, I have during this period also attended (in no particular order) the following meetings of potential interest to members:

Meeting with the KL Civic Society

Kings Lynn Internal Drainage Board

Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board

Visit to Trues Yard

Meeting with officers, the EA and Anglian Water

Visit to Shouldham Village for the grand-opening of their new playground (supported by great PC and community fund-raising and a CIL grant from this council)