

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 February 2023

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

For the period 26th January – 15th February 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

New QEH bid

During this period I met with Steve Barclay MP, The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in London along with James Wild MP, in furtherance of this Council's ongoing cross-party support to the bid for a new hospital and my earlier meetings with and letters to ministers, including the Prime Minister. I took the opportunity to reinforce the dire need for a new hospital and stressed that, whilst it is understood a new hospital is a significant government outlay of c.£800m which needs due consideration, there is genuine local concern and frustration re the ongoing delay in announcing whether or not this vital bid was successful or not and the earlier this could be done the better. I was heartened that the Secretary of State clearly understood the situation at the QEH and RAAC hospitals in general and acknowledged the issue of announcing the outcome as quickly as possible. I and officers remain in contact with the QEH's Leadership to support them wherever we can, as we have done throughout.

The Budget

During this period a significant piece of work was undertaken with regard to the budget and associated papers and meetings. This will be further discussed at the upcoming full council.

Nar Ouse development funding

I was pleased that the County Council's discussions with government around the 'County Deal' and types of scheme that might benefit, highlighted the existing Nar Ouse Enterprise zone, one of the largest brownfield development sites in the East of England, being developed in partnership by this council and the LEP and as a direct consequence £500k funding was expedited to it, irrespective of the final outcome of that deal. This money will be used to help build the infrastructure to open-up the site yet further, creating opportunities for business and jobs.

Long-service awards

I was honoured to attend the Long-service awards with the Chief Executive and Mayor during this period, the first post-Covid where we could have a large number of recipients. Staff came from a broad range of

council departments with many years cumulative experience, serving the residents of West-Norfolk.

Apprentices

We also played our part in National Apprenticeships week by showcasing the staff we have on the various levels of the scheme, from new joiners from local schools to Managers furthering their development and careers.

Recruitment

I was pleased to meet with our new Executive Director (Place) who is currently undergoing his induction to the council and meeting colleagues. I'm certain many of you will see him over the coming days.

70th Anniversary of the 1953 floods

Like many councillors I attended the well-attended, dignified commemorations of the devastating 1953 floods which went on around the borough. I'd like to thank here the Town and Parish councils, Clergy, staff and local people who helped organise these events.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Wisbech Incinerator

On the 22nd and 23rd February there is the first public meeting with examiners for 'registered interested parties' re the Commercial Incinerator application at Wisbech. Councillor Blunt, myself and officers are due to attend and I am registered to speak. I will use this opportunity to reinforce this council's almost unanimously supported opposition to this proposal.

First Anniversary of the war in Ukraine

The 24th February marks the first anniversary of the illegal, unjustifiable and horrific invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime. I am aware that there is to be a public service of reflection in the Minster and take this opportunity to thank all those West-Norfolk residents who have taken in or supported refugees and the great staff (NGO, Council and partners) and volunteers who worked so hard to support them via our 'welcome centre'.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

In addition to attending numerous usual 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);

Liaison meeting with Freebridge Housing's Senior Leadership
Joint member panel meeting re the budget
Opening of the historic Mart