

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

13 JULY 2023

COUNCILLOR BAL ANOTA - CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY AND CORPORATE SERVICES

For the period 19 May to 28 June 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Management and maintenance of council owned property assets: including industrial estates, King's Court, Town Hall and The Depot, Public Conveniences, Crematorium and Cemeteries

I have had preliminary tours of the Council's diverse operational and investment property portfolios which has been extremely interesting. I have spent time with the relevant Assistant Directors going around the district having a look at parts of the property portfolios, and I am starting to get a feel for the areas that I would like to look at in greater detail. Obviously over the next few months I will be looking at :

- Budgets particularly income and expenditure over the next few years
- Rates of return from the commercial property portfolio, and
- Future accommodation and property needs for the delivery of high-quality services for our residents, and visitors to the region.

I have asked the relevant Assistant Directors to provide me with briefings over the next month, or so, on:

- King's Court: office accommodation, income from lettings to third parties such as the Department of Work and Pensions and the Integrated Care Board, and the requirements of council departments currently occupying space outside of King's Court and review how the Council can improve the space it occupies more effectively and efficiently
- Commercial property portfolio: a review of all inclusive rents at two managed

facilities as I am concerned about the current exposure to fluctuations in costs such as utilities etc that currently fall to the council as landlord.

- Updates on the performance of recouping commercial rent arrears mostly arising during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- An update on the current position regarding maintenance for the portfolio to ensure this is sustainable and maintenance managed and planned;
- Potential ventilation and cooling for the Council Chamber at the Town Hall

Assets of Community Value

I have not yet been made aware of any current applications for Assets of Community Value, however, I will be discussing any applications with the Assistant Director of Legal as and when they are received.

Management of other council assets including (but not limited to) car parking matters, CCTV

As mentioned above, the council owns a diverse portfolio of assets and there are a multitude of operational issues that the Assistant Directors need to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Over the coming months I will develop a greater understanding of these issues and hopefully will be able to provide appropriate direction.

I have yet to see the commercial assets leased out at Hunstanton, Heacham, Downham Market and the retail element of the commercial property portfolio, however I will be getting up-to-speed on these areas in the next few weeks.

Street Cleaning and Lighting

I would like to pass my personal thanks to the grounds maintenance teams who have maintained our parks and gardens in superb condition, and whilst the earlier heavy rainfall caused faster than normal grass growth, our grass cutting teams are working extra hard to keep the amenity areas and verges in-check, I again thank them for their continued efforts.

Parks and Open Spaces

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|------|--------|--------|--------|---|--------------|-------------|
| Heacham | 2022 | 3669 | 3150 | 4596 | ✓ | 11415 | |
| | 2023 | 3404 | 3647 | 4239 | ✓ | 11290 | |
| | | | | | | -125 | 99% |
| Hunstanton | 2022 | 35535 | 31677 | 37938 | ✓ | 105150 | |
| | 2023 | 35147 | 34330 | 38475 | ✓ | 107952 | |
| | | | | | | 2802 | 103% |
| Kings Lynn | 2022 | 107252 | 112278 | 110694 | ✓ | 330224 | |
| | 2023 | 114187 | 156736 | 111451 | ✓ | 382374 | |
| | | | | | | 52150 | 116% |

The parking data to the end of June shows visitor stays not dissimilar to last year in the resort areas, whilst it is pleasing to see that the Kings' Lynn number continue to show recovery, albeit helped in some way but the earlier Water Ski Event in late May whereas this event was later in the season last year, again indicating the importance of the summer events programme in bring visitors to the town centre areas.

Health and Safety – property and buildings

The Property & Projects team undertook a health and safety audit of all the council's commercial tenants during 2019/20 checking for compliance with health and safety requirements set out within their leases. Tenants were required to provide evidence of electrical and gas safety certificates and public liability insurance. The team is currently working-up an annual compliance audit process which should be implemented later during 2023.

Where physical works such as repair and maintenance works are being undertaken, contractors are required to provide RAMS [Risk Assessment and Method Statements] for each piece of work and are also required to provide evidence that current/valid public indemnity insurance cover is in place.

Policy relating to land and property acquisition and disposal and Implementation of acquisition and disposal of land and property

From my initial briefings with the Assistant Directors, we seem to have developed a successful, and to a degree opportunistic, property acquisition

policy that has, and will, help facilitate several regeneration initiatives particularly within King's Lynn. I am keen that we maintain this dynamic approach that will hopefully help us to fulfil some of our strategic objectives for the benefit of the district and to its residents, businesses, and visitors.

I have also reviewed a recent disposal of a small development site on the open market promoted by my predecessor portfolio holder. This disposal not only generated a significant capital receipt to help fund the Council's Capital Programme it also helped facilitate private sector investment and the delivery of housing units at no risk to the council. I am therefore keen to look at additional sites that can be dealt with in a similar way, and two sites have been brought to my attention and I will be reporting on these to Cabinet colleagues in the next few months.

- The two sites are:
 - Land at Jarvie Close, Sedgeford
 - Land at Gayton Road, King's Lynn (former Nursery site)

In addition to the above I have visited the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area (NORA) Business Park/Enterprise Zone where the Assistant Director Property and Project is delivering road and utility infrastructure, and speculative commercial properties. The commercial properties are very impressive and look to have been developed with modern business needs very much in mind. I will be looking at how we will be marketing the development sites that will become available once the road and utility infrastructure is complete. I am keen that we have a wider, national, marketing campaign to see if we can attract new businesses to the area, however we will of course not overlook expanding, growing local businesses if they have requirements.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

- Tour of Hunstanton commercial property interests
- Tour of retail property investments
- Inspection of two potential residential development sites to be marketed for sale
- Crematorium and Cemetery Visit

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Thursday 18th May – Annual Council
Tuesday 30th May – Planning Training
Friday 2nd June – Riverfront Regeneration Area – Matthew Henry
Monday 5th June – Planning Committee
Tuesday 6th June – Portfolio Meeting – Oliver Judges
Wednesday 7th June – Sites Visit – David Ousby

Wednesday 14th June – NPP – County Hall

Thursday 15th June – West Lynn Ferry stakeholder workshop

Friday 16th June – Portfolio meeting – Martin Chisholm

Friday 16th June – Portfolio meeting – Matthew Henry

Monday 26th June – Portfolio meeting – Matthew Henry

Tuesday 27th June – Cabinet

Wednesday 28th June – Portfolio meeting – Matthew Henry – Martin Chisholm

Wednesday 28th June – Planning Enforcement Training - Teams