

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

13 July 2023

COUNCILLOR ALEXANDRA KEMP - CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

For the period 19 May 2023 to 2 July 2023

People and Communities encompasses so much and relates to half of this Council's Corporate Objectives, improving health and wellbeing, social inclusion and mobility, and creating places that people are proud to live in. I would like to thank this Council's officers and all the organisations in West Norfolk that play a role in keeping people safe and well. Here is a round-up of recent local issues and developments.

QEH REBUILD

The welcome news was announced shortly after the Borough Elections, that the QEH is now finally on the list for rebuild. But we also need to make sure the new hospital is fit for purpose for our growing elderly population, with proper capacity for the residents who will occupy the thousands of new homes planned in the Borough, in the Local Plan.

I asked at the recent Integrated Care Partnership Meeting, for an increase in beds in the new hospital. The ICP said there will be a "demand and capacity" review, but that the new models of care are about keeping people out of hospital and sending them home earlier, so there is no commitment to more beds. However, the current Covid Inquiry has heard that lower levels of bed capacity in the UK during the pandemic contributed to poorer outcomes.

NHS DENTISTRY

I asked for increased NHS Dentistry capacity in West Norfolk at the ICP meeting, and the ICP Dentistry Lead has set up a Teams Meeting with Councillors, to discuss the way forward. West Norfolk featured in a report of the National Audit Office in 2018 as having the worst access to NHS Dentistry in England. Two new NHS contracts were let in Lynn last year, but NHS Dentists in Norfolk are not taking on new patients and many children in the Borough have never been to a dentist. A new dental school here in Norfolk is a must. As is the extension of NHS treatments to West Norfolk patients, for which people are expected to travel to the Eastman hospital in London.

HOUSING STANDARDS

Housing Conditions in the Borough are, for many residents, worse than Dickensian. Poor housing is a determinant of poor health. Children in Lynn are living in social housing with leaking roofs, where there is an ingress of water every time it rains, and in flats where sewage has flooded up through the floors and out of the shower. The Housing Ombudsman no longer tolerates Covid backlog as an excuse, but there are residents still waiting months for housing repairs to make their lives liveable. Poor energy efficiency and the unaffordable cost of heating homes in winter, led to further deterioration of pre-fabricated housing stock. There were over 100 social

rented homes out of commission in February, because they were unfit for human habitation.

The Borough does not directly own most of the social housing stock, but has a great deal of influence, and is source of help and support for housing partners.

I am working with our social housing partners, to encourage increased inspections of homes, to prevent chronic disrepair building up in the first place; to encourage a grow-your-own workforce policy in the social rented sector, with more apprenticeships for a quicker turnaround of repairs; and the uptake of energy efficiency funding and brownfield funding to turn around decayed homes much faster. Shortage of skills in the supply chain is a key local issue.

I have met with Freebridge, our largest social housing provider - with 7,000 rented homes across the Borough - and suggested the introduction of inspections of homes every 6 months for repairs, and a new apprenticeship scheme.

Freebridge have now agreed to increase the regularity of their inspections to 25% of homes every 4 years, they have recently restructured their Maintenance and Repair Department, and plan to set up an Apprenticeship Scheme in September. But when all social housing came under the Borough Council, there were 6 -monthly inspections.

The Housing Department is assisting Freebridge to access sources of funding to bring its void homes back into commission.

THE NIGHT SHELTER

I am a great fan of King's Lynn Night Shelter and the courageous work it does, for the people hardest to reach, who can so often fall between the gaps for help and support. I have had the opportunity to work towards strengthening communication between the Borough Council and the Night Shelter, by brokering a negotiation meeting about the application for Govt funding. Supporting funding applications of third-sector organisations who provide services for residents, is a key role of the Council and where we can do a lot of good.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Reducing our carbon footprint and ending isolation by making public transport more available and accessible, is a key ambition. Before the Election, I spoke with West Norfolk Community Transport about increasing buses round Lynn, and I recently had a follow-up meeting. It was important to make County Hall more aware of our local geography and demography, which is what I have done. The good news is that West Norfolk Community Transport is going to run a new Circular Bus around Lynn, from South Lynn to North Lynn and the Woottons, taking in areas that are poorly-connected, or do not have a bus at all, like Tennyson Avenue.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

I recently met with "Boost", the Town Deal Youth Pledge. This is a fantastic project. Boost works to engage young people aged 15-30, at risk of NEET and disengagement from education who live in the King's Lynn Town Deal area. Boost commissions courses at COWA and provides Confidence Workshops, and work-experience, so that young people can gain their CSC card to work in the Construction Industry. It also upskills young people who are in work. The project runs for 18 months but is due to finish in March. Boost should be put

on a regular footing, as a generational offer. Young people are our future. Lynn is the economic powerhouse of West Norfolk, but is held back by a relatively low educational attainment. Raising skills in the long term will boost our low-wage low skill economy. I have asked for the funding to continue. There are now positive discussions with Norfolk County Council around funding continuity.

CARE AND REPAIR

The Council is funded by the NHS to help prevent admissions to hospital and care homes, with adaptations to prevent falls, and to assist timely discharge from hospital, and help for people with disabilities to live independent lives, through funds like the Disabled Facilities Grant and Handyman Service, from the Better Care Fund. Care and Repair has just secured funding from Norfolk County Council for a new Occupational Therapist to help clear its Covid Backlog.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

What can we do to improve services for residents? Becoming more outcomes-focused, is the way forward. Residents sometimes say their enquiry is passed around a number of departments, but the situation for the resident does not improve at all. I am investigating how can we do better, by offering more stream-lined services.

COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Through Nourish Norfolk and the Purfleet Trust, a new affordable food supermarket for has just opened at the Southgates, and another is planned in North Lynn.

The Council's Beat Your Bills Road Show, offering energy-saving advice is working its way through rural areas and the towns. Staff are on hand to answer questions and give information and help on energy bills, rent problems, money worries, grants, benefits and advice.

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Housing Register	End March 23	June 27th 23
Emergency	2	2
High	196	226
Medium	461	458
Low	666	680
Total	1321	1366

	Jan – Mar 2023	Apr – June 27th 2023
Homeless Cases	254	227

Nuisance (noise etc) inc Public Health, Drainage, Licensing and Planning Consultations

- Cases referred to CSNN (Nuisance, Public health and drainage) – 272
- Licensing consultations received (inc TENs) – 171
- Open cases – 221
- Cases closed - 417

Antisocial Behaviour

- ASB Service Requests (inc CCTV reports and complaints) – 91
- Open cases – 38
- Community Protection Warnings – 13
- 3 Public Space Protection Orders in force (Vehicle use, Alcohol Restrictions and Dog Control)
- 1 Pending prosecution re breach of PSPO (Inappropriate vehicle use)
- 1 Closure Order Application pending (multi-agency case)

West Norfolk Help Hub

- West Norfolk Help Hub Referrals – 45

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Nuisance (noise etc) inc Public Health, Drainage, Licensing and Planning Consultations

- Improved service and more effective conclusions to some complex nuisance issues have been established with full integration of the **West Norfolk Help Hub** into CSNN processes.
- A review of the process for managing **CSNN Planning Consultations** is nearing completion. Increased numbers of planning consultations in recent years has placed pressure on team resource making it difficult to keep up with demand for CSNN comments.
- Officers have been engaging with the authority's **Project Team** to provide subject matter for a publication intended to encourage **community cohesion** and provide useful information for new and possibly existing residents in and around new council led housing development schemes. This is considered a positive and worthwhile piece of work across the two departments by being proactive in tackling potential issues.

Antisocial Behaviour

- **ASB Awareness week 3rd to 9th July 2023.** This is a national initiative which is supported by Norfolk County Council. Details have been shared with local comms teams to promote awareness.
- The **ASB Case Review (Community Trigger)** process has been reviewed at a County level to achieve consistency across the Norfolk Authorities. It is expected that this will be launched and promoted during ASB Awareness week.
- The **PSPO for Alcohol Restrictions** is due to be renewed in October 2023. Consultations will begin Aug/Sept 23.
- Due to increased reports of **inappropriate and inconsiderate vehicle** use across West Norfolk and a County wide approach to tackle car meets, we are considering reviewing the existing conditions to further restrict certain behaviours and activity on certain land by the existing PSPO. This area of work is becoming increasingly busy for CSNN and we will be discussing plans to effectively resource this in future.

West Norfolk Help Hub

- The use and recognition of the **West Norfolk Help Hub** service is rapidly expanding and is considered as a highly effective and useful tool in tackling complex cases (such as Public Health issues) but also gives users scope to provide support mechanisms that would not ordinarily be easily accessible.
- A programme of **training and awareness** of the service is being rolled out to internal departments such as Care and Repair and Planning Enforcement.
- Ongoing **promotion of the service** to external partners (such as schools) is ongoing.
- **Help Hub Support Officer** post applicants currently being sifted. This will provide some much needed admin support to the Help Hub Officer who will be taking on some additional duties to manage and implement the West Norfolk's 'Sanctuary Scheme' based within the Help Hub. A Sanctuary Scheme is a **survivor centred initiative** which aims to make it possible for victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes.

Careline Community Service department update

Careline

Careline serves West Norfolk, North Norfolk and surrounding counties. As of April 2023, we have 3549 clients. Client numbers have reduced slightly, which is monitored closely. The main reasons for cancellations remain; Death, followed by Going into Care.

Progress on service delivery projects:

Supplies of equipment have been impacted due to global electronic component shortages, which has affected some of our clients and the time they are waiting for installations. We continue to work with our suppliers to manage this situation.

Digital switchover is due to take place on 31st December 2025

All equipment that is not able to be converted to a digital platform has already been replaced, with units that can be linked to a digital hub. However, the Telecare Services Association (TSA) announced last year that telecare providers should be moving away from analogue units and moving to SIM based units. We have been working with SIM based units since August 2021 as another option to clients.

We currently have approximately 428 clients on SIM based products. We are working to increase this through:

- Encouraging all new clients to have a SIM based product after explaining the analogue to digital switch. We do still offer an analogue unit (capable of being linked to a digital hub) and will continue to provide these to remain commercially competitive.
- Where a client has a faulty analogue unit we offer a SIM based

replacement at the same price for a year.

- When we make calls for maintenance updates on the analogue VI we explain the digital switchover and ask the client if they would like to upgrade. Clients are charged the new price from the outset, but we are not charging for this visit.

The team have been working on a programme of recovery of arrears over the last 12 months and have recouped £23000.

I'm Going Home Project

The I'm Going Home project was implemented as a pilot in October 2019 to support the discharge team at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn. If a patient was deemed as being able to go home but needing reassurance and support, then the Buddy Button (this is a GPS tracking and falls detector) was allocated to them free of charge for 6 weeks. After the 6 weeks the client was contacted by a member of the Careline team to see if they would like to take on the Buddy Button and pay for it or to have any other alarm provision from Careline. If they did not want to carry on with the product then it was collected, cleaned and cleared and returned to the QEH for re-issue.

To date there have been 69 clients discharged from hospital with the support and reassurance of a Buddy Button. This could contribute to reducing the need for a hospital bed for longer than necessary. The project was placed on hold due to issues with the management of it at the QEH.

The Careline Business Development Officer has sourced a new piece of equipment to be used with this project and has re-implemented it with the Rapid Assessment team with NSFT to be managed under their control. This has been implemented and is being monitored.

LILY

Lily continues to provide support to the residents of West Norfolk to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

There has been a refresh of the Lily website Project Managed by the Community Health and Wellbeing Manager, and implemented by the Lily Co-ordinator and Lily Support Officer.

The DWP Household Support Fund

This fund is for individuals experiencing fuel or food poverty due to the cost of living. A temporary member of staff is employed to assist with the delivery of this working closely with other support organisations in the district.

Clients are referred to us via professional referral, they are personally dealt with and triaged, exploring their hardship situation and supporting in the most effective way that was deemed possible. The team are also delivering an Energy Saving Initiative which is funded by UKSPF West Norfolk Programme.

Homes for Ukraine

Lily is also working alongside the Hanseatic Union and Access Migrant Support providing support to Ukrainian's who are arriving in the UK fleeing the war. The team have seen had 469 interactions (this is not the number of refugees seen) with refugees to date. Lily is coordinating welfare visits to the refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. There is a small team of

officers helping with this who carry out joint visits with children's services when a child is in the property. This initiative is now coming up to the 6 months mark and as expected many hosts and refugee relationships have broken down, which in turn is placing demand and pressure on the Housing Options team within the Borough Council. Dealing with these breakdowns is very resource heavy for the Lily team too. A Temporary Ukrainian Welfare Officer has been recruited and will commence by the end of August 2022 to support with everything associated with Ukrainian support.

The Borough Council Housing Standards team are continuing to check the properties of hosts prior to refugee arrival. Lily staff and Housing Options staff are visiting the host and refugee to offer extended support and information. Lily also deals with ad-hoc drop ins into Kings Court. Ukrainian speaking staff at the Borough Council are supporting with translation as and when they can which is most welcome as they are already under pressure with their own work.

Food for Thought

Lily is continuing to successfully deliver the Food for Thought 12-week healthy eating initiative at the in partnership with the College of West Anglia. The aim is to encourage local residents of all ages to partake in coffee, chat and to find out more about healthy eating. The sessions include nutrition, shopping on a budget, cooking for one, special diets, food for families and more. This ties in to a piece of work currently being undertaken with the CCG and other partners looking at inactivity in the North Lynn area and also with the issues we have seen from HSF and throughout COVID with people living in hardship in areas of deprivation. Lily continues to source further funding to extend and expand this initiative.

Housing Standards

The team are responsible for ensuring that residential accommodation, regardless of tenure type, are free from hazards affecting health. The team uses the powers and provisions set out in primary and secondary legislation and the councils' own policies and procedures.

In addition to their primary role of inspecting and regulating housing conditions the team have been actively supporting the following work:

- Homes for Ukraine scheme, ensuring potential host properties are suitable.
- Day to day running of the pods provided to homeless persons
- Working with housing options to inspect properties for suitability of use by homeless persons
- Working with planning enforcement on unauthorised encampments and caravan sites

The teams current priorities are

- Responding to complaints about housing conditions both in HMOs or otherwise.

- Processing HMO licensing applications and ensuring licenced HMOs are properly regulated.
- Processing caravan site licence applications and undertaking annual visits to check conditions.
- Dealing with Unauthorised Encampments and undertaking biannual G&T counts.
- Dealing with breaches of Electrical Safety Regulations, Smoke Alarm Regulations and MEES regulations as we encounter them.
- Investigating allegations of harassment and illegal eviction.

Looking ahead the Renters Reform Bill is proposing to end 'no fault evictions'. The banning of no fault evictions will enable tenants to raise poor housing conditions with the council free of the concern that they may be evicted as a result. It is expected that housing condition complaints will be raised earlier than they otherwise would be as a result.

Care & Repair

The Care & Repair team are responsible for the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants, and through our Housing Assistance Policy, other grant works and a handyperson service.

The service is funded through the Better Care Fund, a national fund which is disbursed through Norfolk County Council. The council receives approximately £1.8m pa from the BCF and tops this amount up to £2.1m each year.

The provision of these grants is tenure and age neutral. The majority of recipients are however over 66 years of age. The most common tenure type is owner occupied.

Last year the team delivered 265 DFG's to the value of £1.8m, the average cost of an adaptation was £6.5k

The team also delivered 1409 low level and prevention grants.

The full £2.1m allocation of funds was spent.

The effects of covid on the teams waiting list are still being felt. All cases are assessed on receipt to ensure those in most urgent need are processed first to ensure they are benefiting from the adaptations they need. However for those with less urgent needs this means that they wait for longer for their cases to be assessed. As of April there were 304 cases waiting to be assessed by the team. This is obviously a cause for concern and the team are working hard to ensure that we process cases as efficiently as possible with the resource available to them.

In addition to this work the team are engaged in projects to reduce pressure on the NHS.

The Living Well project works with the orthopedic ward at QEH to contact

people waiting for surgery and offer low level adaptations to keep them active and well enough to have surgery. The team make contact with approximately 40 people a month and the take up rate for assistance is approximately 40%. The team are working with Careline and the ICS to deliver a proactive falls prevention project. The aim of the project is to identify and contact individuals likely to be at risk of a fall but that have not yet been engaged with health care, to offer proactive services to keep them mobile. This project is still in development and further updates will be provided as it progresses.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

18 May – BOROUGH COUNCIL
23 May – Meeting with Gaywood Community Centre, the Local Member and Volunteers
24 May – Briefing with Executive Directors and Senior Leadership Team
30 May – Meeting at Alive Leisure and tour of Rehab Gym and KASET Skatepart
30 May – Visit to Hanseatic Union Children’s Club, South Lynn
31 May – Meeting with Executive Directors
31 May - Meeting with Housing Department
31 May – Attending West Lynn Action Group
5 June- Attending Planning Committee to speak
5 June – Cabinet Sifting
7 June – Attending Inquest of Mr Malcolm Livingstone at Norfolk Coroner’s Court, County Hall, with Housing Officers
8 June – Meeting with Executive Directors
8 June – Clenchwarton Parish Council
10 June – Attending Clenchwarton Open Gardens Day
12 June – Visiting Lynn Foodbank
13 June – West Lynn Action Group
14 June – Briefing about Pullover Roundabout Improvements and West Winch Bypass Funding
15 June – Stakeholder Meeting in Town Hall about West Lynn Ferry Improvements in recent Mott Macdonald Report
16 June – Meeting at Priory House with Boost Project and Freebridge Housing
17 June – Volunteer’s Fair at Town Hall
17 June – Visit to Steam House Café, support for people with mental health issues
20 June – All-Day Cabinet Meeting about new Corporate Plan
20 June – West Winch Parish Council
21 June – Negotiation with King’s Lynn Night Shelter with Lorraine Gore
21 June – Freebridge Housing
22 June – Portfolio Meeting with Mark Whitmore about Care and Repair
26 June – Presenting Coronation Coins to pupils at St Michael’s Primary School, South Lynn
26 June – Meeting with West Norfolk Community Transport about new Circular bus for Lynn
27 June – Local Plan Briefing

27 June – Meeting with Care and Repair and Freebridge Building Control
27 June – Briefing about Parkway Development with Local Member and Executive Officers
27 June – Cabinet Briefing
27 June – CABINET
28 June – Meeting with Integrated Care Partnership about Forward Plan
28 June – Meeting with Housing Department regarding Night Shelter
28 June – Planning Enforcement Training

Future Meetings Arranged

Follow-up Summit at County Hall on Lessons Learned from Deaths of Jon, Joanna and Ben in Cawston Park Mental Hospital run by private firm Jeetal
Integrated Care Partnership Meeting, for all Borough Councillors, about increasing NHS Dentistry in West Norfolk
10 July Borough Council “Beat Your Bills” Roadshow, South Lynn Community Centre 10 am – 2 pm