

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19TH OCTOBER 2023

COUNCILLOR SIMON RING - CABINET MEMBER FOR TOURISM, EVENTS AND MARKETING

11th August to 5th October 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

This has been an extremely busy time as well as an extremely exciting time. We have seen in this period a whole raft of fantastic events, as well as some really positive activity impacting our most challenging wards with the most vulnerable children. To cap this period off, the news about the Guildhall has shone a very large international light on the borough.

Marketing and Tourism

Once again, this period has seen our small Tourist and Marketing team stretched to deliver a huge amount of material, both digital and paper. The work that they have been doing for countless groups and events is vast and does not seem to have any breaks. A constant reminder of what we have to offer in this Borough to both our residents and the visitor economy.

Events

We have seen the conclusion of an incredible summer of events with Mods and Rockers, Women's world cup, Ukranian Independence Day, Mini Meet, Classic Car Day and many other live music on the Tuesday Market Place. In addition Hunstanton events have include Pebble painting, Punch and Judy, Adventure Gardeners, Open Air Theatre, Movie Madness on the green, Sunset Health Walk, Hunstanton Rocks, with the Battle of the Bands, and the Rock Choir.

Nothing happens in West Norfolk!!!!

I'd like to make a special mention for the Civic Society who, in my opinion, demonstrate the very best of West Norfolk. The Society and the hordes of volunteers, as well as some very dedicated Council officers, delivered, once again, an absolutely incredible Heritage Day. I stood patiently in line to enter a number of our sites and will never cease to be impressed by the passion of the volunteers and the welcoming way that they invite locals and visitors alike to enjoy our rich heritage.

Culture and Heritage

This report marks the first full year of the Borough taking a more direct approach to the day-to-day management at the Guildhall site. Over the last month we have seen an increase in numbers attending the activities at the Guildhall.

The summer school activities delivered in partnership with Norfolk Museums Service during July and August had over double the numbers of 2022.

The visitor numbers at the Guildhall for the summer season also showed a significant increase although with a slightly different distribution.

Heritage Open Day was a huge success at the Guildhall with almost 2000 people coming to visit the site in one day (exact figure was 1903). This again is over double the figure for previous years.

The Borough's new Learning and Engagement Officer Jane Hamilton is now in post to assist the Cultural Officer in bringing forward educational, learning and inspiration at the site and wider Borough. She has made a very good start and I encourage all Councillors to speak to her and support her efforts to get into all of the Borough's schools.

The visual art exhibition in the Fermoy and Shakespeare Barn continues to attract large numbers and is proving very popular. It showcases the best Norfolk (and one Suffolk) artist. Very established names hang alongside very new ones (one new young artist has just won the Sky Arts Portrait of the Year award). It runs Thursday, Friday and Saturday each week until the 28th October. The exhibition opening was attended by hundreds of people including some of the featured artists, Councillors and the MP. There has been a visit to the exhibition by students from the CWA and further educational visits are planned to run alongside the exhibition opening to everyone. It is a free exhibition to anyone who wishes to see it.

The archaeological work that has been taking place over the last two months at the Guildhall is nearing the end of this phase with the HBA (Historic Buildings Analysis report) due to come out shortly. As part of the public engagement programme of the Guildhall project there will be a free public talk about the findings of this report on the evening of the 5th October at the Guildhall by the leading Archaeologist and the site Creative Director.

The design team are continuing through RIBA stage 2 (of the 7 stages of RIBA) although findings from the HBA may alter the timeframe that was initially anticipated. This is not necessarily a negative, in a project of this scale involving buildings of this age and importance Heritage findings must be given proportional consideration.

Away from the Guildhall we have seen, once again, a summer of fantastic cultural offerings in all of our wonderful venues and the opportunity to experience culture just keeps coming.

I visited Adam Taylor and his team at The Workshop in New Conduit Street, in the old RBS offices. They are a team dedicated to delivering performing arts to young people from the age of 0. Part of their brief is to reach out and support children in disadvantaged areas and children with particular behavioural and social problems. I appeal to all Councillors to pop in and see them and help them to gain access to your wards, especially those in the most challenging areas.

Leisure

Alive West Norfolk have, despite the inclement weather, had a great Summer.

Time To Talk Football

A new program was launched by AWN Kings Lynn Community Football in partnership with the 856 Foundation. Time to Talk Football supports men's mental health through a 6-a-side league where players score goals off the pitch for keeping a wellbeing log and completing wellbeing challenges and the score is added to their on-pitch score for a final result. All players have access to free wellbeing training funded by the 856 Foundation who are also on hand on the nights for any specific support needs. Teams have a captain as well as a Wellbeing Captain who received free mental health first aid training to support team mates. 70 men signed up from the start and we are now full for season 1 at 80 men.

Play Street

Launched in North Lynn and South Lynn which involved closing a road and playing games in the street. We have seen over 150 children attend these sessions

Active Community including Active Schools

AWN's Active Community Team are now delivering over 100 sessions a month around the borough away from AWN sites with nearly 1000 people taking part. Activities include things such as Play Street, Park Lives in Kings Lynn, Hunstanton and Downham, Community Fitness Classes in Sedgeford, Watlington and Fairstead, Multi-Sport Mash-ups at Wereham, North Lynn and South Lynn, Muga Mania at South Lynn, Social Soccer in Kings Lynn, Downham and Hunstanton, WOW – Womens Only Workouts at Fairstead and Watlington, Stay and Play at Fairstead and Buggy Walks from Kings Lynn Library.

Summer of Play and Holiday Activities

The DfE Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) supported 1023 bookings across the summer – Free holiday clubs with meals for those eligible for free school meals.

Due to the HAF funding reducing this summer, we extended our funding to cover the short fall. This has meant 794 places could be provided free with a free meal on our Holiday Clubs for those who qualified for concession. A further 1738 were able to attend a discounted holiday club with a free meal for those who did not qualify for concession supporting working families.

On the Summer of Play program 13,594 attendances were subsidised meaning activities only cost £1 or 50p with a concession.

We then had 2019 children attend full cost activities including things such as Inflatafun and Go Karty and Party.

In total 19,394 places taken by children across all clubs, activities and programs with the council providing £47k to support.

The Corn Exchange team have been as busy as usual.

Cinema:

A very busy Summer, largely thanks to the phenomenon that is 'Barbenheimer' (Barbie & Oppenheimer). September saw good attendances for horror and award films. Delays are still having an effect as a result of the Hollywood strike.

Silver screenings, Autism screenings and dementia screenings have all shown good attendances. Andrea Rieu 4 screenings is sold out.

Toddler Tuesday and birthday parties are continuing to be in high demand.

Theatre:

The Corn Exchange is now back on budget with ticket sales 67% in the summer months than the same time in 2019.

Buddy the Musical, The Mousetrap, An Evening With Harry Redknapp and Tim Rice (not together!) and, of course, the Christmas Panto are all selling well.

Town Hall and Stories of Lynn

Activities and drop-in sessions for both Stories and Guildhall had only 46 participants last year, this year was a tremendous 426.

Town Hall bookings were strong with Autumn and Christmas bookings coming in.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

I will be attending many more events over the coming month and have scheduled countless meetings in order to give me sufficient knowledge to enable me to lead on this portfolio.

You will no doubt all have heard the news that the floor boards at the Guildhall have been confirmed as being the original boards from the 15th century. This means that, not only was William Shakespeare likely to have walked these boards, but every Royal, Alderman, Mayor, dignitary and other famous individuals from this Borough through from 1400s to the 1800s. Quite some thought.

The attention this is bringing nationally and internationally is astonishing and I'm sure we all share the desire for us to make the most of this to promote our wonderful home.

Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

I have had numerous meetings with officers and outside bodies

Officers

Oliver Judges
Geoff Hall
Duncan Hall
Martin Chisholm
David Morton
Philip Eke
Bethany O'Brien
Philip Bayfield
Jemma Curtis
Tim Fitzhigham
Honor Howell
David Ousby
Michelle Drewery
Abigail Rawlings

Outside bodies

Civic Society
Festival
Hunstanton Action Group
Marriots Warehouse Trust
Conservancy Board
Sandringham Estate

I have regular scheduled meetings with most of the above officers and will continue to meet and fact find with outside bodies including those already met with.