

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**31<sup>st</sup> January 2024**

### **COUNCILLOR BEALES - CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS**

For the period 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

##### **Nar Ouse Regeneration Area.**

Councillors may be aware that it was necessary for an emergency item to be taken to Cabinet in November last year regarding this project. Although there are known areas of contamination on this brownfield development site and an agreed Contaminated Land Method Statement, discussions with the relevant regulatory body, the Environment Agency, concluded that there was now a requirement to remove the contaminated material from site and for this spoil to be deposited at an appropriate waste site. This remediation exercise has now been concluded and was budgeted for within the Capital Programme.

##### **Major Housing Project**

##### **Florence Fields (Gaywood, near King's Lynn Academy))**

The ongoing difficult weather, either persistent rain and/or high winds continues to cause logistical problems. The 3 – 4 inches of rainfall from Storm Babet that fell within 24 hours or so and ongoing rainfall since, deposited large amounts of water on the site that Lovell, our contractor, have managed by constructing temporary reservoirs. This has attracted comment about the amount of water on the site, but it is actually a positive move as it allows work to continue and manages the amount of water flowing into the drains and ditches. A Council owned culvert running under the cycle path (to the southwest of the site) has been repaired. The Network Rail repair to their culvert under the adjacent railway line is still awaited but work is anticipated to start this month. This delay has not impacted the project with works being rephased to accommodate. The original contract included an allowance for surface water management, which has covered the additional costs incurred to date.

There have been two minor complaints since I last updated Council. These are both from the same neighbour and investigation and follow up leads the team to believe that these complaints stem from a wider frustration with the scheme rather than specific issues.

Complaints are taken very seriously and in order to keep neighbours informed of works on site, newsletters were issued to over a thousand homes, and the parents of pupils at the three adjacent schools at the start of the school term.

Two existing gas mains, known to have crossed the site historically but precise location uncertain, were found in recent excavations. They had previously been declared defunct by Cadent (the regional gas distribution company) but in line with the precautionary approach taken by the Borough and Lovell our contractor and build partner, they were re-inspected by Cadent at our request. There was some concern when Cadent declared the pipes to be live after all, but further significant investigations have confirmed beyond doubt that the pipes are dead. They will be removed and Cadent will discharge their easements over the site. Again, operations have needed to be re-phased, but this doesn't look to have delayed the overall project.

Members will be aware that the Borough has invested in flood mitigation measures on all the homes in this development. One of those measures, relating to insulation, has recently become more difficult to implement due to changes in our warranty providers requirements. The Borough Council and Lovell have worked together to find a new solution that both increases the properties resilience whilst being easier to construct. There will also be a cost saving to build cost. A good example of how the need to protect our climate and environment can lead to innovative and cost effective solutions.

Piling the first phase of properties was completed without issues and bricklaying will soon start, somewhat ahead of schedule. Overall, we remain on programme, but should poor weather continue, and/or Network Rail works are delayed, the programme may yet slip.

### **Salters Road (King's Lynn close to Lynnsport)**

This site continues to progress well. The handover of the first properties has been pushed back from early January to the end of the month to allow fitting of carpets and other flooring. This is a late addition to the contract, but Freebridge are to be applauded for the decision which will be financed by them and bring a greatly improved quality of life to future residents. The extra couple of weeks has also allowed the Lovell team to attend to the usual snagging issues and will ensure that the properties handed over meet the high expectations of both the Borough and Lovells.

The next phase of handovers is due for early March. Properties in the final phases are progressing well and are currently ahead of schedule for handover.

A creating communities event is planned for the 3rd of February to help integrate those moving into the area over the next year with the existing community. I am looking into this being the subject of a short pre Council

briefing.

Members visited the site on 19th of January in cold but sunny weather and seemed pleased with both progress on site and quality of the homes. Thanks to our officers, and the Lovells and Freebridge teams for making this possible.

### **Southend Road (Hunstanton)**

Weather delays at Southend Road continue. The wind is hampering efforts to install the final roof trusses and the cold weather is limiting when bricks can be laid. To help combat delay, windows and screeding have been brought forward to create semi watertight units despite the roof not being completed. This has allowed internal trades to commence with partition walls going up and electrical and plumbing work underway. On areas where all the roof trusses are all installed, tiling and zinc work has started.

Completion is forecast for June of this year and the first 7 properties went on sale on Boxing Day. There have been twelve serious sales enquiries and William H Brown are working through them to ensure that locality requirements are met. The corporate projects team receives a weekly update from the William H Brown team and meet with them monthly.

### **Protocol for press enquiries**

Media enquiries are by their nature, often at very short notice and a protocol is being developed to help guide the media, officers, members and Lovell on how to deal with short notice interviews. This will balance the Council's need to communicate with the media with the importance of site security and safety. Among other things, it will be important that the protocol identifies who needs to be aware of any interview, what topics can be discussed (some will be commercially sensitive) and agreeing specific "safe locations" on and off site where interviews can safely be undertaken.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

Funding of council housing companies – should Council approve the recommendation from Cabinet of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Should that approval be forthcoming, the Shareholder Committee will consider the technical aspects and possible timing of any funding offer in detail. Those Members that are interested are urged to attend.

Cabinet report on Lynnsport 1 development (to be considered by Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024).

### **3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

24<sup>th</sup> November – Town Deal Board  
27<sup>th</sup> November – Teams meeting re The Place  
28<sup>th</sup> November – visit to The Epicentre (Haverhill)  
28<sup>th</sup> November – MMPB planning meeting.  
28<sup>th</sup> November – R&D Panel  
29<sup>th</sup> November – Teams meeting re MMPB  
29<sup>th</sup> November – Planning Committee training  
1<sup>st</sup> December – meeting with James Wild MP  
1<sup>st</sup> December – Town Deal Board comms meeting  
4<sup>th</sup> December – Mayors Business Awards shortlist meeting  
4<sup>th</sup> December – Teams meeting of Riverfront/Rail To River Project Board  
5<sup>th</sup> December – planning induction training  
5<sup>th</sup> December – meeting with Exec Director for Place re Grant Thornton report  
5<sup>th</sup> December – Cabinet  
6<sup>th</sup> December – Cabinet briefing  
7<sup>th</sup> December – Budget briefing to Cabinet  
13<sup>th</sup> December – MMPB (Members Major Project Board)  
13<sup>th</sup> December – update re Active Travel Hubs  
13<sup>th</sup> December – portfolio meeting  
14<sup>th</sup> December – meeting with Cllr. Ware re Housing Companies  
18<sup>th</sup> December – portfolio meeting (finance)  
19<sup>th</sup> December – Teams meeting re Riverfront (TDB)  
20<sup>th</sup> December – meeting with Leader of the Council  
20<sup>th</sup> December – Cabinet briefing  
3<sup>rd</sup> January – E&C Panel (apologies given)  
4<sup>th</sup> January – CPP  
5<sup>th</sup> January – Cabinet informal  
8<sup>th</sup> January - Teams meeting of Riverfront/Rail To River Project Board  
8<sup>th</sup> January – Teams meeting re projects on MMPB list  
8<sup>th</sup> January – Cabinet briefing  
10<sup>th</sup> January – Cabinet briefing  
10<sup>th</sup> January – R&D Panel  
14<sup>th</sup> January – Teams meeting re Riverfront (TDB)  
14<sup>th</sup> January – Cabinet sifting  
14<sup>th</sup> January – Cabinet  
16<sup>th</sup> January – Teams training on Shareholding Committee & Council companies  
17<sup>th</sup> January – Mayors Business Awards judging visits  
17<sup>th</sup> January – Cabinet sifting (finance and budget)  
18<sup>th</sup> January – update from TDB Chair on Teams  
19<sup>th</sup> January – Member tour of Salters Road  
22<sup>nd</sup> January – Cabinet sifting (finance and budget)  
22<sup>nd</sup> January – meeting with CEO/Cllr Ware re Housing Companies  
22<sup>nd</sup> January – West Norfolk Economic Strategy  
22<sup>nd</sup> January Council companies training  
24<sup>th</sup> January – Cabinet briefing

25<sup>th</sup> January – Teams portfolio meeting

26<sup>th</sup> January – TDB at COWA

26<sup>th</sup> January – tour of School of Nursing at COWA

29<sup>th</sup> January – visit to Hethel and Scottow innovation centres

30<sup>th</sup> January – R&D Panel

31<sup>st</sup> January – full Council