

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

31st January 2024

COUNCILLOR BEALES - CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS

For the period 24th November 2023 to 31st 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 15th 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 6th February 2024).

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

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

25th January – Teams portfolio meeting

26th January – TDB at COWA

26th January – tour of School of Nursing at COWA

29th January – visit to Hethel and Scottow innovation centres

30th January – R&D Panel

31st January – full Council