

Cabinet Members Report to Council

22nd February 2024

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

23rd November 23 to 12th Feb 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Little has happened since the report put forward for the last Council meeting and as there were no questions to portfolio holders I have copied the report here. In addition I have the following to report

- 50% of our tourism and marketing team have resigned, leaving us needing to fill a large whole in what was already a stretched team.
- Work is being done on reviewing the SLAs, many of which land in this portfolio.
- Following a presentation to HAG on the feasibility of a Lido, a meeting was held with two members and Chris Starkey from NCC to discuss a way forward. This will have been relayed to the HAG by the time of this Full Council meeting.
- I have had a meeting with interested parties with regard to re-introducing the Hanse Festival this year. A committee was formed, and enthusiasm enhanced.
- A tender document has been advertised for the creation of the Cultural Strategy with funding from the Arts Council. Interviews planned for 26th Feb.

This period is a quiet time for a number of my portfolio areas. For events in particular this is a period of rest and repair. A number of physical resources have needed replacement and repair, funded by set aside reserves.

Tourism and Marketing

Visit West Norfolk - An Update for 17/11/23 - 17/01/2024:

For the Christmas/New Year period we continued to promote a substantial amount of local seasonal events and activities, from pantomimes to Christmas-related family activities.

Digital Promotions

During this winter period of time we have sent out the following e-shots to our visitor contacts:

- Festive Events this December in West Norfolk 2023 [sent 30/11/2023]
- Mark your Calendars! 2024 Holiday Inspiration in West Norfolk [sent

14/12/2023]

- Winter Days in West Norfolk 2024 [sent 04/01/2024]

During this winter period of time we have sent out the following e-shots to our tourism business contacts:

- Reminder: Love Your Grant Scheme [sent 23/11/2023]
- Book the Hunstanton Observatory for your visitors and last call for Tourism Forum event [sent 29/11/2023]
- KLIC and connect Business Networking Event and Grant Support [sent 07/12/2023]
- FREE Promotion on the Visit West Norfolk website [sent 21/12/2023]
- Leadership Training, Accessibility Toolkit and Recruitment Support [11/01/2024]

We uploaded the following new content on the *Visit West Norfolk* website during this time too:

- 'New Year's Eve in West Norfolk 2023' blog post [published 05/12/2023]. Highlighted New Year's Eve events and accommodation offers in west Norfolk.
- 'Rainy Day Activities in West Norfolk' blog post [published 08/12/2023]. Featured indoor activities or attractions including museums, historic sites, indoor play areas, cinemas, and art galleries.
- 'Mark your calendars! Unique events in West Norfolk 2024' blog post [published 13/12/2023]. Promoted holiday inspiration and upcoming events in west Norfolk.
- Updated: 'Free Things To Do in West Norfolk | Winter 2024' blog post [02/01/2024]
- Updated: 'Dog Friendly West Norfolk' blog post [05/01/2024]

We also created and uploaded the following social media posts during this time:

o **Social media posts about our blogs:**

- 'Christmas in West Norfolk 2024' blog post.
- 'Free Things To Do |Autumn 2023' blog post.
- 'New Year's Eve in West Norfolk 2023' blog post.
- 'Mark your calendars! Unique events in West Norfolk 2024' blog post.
- 'Wintertime in West Norfolk' blog post.
- 'Road Safety Awareness for Pedestrians and Cyclists' blog post.
- 'Dog Friendly West Norfolk' blog post.
- 'Sustainable Transport in West Norfolk' blog post.
- 'Rainy Day Activities in West Norfolk' blog post
- 'Nature Reserves and Wildlife Parks in West Norfolk' blog post.
- 'Free Things To Do in West Norfolk | Winter 2024'
- 'Golfing in West Norfolk' blog post.
- '20 Historical Figures with Connections to West Norfolk' blog post.
- 'Fishing in West Norfolk' blog post.
- 'West Norfolk... Naturally' page.
- 'Safe and Responsible Travel' page.
- 'Shopping' page.
- 'Food & Drink' page.
- 'Parking' page.

o **Social media posts about local events:**

- 'Christmas at the Guildhall' event [10/12/2023]

- 'New Year's Day Walk' [01/01/2024]
- 'King's Lynn Christmas Lights Switch-On' event [26/11/2023]
- 'Downham Market Christmas Lights Switch-On' event [26/11/2023]
- **Social media posts about general tourism themes:**
 - New Year inspiration
 - 'National Walk Your Dog' month [January]
 - Black Friday
 - Tourism Industry ['Business Listings', 'Event Uploads', 'Tourism Trade News', 'Economic Impact of Tourism' reports, and more].
 - Visitor newsletter sign-up form.
 - King's Lynn
 - Downham Market
 - Hunstanton
 - West Norfolk coast and countryside.
 - King's Lynn Architecture
 - Explore West Norfolk website
 - History and heritage
 - Walking and cycling trails.

We continue to upload events to the Visit West Norfolk website event listings and to proactively contact tourism businesses who are not yet featured on the Visit West Norfolk website for future inclusion.

New Projects

Software

After recently being granted authorisation by the BCKLWN ICT Working Group to use such new software, from early December 2023 we have been using the User Generated Content Platform Snapsea (www.snapsea.io) through our Instagram account for the very first time - to enhance, inform and grow our future promotional interactions with potential visitors to west Norfolk by utilising high quality authentic visitor content of the local area. It is early days, of course, but the first month of our use of the software does look promising.

West Norfolk Tourism Business Event

After the recent West Norfolk Tourism Forum AGM (held Wednesday 6th December 2023), we are currently finalising the booking of presenters and the full agenda for the first West Norfolk Tourism Business Summit event, to be presented by the tourism forum and held in King's Lynn in March 2024.

Shared Prosperity Fund Projects

We are continuing various work and tender processes on a set of SPF funded projects, which include regeneration of items at the West Lynn Pavilion, enhancements to certain Downham Market Town Centre public realm assets, and the formation of a Hunstanton Observatory events programme for a series of four events of varied themes.

The Hanse League

With King's Lynn being an active member of the Hanse League, we have now taken over the Vice Chair and administrator roles for the Europe-wide Modern Hanse League splinter group called the *Hanse Sustainable Working Group*. Our first meeting with the group in these new roles was held on 16th January 2024, with the working group primarily focussing on sharing best practice and learning examples, across the sustainable development goals set by the UN, on a Europe-wide basis. These goals include the implementation and growth of sustainable tourism business practices and much more.

Members of this working group include representatives from many other Hanse towns and cities across Europe

As you can see, the Tourism and Marketing team have kept busy.

Alive West Norfolk Corn Exchange

Theatre:

- New brochure came out at the end of November.
- Pantomime sales reached 21,000 with secondary spends up 8% on previous year.

Cinema

Number 1 place in October was the colourful *characters* *Trolls Band Together* followed by Martin Scorsese latest masterpiece *Killers of the Flower Moon*. *The Great Escaper* did well returning after a huge success in early in October along with *A Haunting in Venice*. November has performed well with the epic *Napoleon*, 2 *Lithuanian films*, 4 sold out *silver 60's* screenings and extra screenings of now popular *Toddler Tuesdays*.

December saw a slate of major family flicks, comedies, and a couple of awards contenders. The biggest film of the month was the blockbuster origin story *Wonka* a Timothée Chalamet-led family favourite, portraying the rise of the iconic chocolatier *Willy Wonka*. Disney's new animation *Wish* started early December. We also had 4 sold out screenings from *Andre Rieu* for our Christmas Event Cinema audience, followed by a re-release of the beloved Christmas classic *Elf*, starring Will Ferrell. Plenty of Christmas titles, including *Muppets Christmas Carol*, *The Grinch*, *It's a Wonderful life*, leaving the Majestic Cinema to show *Love Actually* & *Home Alone*.

Marketing.

We have in the past asked to advertise on the "A" board and the new LED screen on the Tuesday Market Place, also the poster sites at the Multi-story car park and bus stops.

We are now being asked to advertise on our AWN digital screens by regeneration, Lily & Careline, which we are happy to do free of charge.

Town Hall

Currently:

- Wedding bookings are good for 2024.
- Town Hall had a stand at the Kings Lynn Wedding Fayre on 7th January.
- Staff arranged an archives coffee morning which was well received and has led to some future paid for bookings from Hickathrift House.

Culture at the Guildhall

Generally Increased Numbers for the run up to Christmas and events now running at capacity (I would like to increase 'capacity' and am looking at ways to do this).

Dickensian Christmas at the Guildhall was booked to capacity: families engaged with Father and Mother Christmas, craft activities, games, food, drink, carol singers and live animals in the form of owls. Feedback from the event has been really good and an event on this theme is planned for 2024. This event also had the benefit of volunteers from CWA as part of the scheme we are running with them (we have been and given talks at CWA to inspire students to come and get involved and it seems to be working).

Our partnership with the Ministry of Justice is continuing with community payback people assisting in maintaining the garden at the Guildhall.

School plays returned to the Guildhall in December which has not happened in a while with schools using the space for both their in house and public facing Christmas shows.

We partnered with Norwich Puppet Theatre to offer schools a truly magical version of Midsummer Night's Dream. This was featured on the one show with the Guildhall in November and schools came and packed the auditorium for two showings of this production.

We have started a bi-weekly Art Club at weekends. The first one was sold out with a waiting list so we have increased capacity.

The Guildhall is hosting the Heritage Education Network meeting which is an attempt to bring all the schools together and provide support to learning across the town in the areas we know the Guildhall is strong.

We have an exhibition opening shortly and activities for families in February Half Term.

AWN Lynnsport etc

Health, wellbeing and commercial.

Improving community health and wellbeing remains the main priority on the AWN agenda, and the AWN Wellness Referral scheme continues to grow and become

embedded into the Primary Care Network to offer specialist exercise referral across our sites.

With 171 referrals to date, the work we are now doing with Active Now has really engaged local GP surgeries, which historically have been challenging to onboard and build partnerships with. Prior to Active Now, referrals from our local surgeries were less than 5% - they are now the lead contributor into our scheme at 62%

We have gained further funding to support the Active Now Falls Prevention programme, that will be rolled out early 2024. This will see 14hrs per week of engagement from AWN staff to support the programme - a majority of which will be out in the community. To support this, 8 staff members have undertaken a seated based exercise class qualification and a one-day specialist course in 'behaviour change' was undertaken on 5 Dec, training 10 AWN staff.

The company, on behalf of the council, is currently in discussion with Sport England and in partnership with Active Norfolk in relation to potential new national funding to support the borough's work in promoting health and wellbeing via physical activity. This is at the earliest stages and an update will be available once there is more detail to report

AWN continue to be active in the community in terms of outreach to further improve awareness and support local business and charities. AWN offered a day of health checks for the BCKLWN to support International Men's Day in November, providing a valuable educational day for staff. The rotary club and a local Parkinson's support group also benefited from the same health checks, breaking down barriers for these special populations to engage with our services and we were pleased to see a good uptake of participants joining our membership scheme.

Commercially – membership sales continue to outperform last year since the gyms have been refurbished and we have for the first time introduced a fully flexible monthly membership which makes membership at our venues more affordable and without the need for a full year up front commitment. The annual membership remains to give people the choice of monthly or annual – but early signs in January show a healthy sales upturn compared to last January. However a number of people are suffering from the cost of living crisis and have had to consider their financial priorities when it comes to having a membership. With a focus on retention, plans to further improve our member experience over the upcoming months include scheduled member education sessions to help customers understand how to get the most from the technology and capability of the cardio equipment, gym floor-based classes, and further virtual class provision. A recent marketing commission to highlight the breadth of what Alive offer the community for marketing campaigns will be used in our January campaigns. These member testimonials have also helped highlight the great work the team are doing.

Events:

In late October Kaset skatepark held the annual Halloween Hell skate jam, with keen skaters travelling from Bristol, Newcastle and Manchester to attend one of the UK's largest Halloween skateboarding events. Norfolk County Council's Targeted Youth Support Services (TYSS) are now hiring the skatepark on a weekly basis to provide a safe space for young people who can speak to youth workers, the Matthew Project and other support services. The police also attend to provide advice, engagement and bike security tagging free of charge.

November saw Alive Downham host a pool party for the West Norfolk Autism Group

who provide support and guidance to individuals of all ages whose lives are affected by autism. The pool party gave families from the group the opportunity to have fun in the pool using the large floats with their family members in a controlled environment. During December, all sites hosted an event aimed at engaging members and the local community, Lynnsport sold out their Christmas lunch serving 80 people, and customers at Oasis and Downham enjoyed a social morning of Mince pies and coffee. These events provide great community spirit and support those suffering from loneliness.

Events

This is a time of rest and repair for the events team, as well as a time for planning the huge number of events, both by the Council and supporting outside bodies. We are not only planning for all of the now well established events, but we are also looking to maximise the assets we have to provide new events without utilizing additional resource. It is important, at a time of financial difficulty for our residents, that we put on as many free events as we can both afford and cope with, and that we will continue to do. I will be listing the planned events in a future update.

Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

I have had numerous meetings with officers and outside bodies

Officers

Oliver Judges
Duncan Hall
Martin Chisholm
Philip Eke
Bethany O'Brien
Philip Bayfield
Jemma Curtis
Tim Fitzhigham
Honor Howell
David Oudsby

Outside bodies

Civic Society
Town Guides
Festival
Hunstanton Action Group
Old Lenensians
Norfolk Records Committee
Norfolk Museums Committee
Friends of the Walks
Kings Lynn Museum
Stories of Lynn and Archives
Conservancy Board
Downham Market Town Council Committee

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.