

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

27th June 2024

Councillor Simon Ring - Cabinet Member for Tourism, Events and Marketing

To 17 June 2024

Leisure

Lynnsport have continued to work very hard with events and community engagement. There has been a small increase in the use of the Skateboard Park. The Gymnastic Hall has been refurbished and is back to full use and Cllr Ben Jones and I were treated with a demonstration from the tumblers and floor dancers. Cllr Jones much enjoyed having a go on the trampoline!

It is worth mentioning that the Gymnastics club is 50 years old this year, the same age as the Borough Council. It is also worth noting that one lad tumbling is a current age group national champion and we also have three regional champions.

I visited Reef at Sheringham, which used to be Splash, with Siobahn and Paul from AWN. We looked around the facility that was rebuilt last year and was wowed by the place. The income figures were very interesting too and showed us what could be done as a possible replacement for the Oasis.

I've had meetings with a Padel Tennis installer and the Lawn Tennis Association about the growth of Padel. We are studying the figures for installation of court, potentially at Lynnsport, Hunstanton and Downham Market, with funding support from the LTA. Padel is one of the fastest growing sports in the world and is an extremely accessible and adaptable sport. More to follow.

The LTA funding, with financial support from our Resort Reserves, has been released to resurface and refence the MUGA on the Rec at Hunstanton. This will be marked out for two tennis courts, a five aside football pitch and two netball courts. This is part of some real initiatives to increase the activity and economic use of the Rec which we lease from the Le Strange estate.

We are closing in on a decision for the future of Alive West Norfolk. Options have been presented to Cabinet in briefings and the next stage is a Joint Panels presentation on 18th June followed by Cabinet decision. Should changes be decided it is hoped they will have been implemented by April 2025.

I attended a meeting at Lynnsport with a number of partner groups to listen to a lady called Rachel Hutchinson from Able2B in Norwich. Her inspirational talk about how they get disabled young people to focus on what they can achieve rather than what they can't do was inspiring and it was clear from the group that this is the model that the Adaptive Sports Hub and elements of Lynnsport and the COWA will work with. It gave a much clearer understanding that inclusivity for these young people starts with providing a safe space first as a starting point on the journey to inclusion.

Culture

Art Reach have been appointed to create the Culture and Heritage Strategy. This is one of the things that the National Heritage Lottery Fund felt was missing when a bid for funds went to them for the Guildhall project. An Arts Council grant has funded the creation of the strategy and Art Reach were appointed after a tendering process. Consultation events will be held from July and key individuals will be included in that process. If anyone wishes to ensure that certain people or organisations are included please let me know.

The purpose of developing a strategy is to align the needs of organisations and residents to strategic decisions over the next 10-15 years. The intention is that the strategy will strengthen joint approaches and attract investment to the Borough to develop culture for all.

Culture is everything about us and I hope that we can gather together a wide and all inclusive group of people to help formulate the strategy for the good of all in the Borough and to inform the way we mould our vision for the future.

Both The Festival and Festival Too have launched their programmes for the summer. Both programmes are receiving plaudits for the qualities of the performers and events contained and I very much look forward to attending as many events as possible over the next two months.

The Guildhall continues to have displays and exhibitions, working around the ongoing archaeological work and the ever-shortening timeframe to the start of major works.

Heritage

We are so fortunate in this Borough to own, or have on long leases, some wonderful heritage assets. This is both a blessing and a curse. These assets take a considerable amount of resource to maintain and keep open for use, and this past year has been a journey towards understanding what is needed to sustain these assets and for us all to take advantage of our fortunate ownership. Volunteers have a central part to play in the evolution of how we protect and promote our heritage and I am delighted to report that there are a very large number out there to step forward and support. What is less delightful is the way they feel and have been treated for some years. We need to respect and value these volunteers if we want to succeed.

The organisation 'Friends of the Walks' had all but died, but recently, thanks to the passion of a few, the organisation has had a new breath of life and is now working very closely with our hard-working open spaces team. I have very high hopes of keeping the Red Mount and Southgates open more and fulfil the expectations of visitors and residents who wish to enjoy our heritage.

What is clear to me is that we need to create a position of 'Volunteer Co-ordinator'. It is crazy to expect volunteers to organise and manage volunteers. That person ceases to support, the whole thing comes tumbling down. By showing the commitment to keep the assets open and active we will also be demonstrating to potential funders that we are serious about making full use of our assets and for them to be part of our vision for the future. We are working on a bid for funds to create the position which I hope will prove to be self-funding within two years.

The Guildhall project is moving towards RIBA stag 4 and we held a public engagement on May 9th to display the RIBA stage 3 plans. The feedback will be made public soon, but the general comments were very positive with many that were previously sceptical and negative, now showing a renewed enthusiasm for the project.

Tourism and Marketing

This continues to be a concern with a department that is woefully under resourced and trying to touch so many things. In the portfolio reshuffle we have combined Business with Culture and now have Tourism and Marketing within the Business portfolio where it belongs. Tourism is the Borough's biggest industry sector and by recognizing that and focusing on its role in the economic development of both the Borough as a whole, and indeed the Council itself as we get to grips with understanding the monetary opportunities that we have with the wonderful heritage assets we have.

Events

Our events team continue to do their thing. I have listened to many outside agencies comment with great praise for the team. I also have heard many visitors and newcomers to the Borough comment on what an amazing array of events we hold here. At a recent business forum representatives of some of the key businesses in the Borough said "whatever you do, keep the events, it helps us recruit and retain staff". This highlights the symbiotic relationship between the economic development and the need to celebrate our culture in order to make this a place where people want to live and work.

The events team will, this season, be aided by the arrival of a new stage which will allow them to support more events that are put on around the Borough. Its first outing will be at Hunstanton shortly, followed by the Festival Too programme.

This weekend's Hanse Faestival sees the embedding of this event back into

the season. This year's event has been arranged at relatively short notice and the committee has done a fantastic job, working closely with the events team, to put on an event that managed to dodge the bad weather. They will now go straight into organizing next year's event which will be the 20th anniversary of the first modern Hanse festival and will honour the memory of the late Alderman Nick Daubney.

Events have been moved out of my portfolio and will be reported on by Cllr Anota from now on.

Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

I have had numerous meetings with officers and outside bodies

Officers

Lorraine Gore
Debbie Gates
Oliver Judges
Duncan Hall
Martin Chisholm
Jemma Curtis
Tim Fitzhigham
Honor Howell
Jane Hamilton
James Grant
James Arrandale
Alexa Baker
Tommy Goode

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.