

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

29 August 2024

COUNCILLOR ALISTAIR BEALES – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

For the period 27th June to 29th August

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Florence Fields

Progress at Florence Fields has accelerated helped by improved weather conditions. Temporary water management issues have been resolved, and the construction of permanent pumping stations and attenuation systems is underway. While awaiting formal site discharge consent, ongoing discussions with Network Rail to expedite culvert repairs remain a priority. Despite these challenges, sales will commence shortly, with a temporary sales office opening on King's Street while the show home is finalized. The show home is scheduled to open on-site at the end of November.

The project team is trying to maximise the potential of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to increase the proportion of affordable housing at Florence Fields. (Circa £1.7 million with the potential to deliver 11 – 12 homes). In parallel, collaborative efforts with portfolio holders, Lovell, and Cllr Bullen have resulted in ambitious plans for biodiversity enhancement, and one swift box per home will be installed, and approximately 100 bee bricks.

To showcase the project's progress, a site visit for members is planned later in the year to view the show home and wider development site.

Lynnsport 1

Construction has started at Lynnsport 1 (the old Pelicans hockey pitch site) with ground stabilisation work now underway. These works will continue throughout the summer and early autumn, with traditional groundworks, including piling, commencing in November. The recent dry weather prompted concerns from residents about dust on site and work was paused whilst the contractor put more effective mitigation measures in place. The project timeline remains unaffected, with the first homes scheduled for handover in 2025.

Piling works always raise concern among residents and comprehensive property surveys have been conducted on existing homes in the vicinity of the site to provide a base line condition against which any impact from work on site can be assessed. A newsletter was distributed to approximately 200 households, describing construction progress and addressing concerns raised. The project team remains committed to minimising disruption and working collaboratively with residents throughout the development process.

Salters Road

The Salters Road development of 78 affordable homes for Freebridge Community Housing (FCH) is progressing rapidly. A significant milestone has been reached with the completion of roofing on all properties. The next handover of 13 homes to FCH is scheduled for August 20th, bringing the total number of completed affordable units to 46. The project remains on track for the full delivery of these much-needed homes by the end of the year, with a target completion date of January 2025. This development is a crucial step in addressing the local housing crisis and providing affordable accommodation for the community.

Southend Road

The show home at Southend Road has officially opened its doors to the public as construction progresses on the development. With increasing sections of the building becoming watertight, the construction team can work simultaneously on multiple flats, accelerating the overall build rate. While there is a growing optimism surrounding the project, concerns persist about meeting the October completion target. The Borough team is working diligently with Lovell to implement measures to mitigate any potential delays. Marketing efforts for the properties have encountered challenges, as potential buyers express a preference for viewing their specific flat before committing to a purchase. This has led to a slowdown in sales interest, with customers opting to wait a few additional months for completion. Additionally, the proposed occupancy conditions for the development continue to be a source of concern.

Active Travel Hubs

Delivery of the Active Travel Hubs project is facing significant challenges due to unexpectedly difficult ground conditions at the proposed enterprise zone site. This has necessitated a comprehensive review of the scheme's feasibility. The project team, including our directly appointed consultants Pulse Consult (Project Managers) and AMA (Quantity Surveyors), is working closely with the Borough to assess the situation. It is proposed that the project team provide a full update, along with potential options for proceeding, at the next Town Deal Board meeting.

Guildhall

The King's Lynn Guildhall project is progressing steadily. Following approval from both Cabinet and Town Board in July, Haworth Tompkins initiated detailed design work (RIBA Stage 4) on 5th August. This crucial stage will inform the transformation of this historic building into a vibrant cultural hub for the community. Planning and listed building consent applications are underway, with decisions anticipated by 24th September and 20th August respectively. Concurrently, a procurement strategy is being developed to identify the most suitable approach for the project's construction phase. The appointment of a principal contractor is targeted for May/ June 2025, following final cabinet approval on the scheme in Feb/ March 2025.

Riverfront

The Riverfront project comprises two main elements: the Customs House and the Devil's Alley/Dryside facilities.

Progress on the Devil's Alley/Dryside facilities is steady, although there were initial delays related to Planning and Biodiversity Net Gain applications. Both applications have now been submitted, and an enabling works package is in preparation.

The Customs House element is currently facing significant challenges. The proposed RIBA 3 designs are unacceptable from a conservation perspective, necessitating a revised, less intrusive design focusing on internal works. The final design for planning submission has yet to be determined, and there is pressure to expedite this process to meet Town Deal Funding deadlines.

Rail to River

The Rail to River project has progressed satisfactorily and is drawing to a close. Outstanding elements are centred on Purfleet Street, specifically the completion of the pop-up units and the installation of the artistic arch. The arch is scheduled for installation in September, as anticipated in the original programme, as the availability of the artist was always a determining factor in this timeline. The finalisation of the pop-up units encountered delays due to complications with the sewer connections.

These issues have now been rectified, and the concluding stages involving the incorporation of lighting and Corten sheeting will commence once the necessary internal and external resources can be allocated.

The digital signage and wayfinding signs have been put in place, alongside the two commissioned artworks. It is worth noting that the Feather artwork at the train station has been temporarily removed for repair and will be reinstated during the week commencing 12th August.

Southgates

The Southgate regeneration project is progressing with the consultancy team, comprising NCC, BDP Architects, and Lambert Smith Hampton, actively developing concept designs for the proposed development plots and public realm areas. Simultaneously, NCC is finalising technical proposals for the Sustainable Transport and Regeneration Scheme (STARS). Close collaboration between these workstreams is essential to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach to the project. Preserving and enhancing the Grade 1 listed South Gate ancient monument is a core objective, with careful consideration being given to its protection and the strengthening of its setting throughout the design process.

This holistic approach will create a vibrant and sustainable regeneration of this important approach into the town, while respecting the area's heritage and character.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Guildhall

The funding shortfall continues to be one of the projects main priorities and funding requests to the Norfolk Investment Fund (NIF) and Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPFT) will be made once details are confirmed. A proposal to hire a Fundraising Consultant is also being developed.

QEH

I have written to Wes Streeting, the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care expressing concern at the review of the New Hospital Programme and highlighting the urgent need for a rebuild of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I have raised the issues with both our MP's who I understand, will be working together to ensure delivery of a new hospital. I also spoke face to face with Tracey Bleakley CEO of NHS Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board at County Hall on 31st July. She had a meeting with Wes Streeting the next day accompanied by Alice Webster CEO of the QEH Trust. I have a meeting with Alice Webster in the diary and will seek an update on funding and timetable of a new hospital and other questions. It is likely that funding questions will be answered in the Autumn Budget planned for Wednesday 30th October 2024.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

27th June – CEO (Transformation Programme)
1st July – West Norfolk Property Ltd./Cabinet sifting
2nd July – portfolio meeting with Cllr. Anota/CEO briefing/Central Services
3rd July – visit to Mintlyn Crematorium/HAG update call
5th July – True's Yard
8th July – HR/Monitoring Officer/Railways/Riverfront-Rail To River update
9th July – College of West Anglia/portfolio meeting with Cllr. Rust
10th July – Southgates & STARS/Guildhall project briefing
11th July meet Central Services staff team and HR team/Leader briefing
12th July – Teams with MO/Planning officer re NSIP
15th July – reservoir NSIP/meet with Revs & Bens team
16th July – visit to Welcome Centre/LTPT meeting
17th July – swift boxes/bricks & bee bricks/HR/MO/Leader briefing/portfolio meeting with Cllr. Morley
18th July – TDB chair update/Carnegie Library/Cabinet briefing
22nd July – tour of Major Housing Scheme sites with Cllr. Ring
23rd July – MO/Leader briefing/Guildhall
24th July – MMPB/West Norfolk Property Ltd./Constitution working group
25th July – Aikmans Yard/New CEO/MO via Teams
26th July – James Wild MP/Cllr. Kemp/Town Deal Board
29th July – West Winch funding/Southgates Masterplan
30th July – Cabinet Away Day/Leader briefing/Cabinet
31st July – Networking lunch at County Hall/Cabinet Briefing
1st Aug – Meet Careline then CCTV teams/Southgates and STARS scheme and South Gate (site meeting with Cllr. Ring & Conservation Officer)/Meet planning and licensing team
2nd Aug – meeting with Cllr. Jones
5th Aug – meet CIC team/MO/Cllr. Moriarty/Riverfront & Rail to River
6th Aug – meet Regen and EH teams/Leader briefing/Central Services
8th Aug – briefing on planning matters
9th Aug – meeting at Customs House with Dr. Simon Thurley and Cllr. Ring
12th Aug – MMPB (Members Major Project Board)
14th Aug – Active Travel Hubs/Terry Jermy MP/Leader briefing/officer meeting re statutory and discretionary services/Cabinet briefing
15th Aug – meeting re process of Investigating & Disciplinary Committee/Cllr. Sandra Collop
19th Aug – MO/Kings Lynn Police Station
20th – True's Yard/Leader briefing/portfolio meeting with Cllr. Moriarty/Cabinet sifting
21st Aug – meet new Comms manager/Care & Repair/ICT Development Group
22nd Aug – meet Resort Services Team/ Constitution working group
23rd Aug – Unison meeting/Town Deal Board
27th Aug – Alice Webster (CEO of QEH)/Leader briefing/Southgates Masterplan

28th Aug – Major Housing/Mayor/S151/HAG/Cabinet briefing

29th Aug – Appointments Board

29th Aug – Full Council