

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

29th August 2024

COUNCILLOR – JO RUST CABINET MEMBER FOR – PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

For the period 12th August – October 17th 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters. –

Housing register

Total number applicants	Percentage	
4-Low	749	55.73
3-Medium	443	32.96
2-High	152	11.31
Total	1344	100.0

231 new or change of circumstances received

Housing Options

152 were given housing advice, of these 76 progressed into new homeless declarations and/or are ongoing investigations.

Lets

We were advised of 73 lets in September. Please see attached list of properties advertised.

Last Month - 1527 live applications

1 Emergency
198 High
504 Medium
824 Low

210 new or change in circumstances forms received - the forms were unable for a week to allow for essential maintenance by our IT provider

Housing Options

133 applicants given housing advice, 80 new homeless declarations and/or are ongoing investigations.

Lets advised – 38

I'm receiving a number of comments about the information shared with other councillors. This cabinet report is the way that I share with you all the work that I have been doing as cabinet member for People and Communities. I

keep the report as concise as I can, but there is some gap between one report and another and as such the information does build up. These reports are also available to the public so they can be informed.

Community Action Norfolk is an organisation which supports our local VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) groups to be effective and efficient in achieving their goals and aims, and also ensuring their governments is strong. I met with their CEO on the 14th August to get a better understanding of the role that they play in the west. They're an infrastructure body, providing the support for the organisations that use the volunteers. They do training, find funding sources and provide legal advice. They are all about strengthening the community base that so many of our residents rely on. They are currently undertaking a project to audit the energy efficiency of our village halls and communities centres. I've referred several organisations to them for support and would draw them to your attention for any local groups providing community services that you have which might benefit from being aware of them. Importantly, CAN help us to meet our corporate strategy and this is what we are measured on. They also work in partnership with Voluntary Norfolk to empower communities, with VN concentrating on the volunteers and CAN the infrastructure.

CAN are also providing advice and guidance about something called ABCD – Asset Based Community Development. This is the approach which is being used for a project the borough council is working collaboratively on with several different organisations including the police and Active Norfolk. This way of working emphasises the strengths, capacities and the assets of individuals, communities and institutions and uses them to build sustainable development on and enhance the community. They work on what is already there and strong and not what's wrong. There'll be more to follow about the project, but it's all a part of some exciting work our council is doing in the community to try and make things better for our residents in the ways I referred to in my August cabinet report (becoming a Marmot Town, working with Sports England & the Clear, Hold, Build initiative).

I was one of a group of people who met with South West Norfolk MP, Terry Jermy. I must say it was really refreshing to have been contacted by him to request a meeting as opposed to seeking one. He was informed and knowledgeable about the situation with both the QEH and the IDB (Internal Drainage Boards). Some of you will be aware that the IDBs formed the basis of Terry's maiden speech and his intervention helped our council secure additional funding to help with the costs we shoulder because of them that many other councils don't face.

My regular meetings with Freebridge continue and we have seen a few more voids turned over and made available. What we don't know currently is the number of internal transfers as that impacts on the availability of those we have waiting on the housing register.

Our town hosted the annual Pride celebration on Saturday August 17th and once again, while the glitter and rainbows were amazing and everyone

enjoyed themselves, there's a very serious message that runs alongside the fun. Those in the LGBTQ + community still face discrimination and isolation and it's something that causes divides in our community. Until we're all equal, none of us are. And I'd like to use this report to have it on record that our outside spaces team and Claire Thompsett provide amazing support to ensure that Pride runs smoothly. While our council doesn't fund Pride, it certainly provides benefits in kind which are invaluable. So thank you to all of the team who work so hard to help make it happen.

I was honoured to have been invited to attend the Ukrainian Independence Day event Organised by our own Oksana B on Saturday 24th August and well supported by staff from the Lily Team, who always pull out all the stops to support events which bring together our community and help provide cohesion and overcome loneliness.

I helped organise two tours of the Alive West Norfolk Facilities week commencing 26th August. They were very well received even if they weren't a large number of councillors in attendance. We all got to see the range of services on offer which I know was a surprise to some. Our AWN staff offer far more than mere leisure services and incorporate health and NHS as well as rehabilitation. They're a real asset to us and by bringing them back in house, we can maximise and strengthen their offer to our residents.

We had a full council meeting on Thursday August 29th where I faced a public question about the work our energy efficiency team is doing and whether the work that they have done so successfully in getting our residents accepted as eligible for the grants, can be shared on our website or, at least, publicly. Work is being done to do this.

I attended another regular Health and Wellbeing Board meeting followed by the Integrated Care Partnership meeting at Norfolk County Council. At these meetings we get high level presentations about the work being undertaken by Health and Wellbeing partners such as NCC. This time we saw the 2023-24 Children and Young people's Annual Report from the Norfolk Safeguarding Children partnership, which is celebrating the voice of children and young people and listening to what they have to say. Young people from Norfolk's Youth Advisory Boards, Youth Parliament and the Matthew Project took part to produce the report. It's what young people have said needs to happen to keep them safe. This link will take you to the agenda and presentations - [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/Document.ashx)

It is important to prioritise prevention through early help and to tackle inequalities in the communities. However, with millions of pounds more of cuts to come to all our councils, that work is going to be harder and harder to do. While I don't want to be cynical, I find it harder and harder to retain confidence in the effectiveness of systems which have been cut to the bone. We were next presented with the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report. These reports are a legal requirement to present. Some of us will have attended the safeguarding training put on in October so we will be aware of our responsibilities because it is down to all of us. The report does state that

we need to consider how we can improve the contributions to both safeguarding throughout our own organisation as well as to the joint work of the board. I hope that those who did attend the training feel more confident of our own role as a result.

Following that we had a Better Care Fund report. The BCF is a national programme introduced in 2013 to try to join up Health and Adult Care Services and to help people to manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently and healthily for longer. We do a lot of work at a borough level on the Health and Wellbeing Partnership to support this. Part of the BCF is the Disabled Facilities Grant which can be applied for to undertake adaptations in houses.

Please use the link contained within the report to read more fully all the presentations that we received, there are over 200 pages! Some bedtime reading perhaps.

On 10th September I visited True's yard and heard all about the work that they do in our community and how they received approximately 4000 people between October 2023 and the end of March who needed to stay warm. True's Yard is used as a warm space for which our council contributes funding. They also ran a breakfast club to help local families. They provide a wonderful variety of different types of entertainment for children of all ages during the holidays including Slime and Bubbles, Vikings and Victorians and the Victorian Fair Ground. They welcome approximately 13000 visitors during the year and are gradually increasing numbers to pre covid levels. While there is a small charge, free open days are also on offer. It's well worth a visit and not just for a piece of cake.

I met with a young entrepreneur on September 11th who is proposing to set up an organisation for black and brown women who currently feel that they have no community which understands their needs. I am pleased to be able to provide some signposting for support to CAN.

Later that day I had a meeting with Relate about the services that they provide for some of our residents through a Service Level Agreement with us. These SLAs that fall under my portfolio are currently being reviewed to ensure that they do meet our corporate objectives in the way we expect them to. Our relate service was previously provided by an affiliated branch - Norfolk and Suffolk relate. It then merged with national relate and underwent a restructure. Now most of the services delivered in the West are provided online. Relate have a number of services which they're piloting which could be available in our area at an extra cost.

That evening I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the award evening of Open Road. There were a number of guests in attendance as well as all those being presented with awards and certificates in front of their families and friends. The education and training provided by Open Road means that young people who would have been at risk of falling through the education/training net, have been able to achieve and gain recognition which

they can use to gain employment or go on to further education. It was very uplifting.

I met on Thursday 12th with Krystal of the Sisterhood Village. This group had received some funding from the Health and Wellbeing Partnership and I was keen to hear how just a 5 months on, they'd been able to reach 30-35 families with the baby and toddler group, were holding successful book clubs at no outgoing cost and have had a keyring produced which would allow women to reach out to others if they needed. The group have period packs that they are donating and there are plans to start a coffee morning twice a week. They plan to survey their clients at the end of 6 months to see if they're meeting expectations.

I attended an online session on Healthy Homes in the East of England where we looked at smoking cessation, particularly in social housing. Retrofitting energy efficiency measures and data sharing, which we do with the ICB. There were also discussions on how the built environment and regeneration can support good health. As you can hear throughout my reports, our health prior to needing acute or primary health care, is a real focus of work. More and more of it is being seen as work to be done by our local councils – us!

I attended the first food for thought of this 12 week session which are being held at the London Road Methodist Church halls. I persuaded my mum to attend this week (15/10) and she was really pleased that she did, not least because she heard from our very own waste and recycling manager Barry B. he was there with his team talking about recycling, reducing our waste first and foremost, but then reusing or recycling it. Some of you might have read the BBC report also out today which stated energy for waste incinerators and burning our rubbish is as bad for the environment as using energy from coal. If there is a recycling session near you, do attend. But do attend the Food for Thought sessions which will be running from 9.30 until 11.30 until December 3rd.

I met with some of the exec team of the QEH to chat about restructures and changes that were taking place which were causing staff concern.

I also visited some new temporary accommodation we've purchased to enable us to better accommodate our families. They are lovely houses and I can only imagine how happy families will be to be placed there, possibly after having lived in some really unsuitable properties. Our temporary accommodation situation is not as bad as some areas, but we have high aims for all our local families and decent and secure tenancies is one of them.

We also welcomed our new CEO, Kate on the 17th.

I chaired our regular Health and Wellbeing Partnership meeting on 19th September where we welcomed Kelly who is our new partnership coordinator. She's already made a big difference to the group and she comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience which our area and our residents will benefit from. Kelly has put together an Ebulletin which shares all our partner information. It contains a lot of really useful information which you might want

to share with your parish councils. Please let me know if you'd like me to forward it on to you.

I attended some online training around LGA finance. It was quite useful and is one of a wide variety of training programmes available to us all free of charge.

We had a three month follow up of our 2 day place expansion training on Tuesday 24th September

I visited Lavendar View in Hunstanton on September 25th. The plans for this started a very long time ago and it was only because officers of our council ensured that this site was allocated over and above the housing numbers needed that it was able to come to fruition. Officers also worked to ensure that those properties won't be able to be snatched up and used for second homes by placing conditions on the properties thus ensuring that we will be able to enjoy affordable housing alongside affordable supported living for those with care needs. It really will be a development that will benefit local residents.

I attended a smoking a social housing session on 26th September. This is an issue which I have written about previously and I'm sure that you'll hear about from me again. Suffice to say it appears plans are developing on how we can support our residents to either cut back or to give up entirely. Stopping smoking saves residents a lot of money as well as helping improve their health and we have a slightly higher prevalence of smoking in Norfolk, with smoking in social housing being considerably higher at 35%. I've written before that we want to cut out rate down in the west from 21,300 to 14,200. A big ask, but one which would have a significant positive impact.

I attended the National Police Memorial Day at the Minster on Sunday 29th September which recognises those officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. It was very poignant.

On Monday 30th September I and other councillors took part in the safeguarding training I referred to earlier in my report. The training was very interesting, useful and informative and at the end of it we gained a certificate from St Thomas Training.

I also attended a three day session (2.5 hours a session) training course on Fuel Debt Advice in the Community. It will enable me to signpost, support and advice residents who are in fuel debt or poverty. It was held by National Energy Action and we were taken through reasons why residents might be in fuel debt and the responsibilities of fuel providers. On Friday I took the 2 hour exam and I will hear within 4 weeks whether I have passed the exam and gained a City and Guilds Level 2 accreditation. In order to do so one must achieve an 80% pass rate.

On Friday 4th October I attended the Integrated Care System District meeting which was online and didn't require a drive to Norwich! We heard more about the Health Inequalities Framework and the pillars that sit underneath it and

the living and working conditions pillar, with questions posed about economic development and our role as employers. I suggested that we would also benefit from having a trade union input. We also heard about the proactive interventions being taken to support our older and more vulnerable residents which will keep them living healthily, independently and safely in their own homes for longer. And we finally talked about the Health and Wellbeing Partnership event which I will be attending in Norwich tomorrow.

I attended an online event on Monday 7th October about promoting children's oral health and the government's commitment to rolling out a programme of supervised toothbrushing programmes in the most deprived areas and the role of the LA in this. The LA will roll out supervised toothbrushing programmes while schools and nurseries will run supervised toothbrushing clubs. It will reduce health inequalities and has been proven to work. You can read more at www.supervisedtoothbrushing.com

Like others I've had to attend budget review meetings where we ensure that we're doing the best for our residents in the way we use our budgets.

I attended a meeting to discuss the potential for a youth forum.

I attended an event hosted for the police force around the ABCD I referred to earlier in this report. It was a really uplifting meeting providing hopes for doing things differently going forward.

Groundworks gallery hosted a launch of a display called Ground up on Friday 11th October which was amazing. The art on display was thought provoking and interesting.

On Monday 14th October I visited Downham Market to hear of the work which had been undertaken there to try to establish a dementia friendly town and how, once it's revived and relaunched, we might be able to create then same here. This is all work which will be of benefit to our residents.

On Wednesday 16th October I attended the Kings Centre in Norwich for the ICS conference. We needed to look and consider how far we had progressed since the conference last year. From my personal perspective I could see that in the West we had made significant progress on what was needed to do – work on a preventative strategy. The ICB's job is to develop and deliver new models of care and there is progress on that which can be seen with the new Health Hub which will negate the need to use the QEH. More work needs to be done but there's progress. Our area is ahead of the game in the preventative work and that was seen by many of our partners present today. There were videos with the lived experienced of our Norfolk residents which included the Youth Advisory Boards. They had surveyed 11,736 young people to find out what was important to them. As a result of their survey they have put out tenders for contracts to provide the services that the youth commissioners said they wanted. Locally our YAB hasn't received many bids for the contracts and so is extending the deadline. We all discussed what the priorities should be and we also accepted our limitations and barriers as well as the opportunities. It was quite inspiring and I'm happy to share my notes if

anyone would like to see more.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

White Ribbon Meeting – 17th Oct
QEH Visit 18th Oct
Equality Impact Assessment Training – 22nd Oct
Freebridge meeting 23rd Oct
Emergency providers afternoon tea 23rd Oct
Cares Voice 24th Oct
Downham Market Foodbank 25th Oct
Beat the Bills Downham Market 25th Oct
All Saints Church Service 27th Oct
Norwich YAB meeting with the Exec Director of Play England 29th Oct
MAP meeting 30th Oct
Light up the Corn Exchange for national Carers week 30th Oct
Health and Wellbeing Partnership 31st Oct
Full Council 31st Oct

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

CAN
Terry Jermy MP
VJ Day Commemoration
Ukrainian Independence day
Tour of LynnSport and AWN
KLAC
Portfolio Briefing – Housing
Planning Committee
Equality Training
Trues Yard
Classical Music Rocks
Open Road Award Ceremony
LGA Finance Training
Lavendar View turf cutting
Smoking and social housing
National Police memorial Day
Fuel Debt Advice in the Community
Safeguarding Training
Cost of living meeting
Audit Committee
Dementia Friendly Town – Downham Market
Wellbeing Day Discovery Centre
Portfolio briefings – Health and Wellbeing
Portfolio Briefings – CIC
Full Council
Health and wellbeing partnership meetings (monthly)
West Norfolk Community Transport
E&C

Freebridge briefing
Joint Group Meetings
Cabinet/special cabinet/cabinet sifting/Cabinet Briefings
IDB meetings
Food for Thought
King's Lynn Community Football AGM
Homelessness and housing delivery briefing
Staff survey feedback
ICS at NCC
Guildhall Briefing
Bus and public transport meeting
SLA meetings with relate and West Norfolk Befrienders
QEH
Carers Voice