

Cabinet Members Report to Council

28th November 2024

Councillor Simon Ring – Deputy Leader and cabinet member for Business and Culture

In order to condense the contents of this report to readable levels I have used AI in its creation.

Leisure

Funding and Subsidy Reductions

- **Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF):**
- Secured £10k for LED lighting at Downham Leisure, bringing total SPSF funding to £98k.
- Funding for Oasis and St James projects allowed reallocation of capital programme funds.

Health Inequalities Initiatives

- **Aqua Ease Programme:**
- £2k HALG grant secured for a pilot at St James targeting individuals with body dysmorphia or aquaphobia.
- Plans to expand to other pools, with internal champion support.
- **New Offerings:**
- Aqua Circuits launched at Oasis Hunstanton for mobility-impaired customers.

Membership Growth

- 2,160 memberships sold, up 314 from last year.
- Direct debit income increased by 14.3% against target, with notable growth at Downham Market and Oasis.

Events and Community Engagement

- **Key Events:**
- *Halloween Hell Jam* (26 Oct): 50 skateboarders, 30 spectators.
- *Play Loud* (2 Nov): 70 attendees.
- Learn-to-Swim gala at St James with 70+ participants, 10 progressing to the academy.
- Taekwondo training camp and grading at Downham Market.
- Hunstanton Bowls Club Presidents Weekend with 50 participants.

Health Partnerships

- Delivered 300 hours of Cancer Wellness Support at QEH in 2024.
- 437 Falls Prevention sessions across 8 venues, with 500+ attendances.
- 309 wellness referrals from the Active Now project, addressing health inequalities.

Environmental Initiatives

- Exploring LED floodlight upgrades for tennis and multi-use pitches.

- eEnergy project investigating solar energy options for leisure venues.

Staff Development and Training

- 3 internal Swim Teacher qualifications delivered, including apprentices and lifeguards.
- External training courses (e.g., First Aid, Lifeguard) offered to the public, boosting income.
- National Pool Lifeguard course hosted at Oasis in October, including internal and external participants.

This report highlights effective funding use, community health initiatives, membership growth, and environmental and staff development progress.

Corn Exchange Report

Financial Performance

- Current revenue is £50K above target.
- Pantomime ticket sales are 1,400 seats ahead of previous years, generating an additional £20K.
- Benchmarking:
 - Ticket sales are 2% higher than peer venues and 23% above pre-COVID levels.
 - Ticket prices are 22% higher than pre-COVID.

Venue Highlights

1. Corn Exchange

- Sales for September shows improved after a slow start.
- The cast for the pantomime arrives on 29th November for 10 days of rehearsals. Press/VIP night invitations have been sent.

2. Cinema

- After a slow start to the year, performance has improved due to popular releases.
- Paddington screenings last weekend sold out, as did *The Polar Express*.
- December features a range of Christmas films and major releases such as *Gladiator 2* and *Wicked*.

3. Town Hall

- 44 weddings are booked for 2024, matching pre-COVID levels.
- Only 25 bookings confirmed for 2025; new marketing materials (brochure and video) have been developed and are being promoted in the cinema.

Community and Events

• Community Support:

- Supported the King's Lynn Players' 80th Anniversary production of *The Sound of Music* at the Corn Exchange, providing significant technical assistance.
- Saturday matinee is expected to sell out.

• Events:

- Booked Jools Holland for the KL Festival. The Corn Exchange will split profits with the festival. Tickets are priced at £78.
- Technical team supported Guildhall activities, Lynnsport's Glow Ride, and will assist with Lynnsport's gymnastics event on 23rd November.

Capital Projects

- Planning to replace auditorium lighting with LEDs, which will make the Corn Exchange fully LED. A £30K budget is allocated for this upgrade.

Staffing

- One staff member has begun a year-long Level 5 Management programme.

Summary

The Corn Exchange is performing strongly with ticket sales exceeding targets, successful community events, and an exciting lineup for the festive season. Strategic improvements in marketing and infrastructure are in progress to sustain long-term growth and community engagement.

3G Pitch Development Update

Background

The *King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Football Facilities Plan (2020)* highlighted the need for additional 3G pitches, identifying Lynnsport as a priority site due to local demand. Norfolk FA and the Football Foundation have supported the Borough Council in pursuing funding and development for a second 3G pitch in King's Lynn.

Progress to Date

1. Cabinet Approval and Funding:

- Cabinet approved the project in November 2021.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding was secured in January 2022.

2. Planning Applications:

• First Application (April 2023):

- Proposed location met with objections regarding noise, light pollution, biodiversity impact, and access issues.
- Application was withdrawn to explore alternative locations within Lynnsport.

• Second Application (April 2024):

- New location adjacent to the existing 3G pitch was proposed.
- Objections persisted, including concerns about a bridle path and access issues raised by Norfolk Highways.
- Fields in Trust confirmed formal permission was unnecessary, but administrative commitments to protect the field led to withdrawal of the application.

Current Position

The second planning application has been withdrawn.

Next Steps

- Norfolk FA, the Football Foundation, and the Borough Council are identifying alternative sites in King's Lynn and surrounding areas.
- The *Local Football Facility Plan* is being updated, with a revised version expected in early 2025.
- A feasibility study, supported by an external consultancy, will assess potential sites based on updated criteria.
- A "call for sites" will invite local organizations to propose locations for the pitch.

Funding

Football Foundation funding remains allocated for the development of a 3G pitch in King's Lynn, previously earmarked for Lynnsport.

Summary:

Efforts to establish a second 3G pitch in King's Lynn have faced setbacks due to local objections and site challenges. However, stakeholders are committed to identifying a suitable location, with updated plans and feasibility studies underway to ensure the project progresses.

I have also had meetings with various active leisure interest groups who are keen to re-invigorate the Rec at Hunstanton into an active sporting arena and to encourage residents of all ages to get involved.

Tourism and Marketing

East Anglia LVEP

The West Norfolk Tourism department, as a partner of Visit East of England, is thrilled with Lonely Planet's recognition of East Anglia as a top 2025 destination in its prestigious *Best in Travel* list. The region, the only English entry, includes mentions of West Norfolk highlights such as Brancaster Staithe, Sandringham Estate, RSPB Snettisham, and the Norfolk Coast Path.

Partnership Initiatives

• Hanse League Projects:

- Active in King's Lynn Hanseatic Club and the 2025 Hanse Festival Committee, planning a 2-day event in June 2025.
- Supporting HANSA20, a monthly series of events celebrating King's Lynn's 20th anniversary as a Modern Hanse League member.
- Participated in Boston Hanse Association's AGM, sharing insights on leveraging Hanseatic heritage for community and visitor engagement.
- Backing the King's Lynn Hanse Artworks project, funded by SPF.

• West Norfolk VENI Steering Group:

- Delivered a presentation on local tourism in October.
- Collaborated on Q&A video content featuring students and jobseekers for the upcoming West Norfolk Tourism Ambassadors E-Learning Course.

Marketing and Promotions

• Print Advertising:

- Created paid half-page adverts for Hunstanton, King's Lynn, and Downham Market in the *Coach Touring Directory 2025*, targeting group tour operators.
- Launched the *Norfolk Coast Myths & Legends* booklet at the "Fear in the Fens" festival in October. Public distribution and events are planned for 2025, promoting year-round tourism through storytelling and folklore.

• Online Content:

- Produced over 24 GB of high-quality promotional footage showcasing West Norfolk's coast, fenlands, and rural businesses. Content focuses on engaging formats for platforms like Instagram and TikTok, with special emphasis on Christmas promotions.

Culture and Heritage

Cultural and Heritage Strategy Progress Report

Overview

The Borough Council, in partnership with Arts Council England, is developing a ten-year Culture & Heritage Strategy for King's Lynn. This initiative aims to unite creative partners, residents, and businesses to establish a shared vision for the town's cultural growth. The strategy will align activities, attract investment, and strengthen the creative sector to benefit the entire community.

Progress to Date

• **Engagement Activities:**

- Conducted one-on-one interviews with stakeholders.
- Held initial workshops in July 2024 to gather feedback on cultural and heritage opportunities.
- Organized surveys through the Town Board to understand residents' aspirations.
- Follow-up workshops in September 2024 to refine priorities and gather additional insights.

• **Emerging Strengths:**

- King's Lynn boasts a rich cultural heritage, engaged communities, and business support for cultural activities.
- Significant investment is anticipated in cultural infrastructure over the next 3–4 years.
- Growing population offers opportunities to expand cultural capacity.
- The *West Norfolk Economic Strategy* highlights the potential for cultural industry growth.

• **Identified Challenges:**

- Lack of coordination among cultural organizations.
- Perception that cultural leadership is elitist, limiting inclusivity.
- Threats from health inequalities, deprivation, and funding uncertainties.
- Outward migration of young talent due to limited opportunities in the town.

Key Themes

Four priority themes have been identified:

1. **Young People as Makers, Creators, and Producers**

- Inspire and equip young people to explore and develop their creative potential.

2. **Animating King's Lynn's Heritage**

- Transform heritage into dynamic, interactive experiences accessible to all.

3. **Inclusivity and Diverse Voices in Heritage and Culture**

- Create an inclusive cultural scene that celebrates contributions from all communities.

4. **Collaborative Working for Resilience**

- Foster partnerships for a resilient cultural sector with financial stability and shared impact.

Proposed Delivery Approach

• **Formation of a Culture Steering Group:**

- A group of 10 members from the local community and cultural sector will oversee strategy implementation.

- Task Groups will be established to deliver specific projects and secure funding.
- The Steering Group will be supported by, but not led by, the Borough Council.

Next Steps

- Continue gathering public feedback through a short questionnaire.
- Finalize the strategy with input from residents, businesses, and stakeholders.

Summary:

Significant progress has been made in shaping King's Lynn's Culture & Heritage Strategy through community engagement and consultation. Key priorities focus on inclusivity, youth engagement, collaboration, and heritage animation. The next steps involve forming a steering group and finalizing the strategy to position King's Lynn as a cultural leader in the region.

We are interested to hear from residents, businesses, stakeholders and interested people with a short questionnaire to invite comments and help us further develop the Culture and Heritage Strategy which is right for the people and place of King's Lynn.

The survey is running until 25 Nov and this is the link [Culture | Culture | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk](#)

Guildhall Cultural Highlights and Progress

Recent Successes

1. Dragon Festival

- A resounding success with the addition of a town-wide trail in partnership with the BID, enhancing community engagement.

2. Lay of the Land Exhibition

- Attracted over 1,400 visitors, with significant engagement from multiple primary schools during the exhibition.

3. West Norfolk Academy Trust Art Exhibition

- Opened in both galleries, showcasing the talent of our young people and reinforcing ties with the local education community.

4. Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust Collaboration

- St Martha's Primary School performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as part of the prestigious Children's Folio Project, placing the Guildhall among just four national locations involved (Stratford, Preston, Alnwick Castle, and King's Lynn).

5. KLODS Presentation

- *Dracula: The Musical* delighted audiences, contributing to the vibrant cultural offerings at the Guildhall.

6. CYP Move/Shake Project

- Culminated with a presentation at the Guildhall, empowering young people as future producers and leaders in the arts.

Impact Metrics

- **Footfall:** Year-to-date footfall represents over 15% of the Borough's population.
- **Media Reach:** Guildhall content has reached an impressive 427 million people year-to-date.

Upcoming Events

- **Christmas at the Guildhall (8th December):** Featuring family-friendly activities and miniature donkeys, promising festive cheer and strong community attendance.

Strategic Developments

- **Cultural and Heritage Strategy:** Progress continues with further workshops and stakeholder meetings to shape the long-term vision for cultural and heritage initiatives in the Borough.

Conclusion

The Guildhall continues to deliver high-impact cultural programming and engagement, contributing significantly to the Borough's cultural landscape and community well-being. These successes highlight the importance of continued investment in the arts and heritage sectors.

Business Report

Property Developments and Lettings

1. Acceptance of New Buildings

- The office and industrial buildings on Peterborough Road were officially accepted from the developer on 11th November 2024.

2. New Lettings

• Unit 1 (Suites A to D):

- A lease agreement has been finalized and is set to be completed today.
- The incoming tenant, a local firm from King's Lynn, plans to expand its research and development facilities. This letting occupies half of the council-developed office floorspace.

• Unit 3 (Suites C and D):

- Terms have been agreed with another local firm, pending completion of a planning condition for new air handling units.

• Occupancy Update:

- Once these leases are completed, 75% of the newly developed office space will be occupied.

3. Industrial Units

- A marketing campaign is underway to secure tenants for the light industrial units (Unit 5 and Unit 7) on Peterborough Road.

Love Your Town Program – Year 2

1. Grant Distribution

- Ten grants, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in partnership with Norfolk County Council, have been awarded to projects enhancing footfall in Downham Market, Hunstanton, and King's Lynn.
- Each project received up to £2,000.

2. Funded Projects

Project Recipient Town

Heritage Open Day Discover Downham Downham Market
Silent Disco Town Tour R+D The Garage Trust King's Lynn

Go Go Sunny Hunny Break Charity Hunstanton
Restoration of Sun Dial Dial House Cafe Downham Market
Teddy Bears Picnic Downham Market TC Downham Market
Evening with Colin Bell Downham Market TC Downham Market
Gingerbread Trail Mabel Bakery Downham Market
Hanse Street Artwork Celebration Real Nice Signs King's Lynn
Two further grants offered but not yet confirmed

Future of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

- The UK Government has confirmed an extension of UKSPF funding for a transition year in 2025-26.
- Awaiting updates to the UKSPF prospectus and funding allocations from MHCLG.
- Investment priorities for 2025-26 will be reviewed and aligned with forthcoming guidance.

Summary

Significant progress has been made in property lettings on Peterborough Road, with 75% of the new office space nearly fully occupied. Meanwhile, Love Your Town grants have supported vibrant local projects, and future plans for UKSPF funding are being reviewed to ensure sustained community and economic benefits.

Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

I have had numerous meetings with officers and outside bodies

Officers

Kate Blakemore
Michelle Drewery
Tina Underwood
Oliver Judges
Duncan Hall
Martin Chisholm
Jemma Curtis
Tim Fitzhigham
Honor Howell
James Grant
James Arrandale
Alexa Baker
Tommy Goode
Lynne Fawkes

Outside bodies

Civic Society
Hunstanton Action Group

Conservancy Board
Town Deal Board
BID
The Garage
Museum Services
Hunstanton Town Council

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.