

## **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**31<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

**COUNCILLOR ...SIMON RING - CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS**

For the period mid-June to 23<sup>rd</sup> July

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

**AWN**

#### **1. Introduction**

This report provides a detailed update on recent and forthcoming developments relating to leisure, sport, and community engagement within the borough. It consolidates activity from Alive West Norfolk, the Playing Pitch Strategy (June 2025), and major events contributing to cultural, social, and economic objectives.

#### **2. Corn Exchange and Cultural Programme**

Corn Exchange Cinema experienced a +19.8% rise in admissions in June 2025, its best June since 2022. This aligns with national growth in cinema attendance. Contributing titles included the live-action versions of 'How to Train Your Dragon' and 'Lilo & Stitch', as well as the 'F1 Movie'.

Community-focused events such as Silver Screenings, Toddler Tuesdays, and Rotary Club screenings remain highly popular. Each includes complimentary refreshments and serves family and senior audiences.

The theatre hosted five awards events in June, including the COWA Student Awards and football club evenings. July will feature sold-out King's Lynn Festival events, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Jools Holland.

#### **3. Major Sporting Events and Participation**

The Hunstanton Open Bowls Tournament in July welcomed 150 competitors from across the UK. This aligns with our objectives to support sports tourism and reinforce Hunstanton's role as a destination for national events.

#### **4. Sports Facilities Strategy – 2040 Vision**

The West Norfolk Playing Pitch Strategy (June 2025) outlines facility requirements based on housing and population growth. Projected demand by

2040 includes:

- A new 25m, 6-lane swimming pool
- Refurbishment or replacement of St James' and Oasis Pools
- A new 4-court sports hall in the northern borough
- A new 159-station gym (public or private sector delivery)
- Expansion of gymnastics facilities
- Feasibility for indoor tennis and netball-specific courts
- Rationalisation of indoor bowls
- New 3G football pitches, non-turf cricket wickets, and Padel courts

## **5. Facility Development and Partnerships**

a. King's Lynn Town FC Partnership:

- First Team and U23 squads return to Lynnsport for training
- Alive Community to lead on outreach and development
- Alive branding to appear on kits and sponsor materials

b. Padel Court Development:

- EOI issued for Hunstanton with private operator delivery
- Council-led development planned for Lynnsport site

c. Digital Leisure Transformation:

- A new leisure website is in final stages of testing
- Broader digital enhancements planned for booking and access systems

## **6. Community Engagement and Health Inclusion**

- Gymnastics enrolment remains above 1,000 with rising income
- Alive's Active Families Programme received national recognition under Sport England's Patchwork scheme
- Play Street pop-up events have launched in North Lynn and South Lynn, repurposing roads for community use
- Alive is supporting Marmot Group work in Hunstanton and Downham, aligned with public health objectives

## **7. Conclusion**

Alive West Norfolk and strategic partners continue to deliver strong outcomes in participation, infrastructure planning, and community impact. The Council is well-positioned to meet future needs with a clear, evidence-based strategy and effective delivery partnerships.

## **7. Commercial Performance and Membership Growth**

Alive West Norfolk has continued to deliver exceptional commercial performance in membership-based income. Following a £100,000 uplift in Direct Debit (DD) income against budget last year, current year-to-date figures show we are exceeding monthly membership DD targets once again.

Over the past 2–3 years, the membership DD revenue line has increased by approximately £500,000. This success has been fuelled by new facility openings and by capitalising on shifts in the local market, including a major competitor doubling the size of their facility.

Our strategic focus has been on price optimisation—maintaining a strong membership yield and resisting the pull toward budget pricing models. Additionally, there has been a significant internal culture shift: 65% of total membership sales are now delivered by the wider operational team outside of dedicated sales roles. This pivot has reinforced a commercial mindset across the organisation and supports long-term sustainability and reinvestment in services.

### **Business and Property Services**

- Rural Business Connect events in Downham Market and Hunstanton were well attended by local businesses. New applicants have come forward for the West Norfolk Rural Business Grant from these events. The event details were widely communicated, and businesses attended that have not previously engaged with council business events.
- The West Norfolk Rural Business Grant scheme continues. One business has already been awarded a grant, many others are in the pipeline with their applications.
- Organising visits for National Manufacturing day (25<sup>th</sup> September) which includes tours and a careers talk with four key businesses in King's Lynn involved. Students will be attending from colleges in West Norfolk and the UEA.
- A Meet the Buyer event is being planned for October.

I have had a number of meetings with local businesses who are keen to be involved in planning for the masterplans for both Kings Lynn and Hunstanton.

### **Overview and Progress**

Significant progress was made in weeks 13 and 14 across key workstreams, notably within outsourcing, disposals, and preparatory activity for the capital receipts programme.

We are pleased to announce that David Gent has joined the team as Interim Disposals Surveyor. David brings a wealth of experience, including previous roles managing property disposals for rail and local authority portfolios, and more recently advising councils in the Southeast and an NHS Trust. He will focus on managing the full lifecycle of property disposals to support our capital receipts targets and optimise the property portfolio.

### **Key Activities**

- Held strategic engagement with stakeholders at a local innovation hub to develop property-related initiatives.
- Submitted delegated authority documentation for a key leisure site project, currently awaiting financial approval.
- Engaged with potential and existing landowners at prominent sites to

progress strategic property interests.

- Completed procurement documentation to appoint agents for the disposal and letting of 17 vacant properties and a business park site.
  - Initiated a new project to extend car park facilities at a social club site.
  - Mobilised external surveyors to progress overdue rent reviews and lease renewals, with a
  - forecast increase of £200,000+ in rental income.
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### ***Tourism Department Update***

Reporting Period: 16 June – 22 July 2025

#### **1. Partnership Working**

The Tourism Department's HANSA20 umbrella programme continues to deliver Hanseatic and maritime-themed cultural activity for 2025. Following a successful call for artists in May, a digital projection project is now underway. The commissioned artist organisation visited King's Lynn in late June and was given a guided tour by the Senior Tourism Officer, including a historical overview and visits to all three existing projection sites.

The department continues to support the artist team as they develop community engagement workshops across the summer.

In addition, with the Senior Tourism Officer now appointed as the Hanse Commissioner for England, active contact has resumed with other English Hanse towns. A series of one-to-one exchange visits are scheduled to foster future collaborative cultural projects, both within England and across the wider Northern European Hanseatic network.

The department is also supporting preparations for the Downham Market Heritage Open Day in September. Production of the King's Lynn Heritage Open Day booklet is nearing completion and will soon move into the print stage ahead of the September launch.

#### **2. Other Projects**

Following its soft launch in June 2025, the department is actively promoting the new West Norfolk Tourism Ambassadors Course (available at [tourismcourse.co.uk](https://tourismcourse.co.uk)). Targeting local young people aged 16–24, the campaign includes:

- A radio advert campaign (early June to late July)
- A two-page advertorial in the July–August edition of KL Magazine (also targeting parents, older volunteers, and retirees)

- Planned video content and social media promotions scheduled for late July through August, timed to reach school leavers seeking seasonal work in tourism and hospitality

The course also includes a tailored version for adults aged 24+, supporting a broader pool of local tourism ambassadors.

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### **3. Autumn Programming**

The department has arranged a series of events in Hunstanton, King's Lynn, and Wells-next-the-Sea to support the autumn launch of the new Norfolk Coast: Myths & Legends booklet. This campaign promotes distinctive, out-of-season visitor experiences along the West and North Norfolk coast, aiming to extend the tourism season and support local businesses beyond the summer peak.