

## **MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**2nd October 2025**

### **COUNCILLOR RING – BUSINESS, PROPERTY AND LEISURE**

For the period July to September

#### Executive Summary

Despite the summer holiday period, activity across Business & Leisure has been intense. Full Council approved the Guildhall Complex Project (17 July), we mobilised the King's Lynn Masterplan, accelerated commercial portfolio management and income recovery, and delivered strong performance across leisure, culture and community programmes.

#### 1) Strategic Decisions & Place Leadership

##### **Guildhall Complex Project – Approval (17 July):**

A transformative vote for the borough's cultural and visitor economy. The decision signals that West Norfolk is confident, open for business, and committed to being a place to live, work and play.

##### **King's Lynn Masterplan – Commission Mobilised:**

BDP (lead) with Urban Flow, Aspinall Verdi and Mikhail Riches appointed to shape a 20-year spatial and economic vision. Focus areas include: former Debenhams; St James Swimming Pool; Common Staithe Quay; Church Street car park; Port & Timber Yard; West Lynn (former Del Monte/dredging). The masterplan will integrate developed proposals at the Former Post Office site, Southgates and Baxter's Plain and set priority projects for phased riverfront regeneration (Devil's Alley to Southgates). Public consultation: December–January, with councillor and stakeholder sessions throughout development.

#### 2) Business Engagement & Growth

##### **National Manufacturing Day – 25 September 2025:**

First borough-wide collaboration with major manufacturers. Doors opened for BOOST participants and students (schools, College of West Anglia, UEA) to showcase high-value career pathways in our most productive sector.

##### **King's Lynn Enterprise Park – Market Activation:**

Brown & Co appointed as agent. Early enquiries are encouraging, notably from manufacturing and engineering—aligning with sector strengths.

#### 3) Programmes & Funds

##### **Plan for Neighbourhoods – Engagement Wave (July–September):**

Two Community Conferences (South Lynn Community Centre, North Lynn Discovery Centre) plus a September follow-up built consensus for the King's Lynn Regeneration Plan. Themes: local priorities, engagement methods, and capacity building (with Community Action Norfolk). A draft Regeneration Plan is progressing to the Neighbourhood Board & Cabinet (Oct–Nov) ahead of submission by end-November 2025.

**UKSPF/REPF – Rural Community Capital Grants:**

Panel in August considered 22 EOIs; 12 invited to full application; 10 submitted; 8 awards totalling £177,645. Examples: Grimston CC astro practice area; Downham Market Memorial Play Area; Solar PV at Brancaster Almshouses. Ineligible bids were signposted to alternative funds.

**Rural Business Capital Grant Scheme – Open:**

Grants £10k–£100k (up to 50% eligible capital), for projects completing by end-Dec 2025. Enquiries via New Anglia Growth Hub; promotion continues through our networks.

**Rural Business Connect & KLIC & Connect:**

Events delivered in Hunstanton, Downham Market and KLIC (17 Sept), with support from New Anglia Growth Hub, Chambers, FSB, DBT, VENI, and BCKLWN services. Focus: productivity, diversification, skills, apprenticeships and access to finance.

**Volunteer It Yourself (VIY) – Two Projects Completed:**

South Lynn Community Centre: accessible planters, inclusive kitchen upgrades, storage and decorations; Gaywood Community Centre: internal refresh and outdoor furniture. Both enhance community utility and inclusivity.

**BOOST – Skills & Employability:**

Courses delivered in bike maintenance; beauty; intro to office roles; work-readiness bite-size; retail masterclass—expanding pathways for young people.

4) Commercial Property & Asset Management

We have accelerated a comprehensive review of the commercial portfolio—valuations, lease renewals and income recovery—after inherited gaps in policy and data.

**Portfolio Stabilisation:**

Outsourced lease renewals to Brown & Co to unlock capacity. Interim resource deployed to complete the 'tidy-up' exercise. Early indicators are positive for income and clarity on asset values; further update to follow.

**Policy Framework:**

Asset Management Plan and Purchase/Disposal Policy under preparation (to Council in the new year). Framework balances commercial tests (yield, value, covenant) with social and wider economic value. Given long-term borrowing,

assets must deliver a return benchmarked to financing costs while recognising social outcomes.

### **Heacham Beach Huts – Decision Pathway:**

Work continues to establish net income and capital value for informed decisions on future ownership. Following strong tenant feedback, we paused the auction approach; lease extensions or 12-month licences will be offered, with improved terms and clarified use (subject to EA/planning). This will align with the forthcoming policy framework.

## **5) Leisure Services – Performance & Innovation**

### **Kaset – Turnaround & Social Value:**

Year-to-date income +36% versus budget, driven by events and alternative hires. Attendance rising (e.g., April 2022: 325 vs April 2025: 693). Programme pivots: discounted drop-ins; holiday coaching; Revamp clothes-recycling workshops (CREA); Play Up Music (CREA); robotics/programming; skate jams; and Yellow Tape Promotions' indoor/outdoor gig (charity proceeds c. £1.2–£1.4k). Parent feedback highlights community impact and youth engagement. Next: lean review to optimise staffing and net position; explore partnership with Push with Purpose CIC; assess temporary relocation of climbing during Lynnsport works.

### **Membership & Recognition:**

Membership yield and DD income at record levels despite market competition. Alive shortlisted as UK Active Regional Public Centre of the Year (finals end-Oct); only insourced council-run operator on the East & Midlands shortlist.

### **Swim Safe – Coastal Water Safety:**

Delivered with Alive Oasis, Rotary, RNLI and Swim England. Free programme expanded; excellent parental feedback. Aim: extend across neighbouring authorities to improve safety along the Norfolk coast.

## **6) Culture & Venues**

### **Cinema:**

Strong national slate lifted admissions; September features awards-season titles (incl. Downton Abbey finale). Silver/Autism/Dementia screenings sustained; Toddler Tuesdays resume with linked swim offer; Birthday Parties exceed target; Cinema Live (André Rieu) ran 8 screenings (normally 4). Festivals: 'Fear in the Fens' (25 Oct) sold out; community film festival (21–23 Nov) with COWA and local filmmakers.

### **Theatre – Corn Exchange:**

Ticket sales +66% in Jul–Aug versus pre-Covid comparator; on national benchmark. Headline events: sold-out Jools Holland (record £78 top price); sold-out comedy (Jack Dee, Josh Widdicombe, Jimmy Carr, Kevin Wilson). Pantomime pre-sales at record levels; VIP night Sun 14 Dec, 5.30pm.

### **Town Hall & Stories of Lynn:**

Busy summer weddings calendar (smaller ceremonies dominant). Town Hall bookings healthy; testing Christmas party-night concepts to gauge wider demand.

#### 7) Community Sport & Inclusion

Summer programme: 15,087 attendances; HAF funded 1,603 clubs; BCKLWN subsidised 1,845 clubs and 11,524 'Holiday of Play' activities—supporting 3,131 free meals for children. HAF confirmed for three more years.

Ride United launched adapted cycling at Lynnsport with volunteers; complements 'Ability Counts' (multi-sport, football, wheelchair rugby). Padel: EOI open in Hunstanton; King's Lynn to advance to cost certainty with new LTA funding window.

Play Street toured North & South Lynn—subject to funding, proposed expansion in 2026. Hunstanton Summer Events delivered on beach/green (weather-affected single day).

Town Centre 'Business Sports Day' with Discover King's Lynn—business engagement through active participation; KLTFc partnership progressing (facility use and community programmes).

Sport England 'Patchwork'—Active Families achieved national recognition as the only programme to move beyond research to delivery among 12 teams; continuation subject to funding.

Awards/recognition: Alive placed 7th nationally (UK Active Healthy Community Award) for QEH Cancer Physical Activity Assessment and 'Just Move' Falls Prevention; QEH partnership shortlisted for Team QEH 'Best Partnership' (result Oct). Norfolk FA recognised King's Lynn Community Football with the Lionesses Award for best girls' programme.

#### 8) Governance, Risks & Next Steps

- Asset Management Plan & Purchase/Disposal Policy to Council in the new year.
- Heacham beach huts: data-led options appraisal; interim lease/licence arrangements with improved terms.
- Masterplan: consultation Dec–Jan; member/stakeholder engagement throughout; alignment with devolution opportunities.
- Enterprise Park: pipeline development and sector targeting (manufacturing/engineering).
- Programmes: UKSPF/REPF delivery and monitoring; BOOST expansion; VIY pipeline.
- Leisure: Kaset lean review; potential temporary relocation of climbing during Lynnsport refurbishment; Swim Safe expansion bid.

#### **Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

I have had numerous meetings with officers and outside bodies and officers, including

Kate Blakemore  
Michelle Drewery  
Mark Parkinson  
Paul Lowes  
Stuart Ashworth  
Jason Birch  
Devid Gent  
Chris Black  
Hannah Wood-Handy  
Duncan Hall  
Martin Chisholm  
Jemma Curtis  
Connor Smalls  
Tim Fitzhigham  
Honor Howell  
James Grant  
James Arandale  
Alexa Baker  
Tommy Goode  
Lynne Fawkes  
Siobahn Cleeve  
Richard Allen

Civic Society  
Hunstanton Action Group  
Town Deal Board  
BID  
The Garage  
NCC

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.