

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL
27 NOVEMBER 2025

Cabinet Portfolio Report to Council – Business, Property & Leisure

Cllr Simon Ring

Period covered: October – to date 2025

1. Introduction

October and November have been among the busiest and most intensive periods since taking on this Cabinet role. With the Guildhall project placed under a communications lockdown until the announcement of the main contractor (Messenger) earlier this week, the bulk of activity shifted toward the Riverfront Programme, the Health & Wellbeing workstream, business engagement, property portfolio review, parking, and a very strong performance across Leisure.

This report provides Full Council with a narrative overview of progress across these areas.

2. Riverfront & Regeneration

2.1 Custom House

Work progressed significantly on the plans for The Custom House. A key element of the emerging scheme had been the proposal to open a second access through the Purfleet-facing blue door, linking new staging to the existing structure.

Historic England raised objections to this amendment. Given the risk of delay to the overall programme, we have withdrawn that element for now and are continuing with the broader plans as intended. Importantly, this does not impact the business case—the visitor uplift associated with two exits had not been included in the original modelling.

We will continue discussions with Historic England, and remain hopeful that the merits of a second exit will be recognised at a later stage.

2.2 Dryside Conversion (Sommerfeld & Thomas)

All tenders have now been received for the dryside conversion adjacent to Sommerfeld & Thomas, and we are aiming to enter contract shortly. Subject to final checks, we anticipate works starting in the spring.

3. Senior Leadership Recruitment

The appointment processes for the Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer concluded during this period.

- Chief of Staff: Emma Hodds has been appointed and will start in January.
 - Chief Operating Officer: The Board decided not to appoint at this stage and instead to seek a wider candidate pool.
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4. Health & Wellbeing – St James Pool & Lynnsport

A significant amount of time has been dedicated to the Health & Wellbeing review. The public consultation has been hugely valuable in shaping the Council's direction. Engagement levels were high, feedback was constructive, and the insights have directly informed the development of the options now being considered.

Since this report was drafted—and ahead of Full Council on 27 November—further updates have been circulated setting out next steps.

5. Business Engagement & Economic Development

Alongside site-specific regeneration work, business engagement has been a major focus this period.

5.1 Business Visits

I visited several local employers, including British Sugar and Lawtronics. From the new year, I will begin a structured programme of visiting businesses of all sizes and sectors to:

- Share the ambitions behind the masterplans,
- Promote the opportunities arising from LGR/Devolution, and
- Strengthen our relationship with the private sector.

5.2 Business Team Headlines

- Pride in Place 10-year Vision

Submitted to government two weeks ahead of deadline following Neighbourhood Board approval. Early submission positions us well for ministerial review and potential early sign-off in 2026.

- Masterplans for King's Lynn & Hunstanton

Member and stakeholder engagement is underway.

- King's Lynn consultation launches early December.
- Hunstanton consultation scheduled January–February 2026.

Engagement will include a mixture of online material and in-person drop-ins.

- Meet the Buyer Event – 4 December

Taking place at the Town Hall to support local businesses to access procurement opportunities linked to:

- QEH New Hospital Programme
- West Winch Growth Area
- St George's Guildhall

Local partners (Growth Hub, CWA, Boost, JCP, FSB etc.) will be present to provide advice and support.

6. Property Portfolio Review

Work continues at pace to create a more streamlined, more commercial, more efficient estate.

- We are identifying assets that offer no strategic value and can be sold, including small plots unsuited to Council development but potentially viable for small builders or adjoining landowners.
- Low-yield assets or ones better suited to private investment are also under review.

This is not to fund new spending or pay down debt—but to ensure the Council holds a relevant, productive portfolio.

- Lease reviews (overdue or upcoming) are underway via Brown & Co, who are making good progress.
- Recruitment remains challenging, and we continue to rely on temporary staff. This emphasises the importance of outsourcing selected technical work where appropriate.

7. Parking

Following Cllr Bland's resignation from Cabinet, I have picked up responsibility for Parking.

Below are the parking visit numbers for the first seven months of the financial year to end October, compared with the same period last year:

The key point is that parking use has remained broadly stable, with only a 0.24% decrease year-on-year despite significantly worse weather this year.

This also provides clear evidence—contrary to recent press commentary—that the parking fee increases have not deterred visitors. Notably, Heacham has seen a 1.34% increase in stays.

This data, alongside permit trends, will feed directly into the parking fees review, which is currently underway.

King's Lynn Short Term										
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Totals	V's LY	
2024/25	84709	87617	85166	88250	91145	83474	86825	607186		
2025/26	83133	88310	82766	87732	87601	79886	88615	598043	-9143	98.49%
King's Lynn Long Term										
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Totals	V's LY	
2024/25	12957	13607	13843	14569	13832	13489	13552	95849		
2025/26	13693	15311	14893	16007	14113	14112	14275	102404	6555	106.84%
King's Lynn Total										
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Totals	V's LY	
2024/25	97666	101224	99009	102819	104977	96963	100377	703035		
2025/26	96826	103621	97659	103739	101714	93998	102890	700447	-2588	99.63%
Hunstanton Resort										
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Totals	V's LY	
2024/25	21375	30254	27952	36822	62198	21286	12070	211957		
2025/26	32415	31227	31632	33362	55172	17736	11385	212929	972	100.46%
Heacham Resort										
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Totals	V's LY	
2024/25	2338	3253	3506	4363	5934	2971	1108	23473		
2025/26	3493	3530	3996	3742	5135	2410	1481	23787	314	101.34%
Overall King's Lynn and Hunstanton										
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	Totals	V's LY	
2024/25	121379	134731	130467	144004	173109	121220	113555	938465		
2025/26	132734	138378	133287	140843	162021	114144	115756	937163	-1302	99.86%

8. Leisure

This period has been exceptionally strong across our Leisure portfolio, in both financial and community terms.

8.1 Corn Exchange Cinema & Theatre

- Outstanding attendance figures for October and November, both exceeding previous years.
- Fear in the Fens Film Festival completely sold out.
- 3rd King's Lynn Film Festival launched with CWA students managing the entire opening event.
- Theatre Box Office turnover reached £382k.
- Alfie Boe national tour coming to King's Lynn in May – we are the smallest venue on the tour and the only Norfolk date. Tickets sold out in 10 minutes, including £178 meet-and-greet tickets (a venue record).

- Pantomime sales are at record levels, with an estimated 23,000 customers expected.

Next year's Sleeping Beauty goes on sale 10 December.

8.2 Town Hall & Guildhall

- Increase in wedding bookings for next year; new hiring pack due March 2026.
- Strong events programme with support from Lizzie (Stories) and Beth Goldsmith (Guildhall), including the highly successful Dragon Festival.

8.3 Sport, Health & Communities

- Sport England Invite:

Following our successful Expression of Interest, Sport England has invited us to submit a full application under their invited-application process. This signals strong early support and an intention to consider awarding up to £2m.

- Membership Income:

Now exceeds £1.1m YTD—the highest on record for Alive.

- Beginners Membership Campaign:

Excellent impact. Over 580 new members joined, many of whom had previously lacked confidence to start exercising.

- Learn to Swim:

Numbers at a YTD peak of 1600+ participants.

- Junior Tennis:

YTD peak of 90 juniors, despite the usual seasonal dip.

- Kaset:

Exceptional growth—250% increase in attendances vs 2023.

September and October attendances up 50–63% year-on-year.

Driven by thematic events, community partnerships, and broader outreach.

- Events & Training:

- Comic Con at Lynnsport
- National Pool Lifeguard Qualification course
- Free CPR sessions for Restart a Heart Day

8.4 Alive Lynnsport – UK Active Awards

Lynnsport reached the Regional Leisure Centre of the Year finals for the second consecutive year, competing against major national operators. Judge feedback highlighted:

- Innovative community initiatives (e.g. Christmas Day café lunch to reduce loneliness)
- Strong inclusivity across all ages and abilities
- Excellent staff and member culture
- Clear future plans focusing on disadvantaged groups and barrier reduction

A hugely positive endorsement for a comparatively small operator.

9. Conclusion

This has been a period of extremely high activity across all parts of the portfolio. Significant progress has been made on major regeneration programmes, business engagement, property rationalisation, parking management, and the delivery of outstanding leisure services.

Despite external pressures—economic headwinds, recruitment challenges, and service demands—the Council continues to demonstrate ambition, delivery, and strong community impact.

I want to place on record my thanks to officers across all teams, who continue to balance major strategic programmes with day-to-day service excellence.

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
Hunstanton Town Council
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.