

## Cabinet Members Report to Council

**29<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Councillor Jo Rust Cabinet Member for People and Communities

For the period - 17<sup>th</sup> November to 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026

### **Progress on Portfolio Matters. –**

#### **Creating Communities**

I attended a SNAP meeting at Gaywood Library where we learnt of the policing priorities and how they contribute towards our community cohesion.

#### **Partnerships with Health**

At the cabinet briefing in December with heard from Chris Bown – Interim Managing Director of the QEH, and Lesley Dwyer – CEO of the Acute Hospital Trusts partnership. Since that meeting which came about because of the QEH being rated the worst hospital in the country, a report has been received which sets out the challenges and problems within the surgical team revealed by whistle blowers. The report, carried out by the Royal College of Surgeons in late 2025, found serious failings, including a toxic culture and unacceptable levels of care in the general surgery unit. I also had a meeting with Jo Segasby who has taken over as Chair of Group the New Hospital Programme. I heard how the £1.5 billion budget for the new hospital has got to cover everything including the constructions village, MSCP, power network etc. So while it looks like a big figure, there are huge demands on it, which is why our NHP has been linked to the James Padgett so that the procurement process gets better value for money Locally we lose Paul Brooks, the director of estates and facilities and who we worked in good partnership with. His loss will be felt and when I got to say goodbye to him, passing staff agreed it was a shame he was leaving. I think many of our residents have concerns about our hospital and we're all hoping to see improvements to the culture and to patient and staff experience.

#### **Housing and Homelessness**

I held a regular meeting with Freebridge senior leaders on 26 November where I raised concerns about the Hillington Square development. It has since been announced that the remaining blocks will be demolished and not redeveloped due to the increased building costs in a restricted site. It would cost more to redevelop them than it would to build new from scratch. I also raised concerns about the quality of the development itself as although the site looks very nice from the outside, there are issues with damp and mould in the properties.

I attended LGA round table on Temporary Accommodation and heard how other councils are managing this. Both Breckland and North Norfolk presented their work. It was clear that there is no silver bullet for this, but everyone agreed that the LHA rate for TA needs to be increased from the 2011 rate as it means that councils have a significant shortfall to make up.

### **Housing Standards**

The Renter's Rights Act will place additional burdens on our housing standards team. Due to the pressures on the team decisions must be made on some of the activities that they currently deliver. May be some can be delivered by other teams within the council so that HS can concentrate their resources on the Prive Rented Sector and improve the quality of stock there. This is important as decent quality homes is a Marmot Principle.

### **Beat Your Bills**

I attended a successful Beat Your Bills event in Hunstanton on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January with the residents who attended gaining valuable information from our team staffing the event. I spoke to a resident about their heating costs and am liaising with Freebridge about it. On Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> I attended at Dersingham and spoke to a member of staff from Anglian Water who was there speaking to residents about the discounted tariffs, assistance schemes and affordable payment plans that are available if people are finding it difficult to pay. There's also a free priority services register which means AW can provide free practical support such as help if your water goes off, bills in different formats, language preferences noted and used and help to nominate someone to manage your account. Please let your residents know and go to [anglianwater.co.uk/priority](http://anglianwater.co.uk/priority) or call on 0800 232 1951 or whatsapp on 01522 341 343.

### **Assets of Community Value and Bus Shelters**

I met with the officer and AD to learn more about these 2 issues which fall in my portfolio. We found the CoPilot was a great source of information about ACV, advising that in order to declare something to be eligible to be an ACV, it needed to provide social value to the community or boost the wellbeing of that community. Bus shelters fall under the parish council's remit, but as the King's Lynn area doesn't have a parish, KLAC could deal with it. We work with NCC and Westcotec on these.

**Healthier Lives strategy**— The recent series of Food for thought held in Terrington St Clement was incredibly well received. I attended the feedback sessions where residents explained the difference it had made to them in respect of their cooking skills and confidence and the fact that the sessions helped them get to know people who lived nearby but who they hadn't spoken to before. Tackling social isolation in rural areas is one of the areas of work which falls under the Marmot principles. In addition to helping people create healthier meals we're also launching Five Dinners, an online app developed by celebrity chef Theo Michaels. This online meal planning platform that all our residents will be able to access will offer meals plans and shopping lists and avoiding unnecessary food waste which often comes from food shopping without a meal plan. All the weekly meal plans will be personalised to meet

the needs of the resident, for example, family meals, meals on a budget, gluten free, etc and generate aggregate shopping lists to save time. Food for thought is launching a new academy programme at Greenpark Avenue school on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January with the Chef, Jen, going to teach children how to prepare food. There's also a mini FfT running at the Beacon Church.

Attendance at the NCC based Health and Wellbeing Board also links with healthier lives. Topics ranged from the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership Annual report called from Harm to Hope which is a 10-year plan to cut crime and to save lives. We looked at the need for continuity of care between prison and community treatment. We learn that some people are released from prison without accommodation. It's easy to see why this could lead to reoffending. We saw that new and emerging trends in ketamine and synthetic substances. We heard about ongoing work to reduce health inequalities and improving access and outcomes as set out in the joint forward plan. It was noted that in the 10-year plan for health, social care was only referred to 5 times. This is significant as the inclusion of social care is vital to ensuring our residents have less of a need for primary care. Sadly, we also learn that people with a learning disability live, on average, 20 years less than those without. We know that inequality already exists in health for women, but it gets worse for women with a learning disability or autism. It's clear that a lot more work needs to be done to tackle health inequality.

I visited Bridge for Heroes and heard about the amazing work that they do to help improve the health and the lives of those with connections to the armed forces. They don't solely provide support for ex armed forces personnel, but to their families too. They operate on a budget but provide a marvellous service, helping to support the mental and physical health of those who attend and overcome social isolation. Some of the people who attend the lunches go from week to week with no other contact.

### **Youth**

We are progressing with our plan to develop a youth council, working with the Youth Advisory Board. I met with the YAB on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November and spoke about the work we're doing with Marmot. This helped the young people gain a far better understanding of the impact that it would have on them.

### **Safeguarding**

The policy is being finalised and our council is also looking at contributing towards some national consultation about consistency of safeguarding in after school events such as dance classes.

### **Customer relations and CIC –**

I attended a review of the CIC team which was carried out by the team working with the PMO team. It was focussed through the lens of our customers and what their experience would have been like. The demands were split into 2 – value demands and preventable demands that have been created by how the system operates. Basically, if we can change the system we can prevent these demands and concentrate on the value demands. It was incredibly useful to learn more about the challenges that our customers

face and so understand their frustrations. Some were simple and basic, but others were very complicated. Some of our forms are only online, with no paper-based way of giving the information required. For some of our customers this will be a real barrier. I have arranged that the CIC team give a briefing the councillors prior to the next full council meeting. The team do some incredible work that gets overlooked and isn't fully captured in a cabinet report.

### **Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

CMR school performance  
Rural Communities Grants panel  
Budget Scrutiny training  
LGA training – Finance  
Mayor's charity event  
Planning Training  
Communicating for Cohesion  
Health Equity Network  
Introduction to systems leadership

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

Portfolio briefings – Health and Wellbeing  
Portfolio Briefings – CIC  
Portfolio Briefing - Housing  
Full Council  
Health and wellbeing partnership meetings (monthly)  
E&C  
Freebridge briefing  
Joint Group Meetings  
Cabinet/special cabinet/cabinet sifting/Cabinet Briefings  
Food for Thought  
Homelessness and housing delivery briefing  
ICB at NCC  
ICS District Meeting  
ICS Conference  
KLAC  
West Norfolk Community Transport meeting  
Health and Wellbeing Board event  
Marmot stakeholder launch  
Housing standards and ASB portfolio meeting  
Leisure facilities meeting  
LGA training - various  
Planning Training  
West Norfolk Community Transport  
Raising Skills and Aspirations  
CIL Briefing  
ABCD Training  
Active Norfolk

QEH management meeting  
Apprenticeship event planning meeting  
Men's roles in tackling male violence against women and girls  
White Ribbon Day  
White Ribbon Training  
CIC /PMO customer service review.  
Christmas Lunch AWN  
Springwood High School tiered seating launch  
Transformation Board  
Mayor's at home reception  
Jack and the Beanstalk  
Serve Legal safety perception meeting  
Tour of Valentine Park with Lovell Homes  
Thornham Village Hall festive drinks reception  
KLCF