

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

26th March 2026

COUNCILLOR SUE LINTERN - CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE AND EVENTS

For the period 20th January to 13th March

Events Programme

The Borough's events programme for the coming year is largely finalised, with a small number of additional events still under consideration. As in previous years, a full schedule of free events will be delivered throughout the summer months, providing a wide range of activities for residents and visitors to enjoy. The programme will continue to include popular core summer events, with officers working to enhance the quality of events and the visitor experience while operating within existing budget constraints.

Officers are also exploring opportunities to introduce new elements to the programme, including a potential outdoor games event in the town centre. Planning has also begun for the borough's Christmas lights programme. In addition, officers are assessing the feasibility of introducing outdoor film nights at The Walks, with logistical considerations currently under review. A further update will be provided should this initiative progress.

King's Lynn Culture Steering Group

The King's Lynn Culture Steering Group has recently been established and held its first meeting on Friday 30 January. The group comprises twelve members drawn from leading cultural organisations and stakeholders within the town. The Borough Councils Senior Tourism Officer will support the group's work and meetings as it develops its programme and strategic direction.

Cultural Partnerships

Meetings have taken place with a number of cultural partners to strengthen collaboration and support activity across the borough.

The Margery Kempe Trust is delivering a literary trail across King's Lynn during the Easter holidays. Participating venues will include the Fent Shop, the library, the Minster and the College, each hosting events aimed at both adults and children. This initiative is supported through the Love Your Market Town grant programme.

The Trust is also developing the "Stories of our Coast" project, focusing on life writing and storytelling, alongside the continuation of weekly life writing sessions held at the library. These activities have demonstrated benefits for community engagement, cross-cultural participation and mental wellbeing.

Further engagement has taken place with the King's Lynn Business Improvement District (BID) to explore how the Borough Council can support town centre events. As the BID represents the local business community, it is important that council activities complement and support the retail and hospitality sectors and contribute to economic growth.

King's Lynn Hanse Festival

Planning is progressing well for the King's Lynn Hanse Festival, scheduled to take place on Sunday 24 May from 10.00am to 6.00pm. The event will include a range of family activities, presentations and talks celebrating the town's Hanseatic heritage.

Town of Culture

The recently announced opportunity to bid for Town of Culture status has been positively received. However, given the scale of current regeneration projects at the Guildhall and the Custom House, it is considered that submitting a bid this year would be premature. Instead, the intention is to develop a strong bid for the following year. This period will allow time to build partnerships, develop a clear work programme and undertake engagement with residents and stakeholders. This initiative will be a key focus over the coming year.

Norfolk Records Committee

The Norfolk Record Office has recently secured Archive Service Accreditation. Digital archive storage is currently provided through Norfolk County Council, with approximately 18 months of storage capacity remaining ahead of the opening of a new facility scheduled for 2028.

Staff are currently investing considerable time in preparing grant applications to secure additional funding for ongoing work. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is expected to place further demands on staff resources, expertise and financial capacity in order to maintain safe and effective record keeping during the transition period.

The service also continues to support work placements for college students, which provides valuable additional capacity. A new Heritage Fund supported project, "Hallmarks – The Long Shadow of Norfolk's Lost Country Houses", will launch shortly. The project originates from research into tithe maps dating from 1841 and aims to promote the archive collections while providing opportunities for the public to explore local history. Workshops will be delivered across the county to support residents in researching the history of their own homes.

Museums Committee

The committee reviewed the performance of the newly reopened Norwich Castle. While some technical issues remain with the platform lift, visitor numbers and activity levels have been encouraging. Strong growth has been seen in the commercial hire market and retail activity, with retail buyers developing productive relationships with local makers.

The museum teaching programme recruits four trainees each year and is open to

applicants of all ages. This year the programme received over 500 applications. Current trainees are undertaking work on a project examining pilgrim badges.

A Finds Identification and Recording Day will take place on 14 March. At Gressenhall, the Environment Hub has engaged with more than 25,000 visitors, providing educational activities focused on farming, waste management and land stewardship. Public events include Open Farm Day, Apple Day and Earth Day. In 2027 Gressenhall will mark its 250th anniversary, and work is underway to explore funding opportunities to further investigate the site's history.

The Kick the Dust Green Team continues to develop environmental opportunities linked to the hub, including a tree nursery which supports the county council's One Million Trees project.

Officers are also exploring the inclusion of Norfolk Museum Service information within the Borough Council's News and Events webpage.

Alongside this environmental theme, a visit was made to the Wild Downham Market Day event, which showcased local wildlife through photography exhibitions and community displays. The event highlighted the work of local volunteers and organisations, including wildlife groups, the ornithological society, the Downham Market Swift Group and the Men's Shed, which produces bird boxes. The event demonstrated strong community commitment to local habitats and biodiversity.

Norfolk Arts Forum

The Norfolk Arts Forum met at the end of February. Members received an update from The Workshop regarding its plans to relocate to the former library building. The organisation provides creative opportunities for young people and is preparing for a public performance scheduled for April.

A presentation was also given by the GroundWork Gallery in King's Lynn, which specialises in exhibitions exploring the relationship between art and the environment. The gallery will celebrate its tenth anniversary this year.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board provided updates on its work supporting economic growth, wellbeing and regional identity through arts, culture, creative industries and heritage. The board is advocating for the integration of culture within wider regional strategies and intends to engage with the new mayoral authority to ensure the cultural sector is recognised as a driver of economic development and business growth.

Guildhall

Demolition work continues at the Guildhall site. A live video feed of the works has proved popular with school visits and is currently available at No. 29, helping to encourage visitors to observe the progress of the project.

Shakespeare Week continues to be delivered in partnership with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon. The borough's Education Officer will deliver workshops and activities in both primary and secondary schools across the borough, reaching more than 700 children and young people. This year the programme has also expanded through a partnership with King Edward VII School. Shakespeare Week in King's Lynn has become one of the most successful programmes of its kind nationally. Plans are also underway for the annual Shakespeare's Birthday

celebration in April.

Tourism

The Senior Tourism Officer provided an update on the Tourism Development Plan, highlighting achievements over the past two years. The Explore West Norfolk website has been widely used, receiving more than 300,000 visits, and current work is focused on further developing the borough's cultural tourism offer.

Previous research undertaken in 2019 identified factors limiting the number of coach tours visiting King's Lynn, including the need for multiple attractions, extended opening hours, competitive pricing and sufficient accommodation and dining options. To support this sector, the tourism team maintains a monthly subscription with Coach Travel publications and advertises in industry magazines, including "Coach Touring – The Directory". Promotional material highlights King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton and provides suggested itineraries for tour operators.

The borough already hosts a number of established coach operators and frequently acts as a stop on wider touring routes. The tourism team also provides promotional information and works with Visit East of England to monitor visitor trends. Latest available figures for 2024 show day trips increasing by 2% to 10.2 million and overnight stays increasing by 1% to 513,000 visits, while overall visitor spending has increased by 12%.

The need for additional coach parking and hotel accommodation remains a key issue and is being addressed through the King's Lynn masterplan. Expanding the visitor experience is also essential, underlining the importance of regeneration projects such as the Guildhall and the Custom House.

Downham Market Visit

A visit was made to Downham Market with the Senior Tourism Officer and Cultural Champion. Meetings were held with the Town Council Chair and Clerk to discuss local priorities and potential areas of support. The visit also included a tour of the Denver Sluice site, where progress is being made by the Environment Agency in developing the area as a future visitor destination. The first major stage of this work has been completed with the reopening of the on-site public house and restaurant, the Jenyns Arms, in late February.

The visit concluded with discussions with Culture Babylon regarding opportunities to support tourism during the out-of-season months.

Summary

The portfolio continues to deliver a wide-ranging programme of cultural, heritage, tourism and community activity across the borough. This work strengthens partnerships, supports local organisations, promotes public engagement and contributes to economic growth, tourism and civic pride.

The delivery of these initiatives relies heavily on the commitment and expertise of the council's officer team, whose work ensures a strong and varied programme of events and activities while also supporting external organisations across the borough. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

King's Lynn & West Norfolk Area Museums committee
North Norfolk Arts Forum
Hansa Committee
Hunstanton visit

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

20/1 - Portfolio meeting
20/1 - Cabinet
20/1 - meeting with Cultural champion and The Book Festival
21/1 - Constitutional Informal Working Group
21/1 - portfolio meeting
22/1 - Budget scrutiny training
22/1 - News launch
26/1 - Portfolio meeting
26/1 - Planning training
27/1 - Cabinet sifting
28/1 - Joint panel
29/1 - meeting with The Margery Kempe Trust
29/1 - Pre-council briefing
29/1 - Full Council
30/1 - Cultural Steering Group
2/2 - Planning committee
2/2 - CIL briefing
2/2 - Cabinet briefing
3/2 - Cabinet
4/2 - Anglian Water briefing
6/2 - Norfolk Records committee
6/2 - Norfolk Joint Museums committee
7/2 - Downham Market wildlife exhibition
9/2 - CPP
10/2 - Local Plan Task Group
10/2 - meeting with the BID
10/2 - Portfolio meeting
10/2 - R&D
11/2 - Guildhall project board
11/2 - Portfolio meeting with Events team
11/2 - Cabinet briefing
12/2 - Portfolio meeting
13/2 - Joint Cabinet awayday with Breckland Cabinet
14/2 - Opening of The Mart
16/2 - Town of Culture meeting
16/2 - Ukraine briefing
17/2 - Portfolio meeting
20/2 - Cultural Steering Group
20/2 - Downham Market visit
23/2 - Planning training

24/2 - Meeting with Collusion
24/2 - Budget briefing
24/2 - E&C
25/2 - Portfolio meeting
25/2 - Norfolk Arts Forum
26/2 - Full Council
2/3 - Planning committee
2/3 - R&D
3/3 - Cabinet
4/3 - Transformation/LGR Readiness Programme board
4/3 - Renters rights briefing
6/3 - Tour of the new library
6/3 - Mayors Business awards
9/3 - Housing delivery strategy review
9/3 - review of SLA's
9/3 - Constitutional Informal Working group
11/3 - Guildhall project board