

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

26th March 2026

COUNCILLOR SIMON RING - CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS, PROPERTY AND LEISURE

For the period 17th March-15th June

Since my last report to Council in March, there has been an exceptionally high level of activity across the Business, Property and Leisure portfolio. The breadth of work being undertaken across regeneration, property, economic development, leisure, heritage and commercial assets means it would be impossible to capture every meeting, project and decision within a single report.

Accordingly, this update focuses on a selection of the most significant developments and areas that I believe will be of greatest interest to Members. Behind these highlights sits a considerable amount of ongoing work by officers, partners and stakeholders that continues to drive investment, opportunity and improvement across West Norfolk.

Economic Development and Business Engagement

Supporting local businesses remains a key priority. During this reporting period I have met with a wide range of employers and investors including C J Rust, Gayton Estates, Collisons Cut Flowers, Le Strange Estates, Norfolk Natural Living, Advanced Engineering and East Coast Gelato, amongst many others.

These discussions provide valuable opportunities to understand the challenges facing businesses, demonstrate the Borough Council's support for enterprise and investment, and identify opportunities for future growth and partnership working.

The Enterprise Zone continues to perform strongly. Two further units have been let during this period, leaving only one remaining unit currently available, which is attracting interest. In addition, serious enquiries have been received regarding two further development plots.

Our commercial agents, Brown & Co, continue to perform strongly in securing lettings, lease renewals and asset disposals, whilst Colliers have provided valuable support in the marketing of specialist assets including Vegas and South Shores caravan parks. Current asset sales proceeding or under offer exceed £6.5 million.

Asset Management and Property

Significant work continues across the Council's property portfolio.

Discussions regarding Stylement Court have focused on future disposal and housing options. Consideration is being given to a range of possibilities including retention, discounted sale, increased social housing provision and shared ownership opportunities. Discussions have taken place with our housing companies regarding the potential acquisition and management of properties within the development.

I am pleased to report that Liz MacDonald has now joined the authority as Assistant Director for Property. Liz is undertaking a comprehensive review of resources and operational requirements to strengthen the property function and support delivery of a robust Asset Management Plan. This work builds upon the foundations established by Jason Birch and will be critical in maximising value from the Council's estate.

The Council continues discussions with the administrators of NCP regarding Church Street Car Park. Our position remains clear: either the full contractual rent is paid, or the Council will exercise its rights to regain control of the asset and operate it directly.

Regeneration and Masterplans

Both the King's Lynn and Hunstanton Masterplans continue to make progress.

The King's Lynn Masterplan has now completed consultation and officers are preparing the final documentation for Cabinet consideration, with the intention of bringing the document forward as Council policy.

The Hunstanton Masterplan has also moved forward, although additional efforts are being made to secure greater stakeholder engagement to ensure local business and community views are fully reflected in the final proposals before the next consultation stage.

A team of officers and Members attended the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) in Leeds. The event provided an excellent opportunity to promote West Norfolk's investment potential, showcase our regeneration ambitions and engage directly with investors, developers and government agencies.

Encouragingly, a number of follow-up discussions are now underway with organisations interested in exploring development opportunities within the borough.

Heritage

The Guildhall and Creative Hub project continues to progress well.

Major construction activity is now underway, including full scaffolding installation, roof works, structural alterations within the White Barn and archaeological investigations. Recent discoveries have provided further insight into the site's historic use, including evidence suggesting the White Barn once operated as a brewery.

Importantly, the project remains on programme and value engineering exercises continue to provide greater financial resilience while maintaining project ambitions.

I was also delighted to attend the launch of St James House in The Walks. Operated by Connexions, the facility provides a collaborative hub for charities and voluntary organisations. The concept will enable organisations such as the Foodbank and Citizens Advice Bureau to share facilities and resources, ensuring a greater proportion of donated funds can be directed towards frontline services.

Leisure and Wellbeing

The leisure portfolio continues to demonstrate significant ambition and momentum.

Lynnsport Development

Feasibility work and RIBA Stage 2 concept designs have now been completed for the future redevelopment of Lynnsport. Proposals include a new leisure building incorporating an eight-lane 25-metre swimming pool, learner pool with adjustable floor, and splash play facilities. The project is now ready for Cabinet consideration.

Adapted Sports Hub – A Landmark Project for Inclusion

One of the most exciting developments since my last report has been the formal launch of the Adapted Sports Hub project at Lynnsport.

The Adapted Sports Hub Trust has now signed a long-term lease with the Borough Council, providing the foundation for the development of a dedicated, fully accessible facility designed specifically for people with disabilities and additional needs. Fundraising activity is now commencing, with approximately £3.2 million required to deliver the project.

This pioneering initiative brings together the Borough Council, Little Discoverers, Little Miracles, Pelicans Hockey Club and the Adapted Sports Hub Trust in a partnership committed to creating transformational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities.

The proposed facility will provide specialist equipment, inclusive training spaces and flexible multi-purpose areas supporting a wide range of adapted sports and physical activities. Beyond sport itself, the Hub will become a centre for community engagement, coach development, education and wellbeing, helping to create a more inclusive sporting culture throughout West Norfolk.

The launch event was one of the most inspiring evenings I have attended in public life. Young people supported by organisations including Little Miracles, Little Discoverers and Ride United spoke passionately about how access to inclusive activities had transformed their lives and aspirations. Their stories provided a powerful reminder of the life-changing impact that projects such as this can deliver. This development is about far more than a building. It is about removing barriers, improving independence, enhancing wellbeing and ensuring that every resident, regardless of ability, has access to high-quality sporting and recreational opportunities.

Once completed, the Adapted Sports Hub will be a facility of regional significance and a lasting legacy demonstrating West Norfolk's commitment to inclusion, accessibility and community wellbeing.

I intend to arrange a Member briefing to ensure all councillors have an opportunity to see the detailed plans and understand the enormous potential of this project.

Additional Leisure Projects

Work also continues with the Lawn Tennis Association on proposals to develop padel courts at Lynnsport and create a covered indoor tennis facility. The LTA has identified this as a strategic project and has committed more than £1 million towards

its delivery. Detailed plans are now being developed.

Progress is also being made on a new 3G pitch at King's Lynn Academy, supported by the Football Foundation, Lawn Tennis Association and Norfolk Cricket. Club engagement and programming work is currently underway.

In Downham Market, discussions continue with Norfolk FA, the Football Foundation, Downham Market Town Council and Downham Town FC regarding a further 3G pitch development at the Jubilee Centre. Partnership funding has been identified and work is now progressing on the detailed scope of the project.

Looking Ahead

The pace of activity across the portfolio shows no sign of slowing. Significant opportunities continue to emerge across regeneration, property, leisure, heritage and economic development.

The coming months will see further progress on the King's Lynn Masterplan, investment opportunities arising from UKREiiF, the Guildhall project, Lynnsport redevelopment proposals and, importantly, the fundraising and development of the Adapted Sports Hub.

I remain grateful to officers, partners, businesses, community organisations and fellow councillors whose commitment and enthusiasm continue to help deliver positive outcomes for residents across West Norfolk.

I have met with the following officers, most of which are scheduled for further meetings in the coming months.

Duncan Hall
Kate Blakemore
Michelle Drewery
Emma Hobbs
Stuart Ashworth
David Morton
Chris Black
Jason Birch
David Gent
Anne-Marie Ketteringham
Jemma Curtis
Connor Smalls
Robin Lewis
Tim Fitzhigham
James Grant
Tim Baldwin
Phillipa Sillis
David Whiles
Hannah Wood-Handy
Nicola Cooper
Jo Stanton
Liz MacDonald
Emma Kavanagh

Apologies if I've missed some which I'm sure I have!