

Cabinet Members Report to Council

29 July 2026

Councillor Jo Rust Cabinet Member for – People and Communities

For the period - 15th June 2026 – 20th July

Progress on Portfolio Matters. – Creating Communities

I was proud to be in attendance at the Armed Forces flag raising day. We have a voluntary armed forces covenant which we follow. The armed forces covenant is moving to become statutory and will place more responsibility on our council and could possibly come at a financial cost. This is currently being worked through as some councils will be starting from a zero base, and others, such as ours, already have. So, this is an extension of duties of the Covenant which are being proposed in the Armed Forces Bill and will change how the covenant works in currently. The Armed Forces Covenant currently establishes that members of the Armed Forces community should face no disadvantage in accessing public services in relation to housing, health and education. The Government has committed to strengthening the Covenant in law through extension of the legal duty. The Covenant applies to local authorities, governing bodies of state-funded schools, and various NHS bodies within housing, education, and healthcare. The duty requires public bodies to give due regard to the needs of the Armed Forces community in relevant decision-making. The Covenant duties are to be extended by Spring/Summer 2027 through the Armed Forces Bill. The Bill is currently going through Parliament and not likely to receive Royal Assent until the end of the year. So this is advance warning on how our council might be impacted on when providing our support. The extension of the Legal Duty will encompass all UK Government Departments, Devolved Governments, and the following policy areas: • Social care • Childcare • Employment and service in the armed forces • Personal taxation • Welfare benefits • Criminal justice • Immigration • Citizenship • Pensions • Service-related compensation. The LGA has been lobbying for full new burdens assessment and appropriate funding to support the extension of the Covenant duty. We've received great news regarding the work our council has already done on the current voluntary covenant - being awarded Gold Armed Forces Covenant "STATUS" Huge congratulations to all those involved.

Partnerships with Health

I attended a briefing on Neighbourhood Mental Health Centres. This intends to shift care from hospitals to community-based prevention and early intervention. I have expressed concern about this as the funding is for capital only and will see a "new" mental health hub be situated on the site of

Chatterton House. And it will have beds. So central government is investing on buildings and not on the staff to staff it. There is no revenue for staff or resources and it'll have to come out of the current budget. While there was talk again of parity of esteem between mental health and physical health, without proper resources, these remain words and not deeds. I will be meeting with the Ops Director of NSFT to discuss the hub on the 15th July.

I attended a Health and Wellbeing expo in Newmarket and learned of many innovative programmes being run in our neighbouring authorities. Our own Careline and Lily team were there promoting the services that they offer. But I couldn't take any notes so I'm unable to report back more deeply!

Skills

On course to deliver an etch skills project called hackathon which will culminate in November with an event to allow the young participants to showcase their learning.

Housing and Homelessness

We continue to make good progress in this area with lower than average rough sleepers at any one time and decreasing numbers in temporary accommodation.

Housing Standards

Nothing to report

Beat Your Bills

None attended

Community Transport

I attended a Transport East (TE) online briefing which set out the role of transport east and where they sit between the DfT and National Transport Strategy and Local Authorities who deliver against the national targets. TE focus on 4 core domains – rail, strategic roads, pan regional projects and rural mobility. The capital budget for national projects is £22,317 million, of which the biggest chunk is allocated to HS2. So TE lobby heavily to make sure we get our share. In the east we have projects such as the Ely area enhancement and Haughley junction, widening the A12 between J19 to J25, A47 Thickthorn junction and the A10 West Winch housing access road. It was interesting to hear about the impact of rural mobility as it's something we see a significant lack of. 1 in 3 people live in rural communities in the east, facing challenges in accessing education, skills, jobs and services. While we have West Norfolk Community Transport who deliver vital services for us, we definitely need better rural transport links.

Assets of Community Value and Bus Shelters

Bus shelters are expected to be replaced in the following month.

Healthier Lives strategy

I spent a morning with colleagues from Active Norfolk and Sports England at Lynnsport and then Purfleet Trust. It was good to talk about what is on offer locally and the difference it makes to the lives of our residents. Both Cllr Ring and I made a case for support for funding for our proposed new swimming pool. We helped them understand why we had to move from a planned integrated pool with Lynnsport to a standalone. The visit to the Purfleet trust was really inspiring as the work they do to support service users to live healthier lives, some of which is funded by Sport England and we also contribute to the services, was amazing. For people moving through a life of addiction, to living a healthy and independent life, Purfleet make a significant contribution.

Youth

I attended a meeting to discuss this year's apprenticeship event hosted by the DWP and JCP and supported by us. In previous years this event has been enormously well received and I have no doubt that the same will be for this year.

The Youth Advisory Board have recommissioned two services to be delivered to their young people – an exam stress project and an activities and club project. These projects have been chosen by the young people themselves as ones they feel that they'd benefit from.

Safeguarding

No change

Customer relations and CIC

I met with the CIC team at their weekly huddle. The team have continued to go through changes but continues to provide a first class frontline service for our residents.

Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Love West Norfolk Jobs event

Cabinet

Group Meeting

WNCT

Reception for Father Adrian

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
Alive, Active Norfolk and KLWNBC catch up
Freebridge briefing
Housing Developments steering group
Joint Group Meetings
Cabinet/special cabinet/cabinet sifting/Cabinet Briefings
Food for Thought at the new library
Homelessness and housing delivery briefing
LGA Independent AGM
KLAC
West Norfolk Community Transport meeting
Leisure facilities meeting
LGA briefing Neighbourhood and Mental Health - various
Planning Training
West Norfolk Community Transport
CIL Briefing
Values and Behaviours briefing
Active Norfolk
PMO briefing.
Homes and Health Briefing
Budget Scrutiny Training
Scrutiny Training
LGR briefing
Housing delivery strategy meeting
Licensing
Behaviour Change Training
Divestment briefing
Armed forces Flag raising
KLCF AGM
Sports England meeting
Festivals service
Pride in Place Briefing
Community Governance Review
Apprenticeship meeting
Lynnsport briefing
Local Government Ombudsman