

## Cabinet Members Report to Council

24<sup>th</sup> September 2026

### Councillor Sue Lintern – Cabinet Member for Culture and Events

Report to Council for the period 18<sup>th</sup> July to 11<sup>th</sup> September

#### 1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

This report highlights the breadth of activity delivered during the summer, the continued development of cultural partnerships and infrastructure, and the contribution that these programmes make to residents, visitors and the local economy.

We have seen a substantial programme of cultural and community activity delivered across King's Lynn, Hunstanton and West Norfolk. The programme has included outdoor events, festivals, heritage activities, cinema, music, creative programmes and opportunities for young people.

A key strength has been the continued collaboration between Council services, venues, technical teams, marketing, events staff, volunteers, community organisations and external cultural partners. This has enabled a diverse programme to be delivered safely and effectively while making best use of the Borough's cultural and heritage assets.

The Council's support, through both funding and in-kind assistance, continues to play an important role in enabling these events to take place.

#### Summer Events Programme

The summer events programme in King's Lynn and Hunstanton has been particularly successful.

In Hunstanton, the hot weather contributed to strong attendance at outdoor and beach activities. The new **Peter Piper Picked Some Litter** activity proved popular while also delivering an important message about protecting wildlife, the environment and sustainability. Established events including **Open Air Cinema**, **Beats by the Beach** and **Battle of the Bands** continued to attract audiences, demonstrating the strong demand for events within the resort. The Princess Theatre variety show has also provided an important attraction for both residents and visitors. The programme has continued through August and September with further activities including **Swim Safe sessions**, the **Mad Tea Party** celebrating Afternoon Tea Week and **Family Fun Days**. New events have complemented the established programme, with some activities also supporting wider objectives, such as the **Beer & Gin** event supporting local producers. The success of the programme provides a strong basis for developing the offer further in future years.

King's Lynn has similarly benefited from a busy summer events programme, including **Soulful Sunday**, **Muds & Rockers**, **outdoor cinema** and **outdoor music events**, alongside many other activities. The Events Team has worked extensively

throughout the summer to ensure that the free events programme has been delivered safely and successfully.

The **Mayor's Charity Event**, held at Houghton Hall, was an enjoyable evening raising funds for **Bridge for Heroes and the Purfleet Trust**. Guests were able to enjoy the Lynn Chadwick exhibition while supporting these two very deserving and hard-working charities.

The Borough's programme demonstrates the wide variety of cultural activity available across King's Lynn and West Norfolk and the Council's commitment to supporting and celebrating its heritage and cultural assets.

The **King's Lynn Festival** has now concluded following a successful programme of performances across a number of venues, including the Corn Exchange, Town Hall, King's Lynn Cinema, The Minster, All Saints Church and St Nicholas' Chapel. The festival culminated in a sold-out performance by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Council is proud to support both the King's Lynn Festival and **Festival Too** through financial and in-kind support. The contribution of the festival committees, volunteers and staff is greatly valued in providing residents and visitors with a broad programme of musical and cultural events.

The King's Lynn Book Festival, an independent festival taking place in the town, has also continued to develop, including a special event featuring Simon Thurley's talk, *From Carrstone to Concrete: Norfolk and the Story of English Building*. Further festival activity is planned for 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4th October.

At The Lynn Museum, a new exhibition has provided an opportunity for home educated children to develop their understanding of museum collections and the work involved in preserving and presenting heritage. A new autumn-themed display case was unveiled by Deputy Lieutenant Mrs Kathryn Buscall JP. The exhibition was curated by home educated children over four days as part of the Norfolk Challenge Award. The children learnt about how items are preserved and catalogued and how to select and curate items for display.

This collaboration with the home education community will continue throughout the year, providing further opportunities for children to engage with the Borough's heritage collections and develop practical skills in research, curation and interpretation. The project is in association with the current 'Secrets from the Store' exhibition and demonstrates how the museum's collections can be used creatively to engage new audiences and encourage young people to take an active role in interpreting local heritage. I'd like to highlight that the Borough Council's Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Norfolk Museums Service has enabled us to offer free admission during term time for all school children and home-educated children. Free admission is also available to families of serving Armed Forces members, people receiving means-tested benefits and pensioners. There are other concessions available, so please check the museum's website for the full list. We also offer a Twilight Package, providing reduced admission rates during the final hour of opening.

The Borough's wider festival programme continues to strengthen its cultural profile, with the **King's Lynn Film Festival**, **Fear in the Fens Festival** and the developing **Wyrd Fest** contributing to the area's reputation as a cultural destination.

### **Wyrd Fest and Out-of-Season Tourism**

Work is progressing on **Wyrd Fest**, a new festival celebrating the strange, unusual and curious elements of West Norfolk. The festival launches on the 4th October with a film screening and will then offer a programme of films, talks, workshops and events exploring the area's darker and more unusual heritage. A key objective is to support out-of-season tourism, creating additional reasons for residents and visitors to engage with the area during the autumn. A major part of the programme will be **'All of Us Witches'**, an exhibition at Stories of Lynn running from 8th October to 4th November. The exhibition explores the history of witch trials in East Anglia, including King's Lynn's role in this history, using documents and artefacts from the King's Lynn archives. The programme will also include a Crime & Punishment and Witch Trials School Day, practical magic and potion-making workshops and **'A Witch's Night in the Cells'** escape room on 30th and 31st October. The escape room uses the historic gaol cells at Stories of Lynn to create an immersive heritage experience based on King's Lynn's witch-trial history.

Together, the Wyrd Fest programme provides a combination of heritage, culture, education and entertainment while supporting the wider ambition to increase out-of-season tourism.

### **Cultural Steering Group**

The Cultural Steering Group continues to develop and is supporting greater collaboration across the Borough's cultural organisations. A new website is nearing launch and will provide an opportunity to bring together different parts of the Borough's cultural sector and increase visibility for local galleries, artists and creative organisations.

### **Guildhall Outreach and Young People's Engagement**

The Guildhall outreach programme has delivered a particularly active summer programme across West Norfolk. Dragon Arts activities have taken place at Stories of Lynn and Downham Market Library, with young people developing creative underwater dragon lairs and superheroes. Further sessions have been held at Gaywood Library, Hunstanton Library and The Beacon in North Lynn. The programme demonstrates the creative talent of young people across the Borough and supports the ambition for the Guildhall project to have a positive impact beyond King's Lynn itself. Upcoming activity includes Robert Armin Day on 17th September, aimed specifically at schools, followed by the Dragon Festival on 8th November.

The wider cultural programme also continues to provide opportunities for young people to engage with the arts. The forthcoming Into Film Festival will provide opportunities for young people to experience cinema, including for some who may be attending for the first time.

**Accessibility and inclusion** remain important elements of the cultural offer.

The introduction of extended toddler screenings and autism-friendly cinema screenings during the summer has enabled more families and neurodiverse

residents to access cultural experiences, with many children attending the cinema for the first time.

Further improvements are planned through audio-described and captioned performances, including *Come From Away* and the annual pantomime. These measures will improve access for blind, visually impaired, deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences.

The continued expansion of foreign-language cinema, including Lithuanian films, is also helping to broaden audiences. Some audiences have travelled from outside the Borough, including from London, demonstrating the potential for cultural activity to contribute to the visitor economy.

**The History of the Borough Project** continues to gather information and record the experiences of past and present Council employees. The project has begun recording memories from former Council workers, resulting in a number of fascinating conversations and personal stories. The resulting film will provide a lasting record of these experiences and preserve an important part of the Borough's institutional and social history.

### **Heritage Assets and Capital Projects**

The Council continues to support the development and preservation of significant heritage assets across the Borough. Regular updates are being received on the Guildhall project, while work is also progressing on the Custom House project. These projects will expand the Borough's cultural offer while protecting and bringing heritage buildings back into meaningful use for future generations.

Investment has also continued at the Corn Exchange, where refurbishment of the green room has improved backstage facilities for visiting artists. This investment strengthens the venue's attractiveness to performers, producers and event organisers.

Safety arrangements have also continued to be reviewed and developed, including rescue arrangements for working-at-height activities, strengthening health and safety procedures and supporting safe service delivery.

### **Tourism and Visitor Economy**

Cultural and heritage activity continues to make an important contribution to the visitor economy.

The forthcoming completion of the Pontoons Dryside Facilities will provide facilities for leisure sailors visiting the town and support King's Lynn's wider visitor offer. Work has also continued on visitor-facing activity associated with Sail the Wash.

A free astronomy event is planned at Hunstanton Observatory, while the Borough will also be represented at the award ceremony for Deepdale Camping following its recognition as Best Campsite in the UK.

The True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum Yard Project is also progressing, uncovering historic elements beneath the site and providing further opportunities to interpret and celebrate the Borough's heritage.

Planning is also commencing for next year's **King's Lynn Hanse Festival**, with stakeholders due to begin regular meetings in preparation for the May festival.

### **Partnership Working**

The reporting period demonstrates the significant value of cross-service and partnership working. Teams across venues, technical services, front-of-house

operations, marketing and events have worked together to improve visitor experiences, support community engagement and strengthen the Borough's cultural infrastructure.

Partnership working has been particularly evident in the delivery of festivals and outdoor events, as well as through collaborations with organisations such as the Norfolk Museums Service and external cultural partners.

This approach allows the Council to maximise the impact of available resources while providing a diverse and high-quality programme for residents and visitors.

### **Conclusion**

Once again we have seen the strength and diversity of the cultural, heritage and events offer across West Norfolk. From major festivals and free outdoor events to heritage exhibitions, charitable fundraising, young people's programmes, accessible cinema and new initiatives such as Wyrđ Fest, the Borough continues to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with culture in a wide range of ways.

The programme delivers social, cultural and economic benefits, supporting community participation, encouraging visitors, strengthening the local visitor economy and raising the profile of the Borough as a cultural destination.

The continued investment in cultural infrastructure, heritage assets, accessibility and partnership working provides a strong foundation for future development.

The Council's staff, volunteers, committees and partner organisations should be recognised for their considerable contribution to the successful delivery of this programme.

Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate the Council's commitment to ensuring that West Norfolk's cultural and heritage assets are protected, celebrated and accessible to as many residents and visitors as possible.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments**

Heritage Open Day & Classic Car Day  
Soapbox Derby  
WyrđFest