Cabinet Members Report to Council

24th September 2026

Councillor Morley – Cabinet Member for Finance
Report to Council for the period 30th July to 14th September 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

ICT

I thought I would start my report with a review of my thoughts on the current state of progress on ICT as this part of my current Portfolio is being passed to Cllr. Josie Ratcliffe. This will form part of her new transport and parking responsibilities and is quite apt as ICT is concerned with transportation of pulses of bytes around a network before parking in secure storage for later retrieval.

I am, accordingly, handing over the chair of the ICT Development Group which has changed direction over the last year. It used to be a forum which authorised the introduction of new software, whether an upgrade to Microsoft Windows or a specific application such as tree or project management.

The decision on new products is now taken by a peer review of new products by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the Development Group is now focussed on transformation.

Members may recall that I emphasised our strategic priorities (June Report) of:

- Cyber security
- Effective disaster recovery and backup (essential for business continuity)
- Infrastructure renewal
- Enhanced software to improve efficiencies, and
- Tracking financial savings and social value.

I drafted the schematic below as an illustration of the inter-relationships of work streams and processes to deliver these priorities (the ICT manager kindly put my scribbles into a readable format) and is a template of our role in transformation. Although LGR has been paused, the work with our colleagues at the County and elsewhere has helped us ensure we are not progressing down any blind alleys and our plans will not be nugatory

As a “stop press”, business continuity processes are now operating on the latest technology and cloud based back up is now operational.

An Officer group has been set up to bring together a cohesive framework for assessing and calculating social value.

PROCUREMENT

This month the Procurement and Contracts Management Team is pleased to welcome a new interim member.

Previously we had reported that a consultant from Local Government East had analysed our spending and identified a considerable amount of non-compliant spend. Ben Sawyer has joined the team as Interim Senior Procurement Partner and will getting to grips with this non-compliant spend by working with the client departments to ensure our future spend in these areas is complaint with the Procurement Act 2023 and our Contract Standing Orders.
Suppliers have been advised that payment will not be released until they have received a Purchase Order.

Other major news this month, and which you may have seen in the public domain, is that the Contract for refurbishment of the Custom House was awarded to King & Co (Norfolk) Ltd, a company based in Norwich.

This award was the result of an open tender which was advertised in the usual way through Delta E-Sourcing portal, onto the Government's national website (Find A Tender) and our own website. It attracted nine bids. The evaluation process included assessment of bidders' responses to questions on their technical ability and experience, along with planned programme and construction methodology. Evaluation of all bids showed that King & Co's bid was the most advantageous overall.

Current procurements being advertised are:

- Design Support and Advice for Local Plan Preparation
- Sewage Treatment Plants Maintenance and Replacement of Telemetry Units

Installation, Maintenance & Fault Rectification of Electronic Security Systems (CCTV).

FINANCE 26/27

The Q1 Report has been presented to Cabinet and is posted on Mod Gov under Budget Monitoring.

We are currently on a steady course to meet our balanced revenue budget forecast this year but there are significant pressures on our service costs which, again, we trust will be offset by our savings and efficiencies programme to provide a positive outturn. A savings programme of £3.05m has been planned to not only act as a safety net but also to deliver our value for money and sustainability obligation.

However, with the headroom we have achieved we decided to increase our Grants Programme by £650K for this year, taking our community benefits package to over £1m.

£450K is being allocated to those causes that we consider to be essential to support year on year, such as the Kings Lynn Festival, Festival Too, Citizens Advice and Community Transport, Ferry Service; these and similar causes all have a Service Level Agreement with the Borough such that we can regularly measure their service and benefit.

£55K has been allocated for the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.

£15K revenue and £50K capital for our Small Grants Scheme which is managed for us by The Norfolk Community Foundation, and for this year only, an additional opportunity for Rural and Coastal Communities to secure revenue or capital grants of up to £10K from a supplementary community fund of £50K.

A new scheme for 26-28 has also been introduced. A Councillor endorsed grant scheme offering grants of up to £25K revenue or capital from a pot of £500k.

And, following a request from the Leader, we are in the process of re-instating the reserve arrangement enjoyed by the Leader of the previous Conservative administration, to repurpose a Grant fund for emergency priorities that emerge and cannot wait for the usual structured approach but with Governance through sign off by the Leader (or Deputy), Finance Portfolio holder and 2 Statutory officers. The Fund total is £250K, capital or revenue, but by the very nature of being an emergency fund, no matching contribution is required.

Any Cabinet Member can sponsor a request as can any Ward Member via a Cabinet Member.

Full transparency will be available.

Separate advice highlighting this is very much an emergency fund is being issued

CAPITAL FINANCE PROGRAMME

Notwithstanding our ability to introduce further Grant programmes, there is, a cloud hovering over our capital investment programme and that is house deliveries to our residents. We are managing the build of over 1000 modern homes in the Borough, predominantly in Kings Lynn where developers are reluctant to commit due to the issues connected with the town's low lying situation. Many houses have been built or nearing completion but await sales in a flat market. We are reallocating as many houses as

appropriate to affordable rentals and social housing but this takes a little time to arrange. Meanwhile our builders are being paid and our net debt has risen to a little over £30m. The debt on this borrowing is catered for within our revenue budget and it is well within our "credit card limit" or more precisely the regulated financial boundary under local government financial rules. (Set in 25/26 at £84m).
This debt but more importantly the need to get affordable housing to families or single people, is under constant scrutiny and the signs are hopeful that progress will be made in good time for investment in further developments and our eagerly awaited town centre improvements including a world renown Guildhall. As an aside, it is often overlooked that the Guildhall complex also includes a refurbished building for new business or start ups (similar to KLIC) which will bring further investment and value into the town.
It is important to note that none of our loans exceed a repayment period of 12 months.

SOCIAL VALUE

All of our investments have an intrinsic benefit for the purpose intended, such as housing, leisure, tourism, however, there very construction and existence provides "hidden" value through aspects such as employment, training, citizen wellbeing. As I report above, we have recently set up a cross functional team to bring these varies aspects together for reporting purposes.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

August was a relatively quiet month but the wheels of finance bringing money in and spending for our communities and visitors roll on.
We are now ramping up with the calculations of our Medium Term Plan which will offer a balanced budget to Council next February.
I have a week's break in France shortly and cannot attend the Full Council meeting, however I trust there is sufficient data in this report to keep Members abreast of developments.
October has some key reviews including the across Council Budget Task Group meeting, various Grant adjudications, our Major Project Capital review as well as the usual round of Scrutiny Panels.
Perhaps of most importance is being briefed and offering opinion on the QEH new build. I don't mind disclosing that I was rushed to A&E twice in short order last year, so keeping a full facility for West Norfolk and it's surrounding communities, is, in my experience and opinion, of paramount importance.