

Cabinet Members Report to Council

29th October 2026

Councillor Sue Lintern – Cabinet Member for Culture and Events

Report to Council for the period 12 th September to 19 th October

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

Summer Events Programme

The Borough Council's summer events programme has now concluded following an exceptionally successful season, offering a diverse range of free events across the Borough and providing something for residents and visitors of all ages and interests.

Hunstanton

Hunstanton welcomed the return of popular events, including Open Air Cinema – Movies on the Green, Family Fun Days, Beats by the Beach and Battle of the Bands. Alongside these established favourites, several new events were introduced and have been very well received.

Highlights included:

- Beer & Gin Festival: A successful event offering a wide variety of food and drink.
- Peter Piper Picked Some Litter: Introduced during the first week of the school holidays, this innovative event raised awareness of litter and the dangers it poses to wildlife, including discarded fishing nets and drinks can ring-pulls. The inflatable whale, which visitors could enter, proved a particular highlight for children and adults alike.
- Borrow, Play, Return: The first Hunstanton beach equipment borrowing box was launched, enabling children to borrow beach play equipment and return it after use.
- Water Safety Sessions: The Alive team delivered open-water swimming and water safety sessions, helping to educate children about the risks associated with swimming in the sea. This remains an important priority for both residents and visitors.
- Mad Tea Party: A new event designed to encourage community participation and strengthen local community spirit.
- Hunstanton Soap Box Derby: This hugely popular event attracted more than 55 entries. Minor changes to the course provided a fresh experience for competitors and spectators, with participants enjoying the challenge and the crowds turning out to support them.

The success of both established and new events demonstrates the value of continuing to develop the programme while retaining the activities that residents and visitors know and enjoy.

King's Lynn

King's Lynn hosted a similarly varied programme, including the Hanse Festival, followed by the Hanseatic Waterski Event, Folk in the Town, Soulful Sunday, Mods & Rockers and a series of Music in the Marketplace events celebrating music from the 1940s through to the 1980s. Classic Car Day also attracted interest from residents and visitors.

In addition to the Council's own events, the Borough supported a wide range of activities delivered by external organisations. These included King's Lynn Festival, Festival Too, the Vintage Fair, food festivals, Heritage Open Day and numerous events in The Walks.

It is important to recognise the breadth of the events offer across the town. While the Council delivers its own varied programme, the support provided to external organisers is equally valuable. Assistance with traffic management, health and safety, event logistics and post-event cleaning enables other organisations to concentrate on delivering their events safely and successfully. This partnership approach helps maximise the number and diversity of activities available to the public, supports local organisations and contributes to the vitality of King's Lynn as a destination for residents and visitors.

King's Lynn Heritage Open Day showcased an impressive range of historic buildings, cultural venues and heritage sites across the town, with at least 18,000 recorded visits to the properties that provided visitor numbers. The most popular venues were Town Hall & Guildhall, with 1,876 visitors, followed by Stories of Lynn (1,529), the Minster (1,495), Guildhall of St George (1,059) and the Valiant Sailor, 2 Nelson Street (1,041). Other well-attended venues included Hanse House (873), True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum (852), Red Mount Chapel (828) and Woolmarket House (773). The event offered visitors a valuable opportunity to explore buildings of historical and architectural interest, discover local stories and engage with King's Lynn's rich heritage. Visitor numbers should be treated as a minimum, as not all participating properties had the time to record attendance or chose to do so. Several venues also opened for limited hours. Heritage Open Day is a project of King's Lynn Civic Society and is organised by a dedicated team of just four volunteers. The Borough Council is pleased to support this valuable initiative, which celebrates the town's heritage, encourages people to explore its historic buildings and helps promote King's Lynn as a destination for visitors. The event demonstrates the important contribution that volunteers make to celebrating and promoting the town's heritage and encouraging people to explore its historic buildings.

Guildhall Outreach and Learning Programme

While the Guildhall remains under redevelopment, the learning and engagement programme has continued through outreach activities delivered at venues across the Borough.

Shakespeare Week took place earlier in the season, followed by the popular Dragon Arts programme. Activities were delivered at Stories of Lynn, Downham Market Library, Gaywood Library, Hunstanton Library and The Beacon in North Lynn.

The programme has provided opportunities for younger residents to explore their creativity and imagination in accessible community settings. The imaginative work produced by participants, including underwater dragon lairs, has been particularly inspiring.

This outreach approach ensures that the Guildhall's educational and cultural offer continues to reach communities while redevelopment work is ongoing.

Museum Service Update

The museum service has enjoyed a busy and productive summer, with 559 young people attending educational and theatre events, including the popular *Rampage through the Iron Age* activity.

A young people's takeover week also gave participants the opportunity to curate a mini-exhibition, providing valuable hands-on experience and encouraging greater engagement with local heritage.

The service has now established a monthly home educators programme, alternating between Stories of Lynn and Lynn Museum. This provides a regular opportunity for home-educated children to access learning activities and engage with the Borough's collections and heritage.

Councillors can play an important role in promoting these opportunities through their local networks and helping to raise awareness of the programme among home-educating families.

Review of the Summer Events Programme

A review meeting will take place shortly to evaluate the summer events programme, identify what worked well and consider where improvements can be made for future years.

The safety of everyone attending Council events remains paramount. The review will consider how the Council can continue to deliver events that are safe, accessible, enjoyable and attractive to a broad audience.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the events officers and wider Council teams whose hard work makes this programme possible. The planning, coordination and behind-the-scenes preparation required to deliver events of this scale is considerable, and the success of the summer programme reflects their professionalism, commitment and dedication.

WyrdFest – Autumn Cultural Programme

As the summer season concludes, the Council is turning its attention to the autumn and winter programme, with WyrdFest providing an exciting new addition to the cultural calendar.

Developed in partnership with Culture Babylon, WyrdFest is a month-long programme celebrating the strange, mythical and deliciously dark. Through film screenings, storytelling, exhibitions, workshops and talks, the festival aims to

attract new audiences and support the Council's wider ambition to increase out-of-season tourism.

The festival launched with the exhibition *All of Us Witches*, exploring King's Lynn's connections with the witch trials of the seventeenth century. The exhibition is being held at Stories of Lynn throughout October. The exhibition examines the experiences of women from King's Lynn and West Norfolk who were accused of witchcraft, condemned and, tragically, executed. It explores how fear, superstition, poverty and social tensions could lead to devastating consequences, inviting visitors to consider how ordinary members of a community could become the targets of suspicion and persecution. The exhibition offers an important opportunity to explore local history while reflecting on wider themes of prejudice, social responsibility and the consequences of scapegoating.

The Wyrdfest programme continued with a talk exploring F. R. Buckley, the writer, journalist, actor and painter associated with King's Lynn's Exorcist's House. The event also saw the launch of an updated edition of the *Norfolk Coast: Myths & Legends* booklet, celebrating the folklore and coastal legends of the area. Later in the month, activities will include a potions workshop and escape room events, offering further opportunities to engage audiences through imaginative and interactive experiences.

Wyrdfest represents an important step in developing the Borough's cultural offer beyond the traditional summer season. By bringing together heritage, creativity and distinctive local stories, the festival has the potential to attract new visitors, encourage local people to explore their heritage and support local businesses during a quieter period in the tourism calendar. We hope to build on this success and develop Wyrdfest further in the coming years, establishing it as a distinctive and valued addition to the Borough's cultural events programme.

History of the Borough Project

Work continues on the History of the Borough Project, which will create a lasting historical record of the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. Originally commissioned in anticipation of the conclusion of the Borough Council through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the project has evolved following the Government's decision to pause the LGR programme. The film will now focus on documenting the Council's history, achievements, challenges and influence over the past 50 years.

Through interviews, archive material and reflections from people who have helped shape the Borough, the film will create an accessible record of the authority's contribution to local communities and its role in the economic, social and physical development of the area.

The project provides a valuable opportunity to capture the experiences and institutional knowledge of those who have worked within and alongside the Council, preserving stories that might otherwise be lost.

The finished film is intended to serve as a lasting resource for future generations, celebrating the Council's legacy and helping residents understand how the organisation has evolved and influenced the Borough over five decades.

Crabbs Abbey Pumping Station – Heritage Opportunity

Our Cultural Champion, Cllr Alex Ware, has highlighted an exciting opportunity for the Council to acquire historic pumping station equipment from Crabbs Abbey, dating from 1948, including Gwynne pumps and Ruston diesel engines. The equipment formed part of the post-war infrastructure that helped protect King's Lynn and the surrounding fenland from flooding. With the station due for demolition as part of wider drainage improvement works, there is an opportunity to preserve an important part of the Borough's engineering and drainage heritage. The equipment could provide an educational and cultural resource, helping to tell the story of fenland drainage, flood protection and the engineering that has supported local communities, agriculture and economic activity for generations.

We are currently undertaking careful consideration of transport, storage, conservation, potential contamination and future display costs. However, this represents an incredible opportunity to preserve an important part of our local heritage, and we are hopeful that the project will come to fruition.

Cultural Steering Group

The Cultural Steering Group continues to develop its role in supporting collaboration across the Borough's cultural sector.

A dedicated website has now been established, with the longer-term ambition of developing it into a digital platform and directory for creative and cultural organisations. This will help improve visibility, encourage networking and make it easier for organisations to identify opportunities for collaboration.

The group is also revisiting the possibility of holding an 11th Hour event early next year, with further discussions required to establish the format and arrangements. These developments support the wider objective of building a more connected cultural sector and strengthening the relationship between the Council and local creative organisations.

Volunteer Recognition – December Celebration

Volunteers continue to make an invaluable contribution to the Borough's cultural and heritage offer, supporting activities and events across the whole of West Norfolk, not just King's Lynn. At No. 29 King Street, volunteers have contributed more than 1,700 hours, while the Red Mount has welcomed over 2,500 visitors. These figures relate to just two locations in King's Lynn, giving an indication of the scale of volunteer support across the Borough. When the many volunteers who help deliver the Council's events and activities throughout West Norfolk are also taken into account, the overall contribution in time, commitment and community support is immense. To recognise and celebrate this contribution, an Oscars-themed celebration is in the early stages of planning for December. The event will thank volunteers from across the Borough, alongside workplace students and apprentices, for their commitment and support. It will provide an opportunity to celebrate their achievements and acknowledge the important role they play in

supporting the Council's services, cultural activities and events throughout West Norfolk.

Norfolk Arts Forum

Recent discussions at the Norfolk Arts Forum highlighted the importance of ensuring that cultural organisations remain relevant, accessible and responsive to changing audiences.

A speaker from the Sainsbury Centre emphasised the need for museums and galleries to evolve, moving beyond a solely preservation-focused approach towards creating meaningful connections between collections, communities and contemporary life. Art and heritage can be living, engaging experiences that encourage participation and dialogue.

The Forum also considered the *Survive to Thrive* project, which highlighted the benefits of closer collaboration between culture, the creative industries and tourism.

The creative industries encompass areas such as marketing, branding and digital services, which offer opportunities for economic growth and innovation. Culture, meanwhile, can make a significant contribution to health, wellbeing and the quality of life of local communities. There is clear potential to strengthen these connections, ensuring that cultural activity contributes not only to the visitor economy but also to wider social, economic and community outcomes. This reinforces the importance of joined-up working across the Council's cultural, tourism and economic development priorities, and of building stronger partnerships with organisations throughout Norfolk.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

Over the coming months, the portfolio will focus on:

- Reviewing the summer events programme and identifying improvements for future delivery.
- Continuing to develop the autumn and winter events offer, including Wyrdfest, the highly successful Fawkes in the Walks and the Christmas Lights Switch-On, to attract visitors, support local businesses and strengthen the Borough's cultural offer beyond the traditional summer season.
- Maintaining accessible learning and engagement opportunities through the Guildhall outreach programme and museum service.
- Progressing the History of the Borough film project to preserve and celebrate the Council's institutional history.
- Supporting the work of the Cultural Steering Group in shaping the Borough's cultural priorities and future direction.
- Recognising the contribution of volunteers, workplace students and apprentices in supporting the Council's cultural activities, heritage sites and events across West Norfolk.

- Strengthening collaboration between culture, tourism, the creative industries and wider community services.

The portfolio continues to support an ambitious and varied cultural offer across the Borough, combining high-profile events with heritage, education, community engagement and partnership working. These activities contribute to local pride, community wellbeing and the visitor economy, while enhancing the Borough's appeal as a place to live, work and visit.