

Cabinet Members Report to Council

29th October 2026

Councillor Chris Morley Cabinet Member for Finance

Report to Council for the period 24th September to 19th October
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1 Progress on Portfolio Matters
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This reporting timescale has not fallen in a particularly opportune period for advising Council of current and forecast figures. There has been and is, an intensive spell of analysis and reporting. We have had to meet a tight timetable for the Annual Statement of Accounts (see below) and at the same time analyse the ½ year figures, start on the Medium-Term Financial Plan and adjudicate a labour intensive, initial, Community Projects Fund Grant.

Members will recall that we introduced this (£500K) opportunity as we had some headroom in our finances and offered this sum for communities which, ordinarily, may not be able, in this period, to attract, readily, sums from CIL Precepts, Reserves or KLAC discussions.

The scheme was also conceived to help Members in helping, their communities in a tangible way and would be supported in evaluation by a newly formed Community Projects Fund and Budget Setting Task Group, with representation across the political grouping.

Project submissions were due by 2nd October and the Task Group met on 16th October and of the 48 projects submitted, 34 have been recommended for acceptance by Cabinet, at a total cost of £411,362.

Because of the time that preparation and evaluation through this Community process would take, the Leader asked us to find a small sum of money from Reserves to pay for an emergency response to community issues. We set aside £250K for emergencies but with a sign off by Cabinet Member Finance and 2 Statutory Officers. So far £20,182 has been authorised for release to address 3 issues. The other element of the aforementioned Task Group is to help with budget setting and to judge the benefits of schemes to help communities or residents as the cost of living rises. Ideas from

Members are due in by 6th November and will be reviewed by the Task Group at a meeting scheduled for 26th November.

½ Year Results

These will be available shortly. We are examining in detail our outturn forecasts. I reported at Q1 that there were strains on our budgets through inflation and physical maintenance needs. Our productivity and efficiency programme was also not delivering what we expected. We asked for extra efforts to bring figures back in line before we reported on areas of potential expenditure above budget. Q2 will have to show our best and realistic estimates with the appropriate reasons for any negative positions. Hopefully, these figures can be posted before the October Council meeting.

STATEMENT of ACCOUNTS

Our external auditors, EY, have a full team allocated and have been assessing, from 5th October, around 150 submissions of working papers from our Finance team. The audit is expected to be completed before the festive break.

The Government's back stop date for publication by Local Authorities is 31st January and an Audit Committee meeting has been scheduled for 19th January to review both an audit report and the Statement of Accounts 25/26.

To date, feedback from the external auditors has been positive and I trust, is more than a fair reflection of the extent of the extra resource and quality of working papers we have committed to ensure the Government targets of getting, nationwide, public documents published back on track post, believe it or not, Covid. We are meeting that commitment.

The Draft statement of Accounts is available on the internet and those who click on the covering photograph will recognise a form of irony with the content of the picture and our desire to squeeze as much headroom for helping communities, as we can, from our available budget.

PROCUREMENT

The Procurement Team has continued to deliver a strong programme of work, managing a large portfolio of projects while supporting services across the Council.

Alongside delivering new procurements, the 100 non-compliant suppliers spend is being addressed, identifying opportunities to improve contractual compliance either by approved frameworks, open tenders with a focus on local and SME engagement and to strengthen future governance and maximise value for money. This work is helping to reduce procurement risk and ensure expenditure is aligned with Council policies and procurement regulations.

The team has also continued to focus on forward planning and upcoming contract renewals, supporting departments to develop effective procurement strategies.

Current projects include:

- West Norfolk Property Ltd's tender for Management of Private Rental Housing is in the final stages of contract award
- Exploration of alternative suppliers for electricity and gas supplies to for possible better prices
- Council Tax/NNDR & associated printing and mailing contract – looking at possible improvements and increase use of technology

Procurements in Numbers -

- 12 projects in final draft stage
- 1 advertised tender
- 2 procurements under evaluation
- 19 projects reaching contract signature stage
- 4 at contract award and standstill stage

And 49 live projects to be progressed.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

By the time this report is in the public domain we will have adjudicated the submissions for further awards granted under our annual small grants process.

For ease of reference, these awards have budgets of £15K revenue and £50k capital. For this year we have reduced the match funding

capital requirement to a minimum of 50%. We have also supplemented our total “pot” by £50K from the WINS Community Fund. This fund is made up from the 10p in the £ from those entering the WINS lottery or £0.50p for those tickets where the purchaser’s cause is this council.

For those whose faith and/or beliefs permit, this lottery is a fun way to have a very small waver, £1 per ticket, with half of your ticket money going to a worthy, local cause, (which can be this Council). Full details are on our internet.