

Cabinet Members Report to Council

Date of Council Meeting 29th October 2026

Councillor Alistair Beales – Leader of the Council

Report to Council for the period 24 th September 2026 to 29 th October 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

I provided members with an update on Local Government Reorganisation ahead of the Council meeting on 24 September. The Government's review of the programme continues to create uncertainty over the next stages and timetable. I will continue to keep members informed as further information becomes available and to ensure that West Norfolk's interests remain clearly represented. The briefing material was subsequently circulated to members.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Council's consideration of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on 24 September was followed by an all-member briefing on 8 October. Arrangements have also been made for a joint panel meeting on 21 October, providing a further opportunity for members to consider the hospital's developing clinical strategy and the implications for West Norfolk. The Council is committed to supporting the case for high-quality, accessible hospital services for West Norfolk while ensuring that the views and concerns of our communities are heard as the future configuration of services is considered.

King's Lynn Neighbourhood Board

The King's Lynn Neighbourhood Board met on 25 September. The meeting considered the emerging King's Lynn Masterplan, progress on the St George's Guildhall and Creative Hub, community-led governance, the Pride in Place programme, Riverfront works and wider Town Deal projects.

The Guildhall

Construction work at St George's Guildhall continues. The September update reported expenditure of £5.6 million against the £30.5 million project target, with £15.1 million of funding secured and a remaining funding requirement of £15.4 million. Work also continues on operational planning, fundraising, community engagement and the future relationship between the Council and the Guildhall charity.

Housing development programme

I chaired the Housing Developments Steering Group on 14 October. The group reviewed progress at Styleman Court, Valentine Park, Florence Fields and other housing sites, including sales performance, affordable housing delivery, legal transfers and potential changes to the tenure mix.

Nine additional affordable homes are progressing towards management by Broadland, with the necessary legal transfers and leases being advanced. The group also considered the potential for additional affordable, private-rented and key-worker housing, while recognising the importance of maintaining balanced and sustainable communities.

The financial position at Florence Fields and Parkway remains a significant area of focus. Higher construction-cost inflation, weaker sales income and the costs associated with holding completed properties have affected the forecast. Further work is therefore being undertaken on sales incentives, affordable-housing opportunities and alternative tenure options.

Florence Fields

Members were invited to visit Florence Fields on 2 October, and the opening of the road named in memory of the late John Collop, a long serving councillor of this Borough, was marked on 7 October. The site visit provided an opportunity to view progress on the site and recognise the work undertaken by the Council and its development partners. Members were asked for feedback after the visit and future visits will be informed by that constructive and helpful feedback.

Community Project Fund

I participated in the Community Project Fund assessment meeting on 16 October. Applications were considered against the published scheme requirements as part of the process for supporting locally led projects across the borough. Cabinet is the final decision maker and will consider recommendations at its next meeting.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

Given the number and scope of NSIPs in West Norfolk the Borough Council employs a dedicated planner to deal with these applications. Work continues in relation to the Drovers Solar Farm examination, the Eastern Green Link 3 and 4 proposals, Grimsby to Walpole, the Fens Reservoir and the emerging Redmere Wind Farm proposal. The Eastern Green Link proposals would include underground cabling, two converter stations and a new National Grid substation in the Walpole area.

A recent addition to the list of NSIP's is the enormous application from Longmarsh Geen Energy Solar for a solar farm, battery storage and data centre on 3,700 acres on two sites and potentially impacting on a number of villages including Fincham, Barton Bendish, Tilney St Lawrence and others.

Cllr. Moriarty is the lead member for these matters and can explain the process in more detail and I will discuss briefings with him to ensure members are familiar with that process. In the meantime. Council officers continue to engage with promoters and applicants, challenge aspects of the work where appropriate and seek effective engagement with parish councils and affected communities.

External and community engagement

During the period, I met Terry Jermy MP and attended meetings relating to the Norfolk Business Board, the Adapted Sports Hub, Fisher Fleet and quay structures, housing delivery, the Nar Ouse site, parish matters and major projects. I also attended the first anniversary event of the Norfolk Citizens Advice Patrons' Club and the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association senior leaders' briefing.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

Between the date of preparing this report and Full Council, scheduled activities include:

- The Guildhall Programme Steering Group, focusing on delivery of the St George's Guildhall and Creative Hub project.
- A pre-meeting for the November Member Major Projects Board.
- A community consultation meeting concerning Aldi's proposals in King's Lynn.
- A further review of housing data relating to Styleman Court.
- The joint panel meeting on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.
- The October King's Lynn Neighbourhood Board meeting, preceded by a visit to the completed Riverfront dry-side facilities.
- An update from Broadland Housing on the proposed Wild Ken Hill development.
- A further major housing data review and a meeting of the ICT Development Group on 28 October.
- A pre-Council briefing on the national planning scheme of delegation, Full Council and the Extraordinary Council meeting to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on 29 October.