

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

9 July 2020

**COUNCILLOR BRIAN LONG – LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES.**

For the period March 2020 to 28 June 2020

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

#### **Corona Virus (CV-19)**

The world wide pandemic has hit West Norfolk hard as it has over the entire world. Our thoughts as a council must go out to all the families directly effected by this who have lost loved ones.

As Leader it became apparent to me early on as we were placed into lockdown that the virus would change the way we had to work and early on I incepted virtual meetings with my cabinet and colleagues. I appointed Cllr Stuart Dark to Cabinet as his experience in dealing with emergencies was probably far in excess of anyone else on the Council, due to his professional background. This allowed members to be briefed by him on the local handling of the council's response to CV19, allowing me to keep a strategic oversight to the whole council's operations including the response.

My personal thanks must go to all our officers who have stepped up to the mark in what has been the most difficult time in this Councils existence. Also I must thank Stuart Dark and all of my Cabinet Colleagues through this difficult time.

To keep the day to day operations of the council working we have had to make changes to our offices, moving entire departments to maintain social distance, creating a shift working system and facilitating more staff working from home. Across every department we have had to change how we work, but providing as we do essential services we have had to do this and maintain as safe an environment as we could for our staff and officers.

During the pandemic we have had to commence new services such as providing emergency food supplies to the vulnerable that were shielding and also we have paid out grants utilising Government funding to in excess of 3300 businesses totalling over £37m. We have found accommodation for our homeless, ran day care for Keyworkers Children and worked with the NHS to free up hospital beds.

It is acknowledged by everyone the fantastic work done in West Norfolk by

our partners in the NHS, Care System and blue light services but it also must not be forgotten that Council Workers have been Key Workers throughout the Pandemic, and the people of West Norfolk, I believe, appreciate what those Council workers have done and thank them.

### **Recovery from CV-19**

As the cases of CV-19 are now diminishing in West Norfolk and across the country it is vital that we now look to recovery of the economy both nationally and locally. Initial physical measures have been put into place to allow maintenance of social distancing, but our local economy will need more than just that to aid recovery. As an organisation we have control over many regulatory functions, such as planning and licensing, it is imperative that we work with business to allow them to recover without inhibiting them with regulation and red tape. As a council we can and will do what we can to invest in our local area to facilitate growth, where possibly bringing forward plans that can create local employment, homes and new business opportunities.

### **Finance**

Having taken all measures necessary during the pandemic we have had to use large amounts of our reserves and whilst our recent budget monitoring report starts to outline our position financially we will have to look at our budget that was agreed in February for 20/21 year. I therefore propose to bring forward with officers an amended budget for the remainder of this financial year.

We have as a council received financial assistance from central government of over £1.6m to date, at the time of writing this report and given the state of all District level councils finances, I have already been lobbying government for more help, this is done in collaboration with the Local Government association and the District Councils Network. I will of course advise further if and when any progress is made.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

### **Norfolk Covid-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board**

As with other areas of the country, Norfolk has created a Local Outbreak Engagement Board, the purpose for which is to organise / incept localised measures including local lockdown or other emergency measures needed to help contain a further outbreak with a local area, such as care home, food factory or even wider up to whole towns or areas. Initially we are creating a model for dealing with this, the main lead is Public Health at NCC, however all district / borough / city council is involved together with the police and NHS. We would also call in other partners as required.

### **3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

During the period of lockdown I have attended the following meetings via Teams or Zoom.

Norfolk Leaders Meetings x 27

District Council Network (DCN) CV-19 Briefings x 14

Kings Lynn IDB Meetings inc Water Management Alliance x 4

Weekly Update from Chief Executive from Management Team x 14

Cabinet Briefings with officers

Cabinet Sifting x 2

MHCLG Briefings x2

Cabinet

Freebridge Housing Board x2

Councillors Briefing from Public Health / NHS

Alive West Norfolk Board x 2

Norfolk Covid-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board

Weekly informal meeting with cabinet colleagues.

Various other meeting with officers – portfolio matters.

Liaison meeting with Downham Market Town Council

Local Government Association CV-19 Briefings.

In addition to these I have had numerous trial meetings to check functionality and train some in using Teams and Zoom