

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**14 July 2022**

### **COUNCILLOR STUART DARK – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CHAIR OF CABINET**

For the period 25<sup>th</sup> April to 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

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

##### **Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations**

I believe it appropriate to start this report by commenting on this Council's support to the celebrations to mark Her Majesty's 'Platinum Jubilee' an unprecedented milestone in the country's history, unlike to be repeated. Amongst the support given this included the council; giving out specially minted 'coins' to c. 35,000 infant and primary school children across the Borough, extending its grant scheme to provide c£14K of funding to support local community events, providing assistance to both Hunstanton and Downham Market Town Council's and delivering 4 days of major activities in Kings Lynn, including fireworks, bands, the biggest ever parade of children's youth groups and a combined service in the Minister to celebrate the Jubilee and the Mayor's civic service. I hope Councillors concur West Norfolk's communities and the Borough's officers can be very proud of how we all marked this once in a lifetime event and I give thanks and pay tribute to the groups, volunteers and staff who made this happen.

##### **Levelling Up Funding Bids and Shared Prosperity Funding**

A major part of my work during this period has been working with portfolio holders and officers from the Borough and Norfolk County Council to submit two major funding bids into government under their 'Levelling Up' programme, in time for its deadline. The larger relates to a c.£40M Transport and Infrastructure improvement scheme to address the long-standing issues of the Southgates access/egress to Kings Lynn and reprofiling the gyratory system. I believe it is worthy of note that the County was only able to bid in for one scheme across the 8 Norfolk districts covering over 2,000 square miles. The fact that this is focussed here, alongside the County Council's ongoing involvement in the Town's Board multi-user Hub and that scheme's associated multi-million pound commitment from that body demonstrates the tangible, magnifier, impact of collaborative working.

The second bid submitted is for c£20M to help create a new Oasis Leisure centre in Hunstanton to replacing the ageing current facility. Consultation in the process of this bid's creation demonstrated a very high degree of support, with over 1,000 respondents to a survey in just two weeks and letters of support from Hunstanton Town Council, James Wild MP (an essential part of the published process) and the newly formed Hunstanton Advisory Group.

At Cabinet during this period these bids were considered and approved alongside the reprofiling of some of the 'Towns Board' projects (The School of Nursing already being successfully delivered). In context, this means with that scheme's £25M and the two 'Levelling Up' bids we are currently actively working on funding and schemes potentially bringing c.£85M of new funding into West Norfolk.

### **Expansion of the Planning Department**

As part of this administration's continuing, self-generated reviews of departments and services to be the best we can be (bearing in mind this council operates on just 7p of every tax pound raised in West Norfolk with nearly 3p of the 7p going to the IDBs in Levys) Cabinet took the decision during the period to significantly increase staffing in the planning department. This follows on from similar work in legal services, fly-tipping enforcement and support to litter picking and communications and engagement.

### **Support to Ukranian refugees**

I am proud to report that West Norfolk is currently supporting 151 refugees from the illegal invasion of Ukraine and resulting humanitarian catastrophe. 35 of these are children placed in local schools. The reception centre based in Kings Court, supported by the Hanseatic Union charity, borough officers, DWP and volunteers (including Ukrainian refugees kindly helping others) is gaining a very good, well-deserved reputation for the support it offers. Funding has been aligned to ensure this vital support function continues as long as it is needed. On behalf of those I have spoken to, I would like to offer my wholehearted thanks to all those locally hosting refugees, supporting the children in schools and working in the centre to achieve this it is very much appreciated.

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

### **This coming week:**

Hosting 'thank you' event, with Mayor for staff who delivered the Jubilee celebrations.

Joint chairing an Armed Forces Covenant co-ordination meeting of Military Charities operating in West Norfolk.

### **September's full council meeting:**

Last week I chaired the annual JEC and a paper is coming forward re this year's proposed pay award for staff.

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

In addition to attending numerous usual development and review meetings with officers and cabinet colleagues, meetings with opposition group leaders and members, I have during this period also attended (in no particular order);

Great Northern and Thameslink regional co-operation meeting

Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board

The New Anglia LEP Board

The Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Champion's Board

Norfolk Covid-19 Engagement Board

Liaison Meeting with DMTC (and its new Mayor)

Meetings with Staff representatives

Chaired the JEC re the annual pay award

Norfolk District Leaders meeting re the potential impact of 'nutrient neutrality'

Meeting of the Hunstanton Advisory Group

Meeting with Hunstanton Town Council

Visit of Ed Argar Minister of Health to the QEH to lobby directly alongside the Hospital's SLT and James Wild MP for a new, replacement hospital

Meeting with Kings Lynn Town Football Club's leadership

Meeting with representatives of the Kings Lynn Fishing fleet and associated industries to assist re the IFCA decision to potential close the fisheries for the season

West Norfolk (NCC and KLWNBC) Transport and Infrastructure Group

3 District Waste Contract Meeting

Meeting with the EA's regional head of investigations to co-ordinate/support the response to recent illegal waste fires

Liaison meetings with KLWNBC and NCC officers to deliver the separate County and Borough bids into the Government's 'Levelling Up Fund' (amounting to c£60M) in time for the July deadline

Meetings with the charity working in the Borough's Ukranian Reception Centre

Exploratory meeting with Norfolk District Leaders re potential 'County Deal' scenarios

Meeting with the Management Team of the Swan Youth Project, Downham Market

Chaired the Appointments Panel to elect a new Executive Director

Chaired the judging panel for the KLWNBC category of the upcoming Lynn News Teaching awards (for inspirational West Norfolk Primary School Teacher)

The Launch Event of this year's 'Festival Too' – with KLWNBC being a continuing supporter and CIL money confirmed for next year's replacement stage

The opening of Holly Meadows School's, CIL funded, cycle track to teach pupils safe riding skills

Both Heacham Primary and Junior Schools to give out Platinum Jubilee Coins on behalf of the Mayor (with Cllr Parish)

Civic events during the Platinum Jubilee holiday

The Queens' Baton relay at Lynnsport

Representing Councillors at the funeral of a staff member who died in service

Armed Forces week Flag raising ceremony

Attended well-received beach clean with other Councillors organised by the council's 'Single Use Plastics Group'