

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 February 2023

COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LAWRENCE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PROPERTY

For the period January to February 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Commercial Property

I am pleased to report that there are no major issues in respect of the commercial property portfolio. Obviously the performance of this portfolio may be affected by wider macro-economic issues, however the team is closely monitoring this.

In previous reports I have mentioned that the team is managing, and addressing, commercial rent arrears on the portfolio – mainly arising during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the Assistant Director for Property & Projects will be going through this in detail with the Corporate Performance Panel on 27th February.

As previously mentioned we may need to look at some repair and renewal issues in order to comply with our duties as a commercial landlord and to ensure that certain commercial premises can continue to be occupied and generate revenue income for the council. The team needs to go through due process as set out within the Council's Contract Standing Orders and they are working on this at the moment.

Some improvement works are already underway with Air Source Heat Pumps being installed at Enterprise Works (managed workshop space) at North Lynn Industrial Estate under the Re-Fit Programme [led by my colleague Cllr Kunes], and this should help the Council with reducing its overall carbon footprint going forward.

KLIC

The KLIC continues to be fully occupied and the team has been looking at reconfiguring some of the rooms within the building to accommodate some of the occupier needs, improve business operations, and generate additional revenue, for example :

- Within KLIC there is some shared workspace areas where business

operators can flexibly hire desk spaces, and the team has been liaising with these small businesses to provide some private space for more confidential meetings and discussions.

- Feasibility, and costing, work is being undertaken to reconfigure the Reception facility. We are looking at a Reception Pod within the ground floor circulation space which will create a more visible presence whilst also freeing up the current Reception office for a potential letting.
- Meeting Room hire rates have also been reviewed and hire charges will change with effect from April. Pricing has been balanced so as not to make them unaffordable. From now on these room charges will be reviewed annually.

In addition, a '*KLIC & Connect*' drop-in event was held at the King's Lynn Innovation Centre (KLIC) on 31st January. Full details will no doubt be in Cllr Middleton's portfolio report but essentially the event was to offer informal networking, information, advice and guidance for businesses from the New Anglia Growth Hub and Innovate UK.

Nar Ouse Regeneration Area

The road and utility infrastructure project is well underway, and we benefitted from receiving a fairly sizeable financial contribution, of nearly £500,000, through the County Deal proposals, which is obviously very welcome.

The Phase 2 speculative commercial units tenders are still being challenged to see if we can reduce the construction costs, and we are exploring the possibility of seeking investment from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to see if this will help make this a viable proposal. As mentioned previously I will report my findings through to Cabinet colleagues in due course once we have explored all avenues.

Riverfront Regeneration Area

The works are progressing well. Please see below a couple of images relating to progress. The site is really opening up now that the main demolition work is almost complete – with the images showing the positive impact upon the adjacent Listed Building, Hampton Court.

Disposals

I am pleased to confirm that we have successfully completed the legal transfer of the Hunstanton Community Centre to Hunstanton Town Council.



Property & Projects Team

Over the past few years the team has struggled with staff retention and recruitment. A slightly different approach has been taken over the past couple of years in an attempt to stabilise the situation and we have moved to seeking to “grow our own” with the appointment of two Higher Level Apprentices. Our first Higher Level Apprentice has recently completed his Property Degree and has achieved a First which is very commendable.

Meetings Attended

Full Council
Portfolio meetings
Cabinet and Cabinet Sifting