

Cabinet Members Report to Council

24 August 2023

COUNCILLOR SIMON RING - CABINET MEMBER FOR TOURISM, EVENTS AND MARKETING

1st July through to 10th August 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

I have spent most of this period continuing to get to know the key individuals and teams within this portfolio and forging, to be honest in most cases 're-building', relationships with external stakeholders. It is so clear that we need to do things very differently from the past.

Marketing and Tourism

The following report on marketing and tourism has been compiled with help from our wonderful tourism team of Two of our hugely enthusiastic but under resourced staff.

Digital Promotions work continues in the back ground almost unseen and during this last period included

Visit West Norfolk.... Naturally

10th July 2023 – The following variant domains paid for and went live for Visit West Norfolk on 10th July to use for the '*...Naturally*' campaign to promote local green tourism, sustainable tourism and responsible tourism under one umbrella for West Norfolk from July 2023 onwards:

westnorfolknaturally.co.uk, www.naturallywestnorfolk.com,
www.westnorfolknaturally.com, www.naturallywestnorfolk.co.uk.

The content for this marketing and promotions campaign, with a wide variety of environmentally conscious tourism messaging, includes:

The *Visit West Norfolk... Naturally* webpage, promoting the following blog posts and pages on the Visit West Norfolk website: [Explore West Norfolk](#), [Nature Corridor Protectors](#), [Good Journey – West Norfolk](#), [Green Flag Awards](#), [Road Safety Awareness for Pedestrians and Cyclists](#), [Sustainable Transport in West Norfolk](#), [Safe and Responsible Travel](#), [Walking in West Norfolk](#), [Cycling in West Norfolk](#) and [West Norfolk Guide to Electric Car Travel](#).

Radio Advert: A *Visit West Norfolk...Naturally* radio advert (a £4.5k paid campaign) has been created in August 2023 and will be launched from the start of September 2023, aired in affluent areas of London in the evenings, for out-of-season tourism promotion of our area.

Our *Visit West Norfolk...Naturally* content also intentionally runs alongside the regional *Visit East of England ...Naturally* campaign which also launched from July

2023. That region-wide campaign touches upon similar themes and is a £100k campaign for East Anglia in general. Visit West Norfolk is a partner of VEE

Good Journey Project

The Good Journey – West Norfolk campaign page launched at the end of July and sits within the website for the national Good Journey campaign. This paid campaign helps visitors enjoy west Norfolk by train, bus, bike and foot and promotes attractions in west Norfolk that offer discounts for car-free visitors.

The team skills complement each other very well with one providing most of the social media content which this period includes, as always, much new content to the Visit West Norfolk Website, including;

Summer Holiday Activities in West Norfolk 2023

Eateries by the coast

Five West Norfolk parks awarded the coveted Green Flag Award

10 of West Norfolk's Best Rest Stops and Picnic Spots

They also continue to proactively contact tourism businesses who are not yet on the VWN website listings for future inclusion.

Other social media posts include;

Posts to promote Norfolk Day on Visit West Norfolk's Twitter and Instagram pages.

A new #DidYouKnow social media campaign. The campaign promotes fun facts about west Norfolk using the hashtag '#DidYouKnow'.

Since 10/07/2023 – present day, 35 tweets have been posted on Twitter, 29 posts on Pinterest and 15 posts on Instagram. The posts promote the following: King's Lynn Festival, King's Lynn architecture, Explore West Norfolk (website and app), Golfing in West Norfolk blog post, BCKLWN summer events, Free Things To Do in West Norfolk blog post, Rover Parking Tickets, Good Journey (West Norfolk), Summer Holiday Activities in West Norfolk 2023 blog post, Eateries by the Coast blog post, Norfolk Day 2023, nature reserves in west Norfolk, and more.

Printed material which supports our many Heritage and Cultural partners. In this period, it includes;

KL Heritage Open Day 2023 booklet

Hansa England: Cultural Cycle Route

KL Maritime Trail

Where to Stay in West Norfolk

Hunstanton Horticultural Trail

Downham Market Gingerbread Trail

Norfolk Coast: Myths & Legends

Other Tourism Department work includes;

'The Hunstanton Observatory'

Ongoing 2023. New elements being added to the venue in August: benches to be purchased for the inside of the venue, laptop plinth has been purchased, presenter's stool obtained and interior wall charts for stars, moon phases and wildlife being created this month.

Final discussions are being held with the RSPCA with regards to promoting themselves alongside KLADAS as partners for accommodation businesses in Hunstanton and beyond to partner-up with, for themselves to create bookable experiences.

Visit West Norfolk aims to support a collaboration of sorts with other local leads in creating a programme of Dark Skies events in Hunstanton for the forthcoming winter onwards.

'A Roadmap Towards Reduced Coastal Health Inequalities'

July 2023 – Philip was interviewed by Norwich UEA project leads, with himself detailing some current workplace and job security/retention concerns on behalf of the local tourism industry. Philip also recommended UEA to contact Dr Adele Powell/NCP for interviews for this project. Norwich UEA project leads are aiming to develop a roadmap of initiatives that could reduce coastal health inequalities in the region through improving employment opportunities and protecting and leveraging coastal heritage and environmental assets.

'Film Friendly Norfolk: Norfolk Screen Sector Forum'

26th July 2023 – As a member of the Norfolk Film Assets Group, our Senior Tourist Officer is included in the drawing up and creation of a new film sector forum for the whole of Norfolk. The forum will include members from the regional creative media industry, film sector employees, digital artists and UEA media students. The forum will invite key councillors to become members. Philip will remain a member.

'King's Lynn Walsingham Way'

Ongoing 2023. The aim of this project being to make an accessible new trail from King's Lynn town centre straight through rural west Norfolk and into Little Walsingham. As a member of this group, we are now heavily involved with this project and leading on the digital recreation of the substantial original handwritten trail, imminent GPX file creation and assorted area-wide research. We and group met with NCC/Norfolk Trails in King's Lynn in July and a business case for future funding has now been created and signed-off. Meetings ongoing.

'The King Charles III England Coast Path'

Ongoing 2023. The Norfolk Trails team are in talks with Visit West Norfolk and BCKLWN Car Parks as to whereabouts the new signage and fittings are going to be placed through King's Lynn for this new path – talks have been happening between departments for the past couple of months.

I make no apology for putting such a long and detailed report about our tourism team into my report, it's not just here to bulk it out. My intention is to demonstrate to Councillors how much work that these incredibly diligent officers do, with a small budget and limited resources. We need to take a closer look at what this team is able to deliver and how effective the current online and paper marketing offerings are. I welcome feedback from ALL Councillors on this subject.

Events

The Corporate Services hard working Events team have also been very busy this summer with the following events completed and planned

King's Lynn so far

15th – 16th July Wimbledon Watch Party – First summer event to utilise giant screen, weather was poor for large parts of both days but hundreds attended. Short tennis court was very popular with children and people stayed for the full five sets on 16th for the men's final.

22nd – 23rd Folk In The Town – Again weather was poor putting off some people, but this event has a fan base who will come and support it regardless. Both headline acts were particularly impressive (Man The Lifeboats and Banter) have introduced people to a style of music they may not have considered listening to.

30th July – Soulful Sunday – Our biggest attendance of the TMP summer events so far, the weather held out as hundreds of people enjoyed an afternoon of soul music provided by two bands and a DJ.

6th August – Summer Fun – Weather was very poor in the build-up to the first band starting, with only a handful of people braving the elements for the first 10-15 minutes of their performance. Once this cleared more people who were passing stayed to enjoy the remainder of their set and the second band who came to perform.

12th August – Women's World Cup Quarter Final Watch Party – England vs Colombia

King's Lynn to come

13th August – Mods & Rockers - Back for the 8th year, celebrating all things two (and three) wheeled. A very popular event with a large fan base, live music from Pat Winn and The Losers and Rebellion. Along with two separate DJ sets.

16th August – PROVISIONAL Women's World Cup Semi Final

19th August – PROVISIONAL Women's World Cup 3rd Place Playoff (depending on England's previous result)

20th August – Women's World Cup Final

24th August – Ukrainian Independence Day – Supporting Ukraine Independence Day with an event of reflection and children's activities including arts and crafts

27th August – 90s & 00s – Live music celebrating the best songs from the 90s and 00s, anticipating a large crowd following the success of this event last year and with it being a Bank Holiday weekend.

3rd September – Mini Meet – Modern and vintage examples of the iconic Mini displayed throughout the Tuesday Market Place.

10th September – Classic Car (as part of Heritage Open Day) – Vintage and classic cars on display throughout the Tuesday Market Place.

Hunstanton So Far

15th July – Outdoor theatre – Poor weather meant the production of MacHamLear was held in the Town Hall, but organisers were happy with the numbers in attendance and all enjoyed the show.

Tennis with the schools has gone well, number of sessions held and well received, however scheduled Tennis coaching during the holiday haven't taken place due to poor response (weather also would have played a part)

Ladies' beginner running course now in full swing, 16 signed up for the course, this can then lead to the joining of the Hunstanton HunnyBees running club on completion

NIA – Aerobics on the Green, been steady, initial course finished but is continuing on self-sufficient basis, with steady numbers

Punch & Judy has begun each Wednesday in August on the Green, week 1 numbers and feedback been extremely positive

Pebble painting (80 kids) & adventurer gardeners (40 kids) on going and again well received will continue through holidays

We supported Hunstanton Carnival via provision of stage (£4K), and loan of barriers and gazebos for event

H DFA music festival went well, good numbers again, we assisted with barriers, gazebos and cable covers

Hunstanton To come

12th August – Outdoor Theatre on the Green – Alice through the looking glass

19th-20th August – Outdoor Cinema on the Green – Screenings of Top Gun Maverick and Grease

20th – 26th August – LTA Tennis Tournament held at The Recreation Ground

31st August – Sunset Health Walk with West Norfolk Health Walks

16th September – Battle of the Bands – 8 west Norfolk bands compete for a prize of a 20 minute set on the main stage at next year's Festival Too

17th September – Hunstanton Rocks Chill Out Sunday - Three amazing bands (Vex, Bear Club and The Chebbs) will provide an afternoon of live music, all three have a great following so this has the potential to be very well attended.

26th October – Hansel & Gretel Puppet Show – Indoor at Town Hall

28th October – Murder Mystery evening – The Hauntings of Hunstanton

11th November – Star gazing event

WOW what a set of events and well done to the whole of the events team.

Culture and Heritage

Festival and Festival Too have had successful seasons that have been both very well attended.

Heritage Day on 10th September is being busily organised by Anna Gunn and the team at the Civic Society and there are big hopes for another great day of showing off Kings Lynn's awesome Heritage assets. This is another example of the vital role that volunteers make to the community effort and demonstration of civic pride that we so desperately need to nurture in this wonderful place.

St George's Guildhall

The project to regenerate the St George's Guildhall site is a very inspiring and exciting project. It has the potential to really make a difference not just to King's Lynn but to the whole of west Norfolk. It is a complex project and is being delivered on a very tight timeframe given the scale and scope of the project. However, it is currently progressing as anticipated (there is a slight delay on the initial timeline but this, it is hoped, will be made up in 2024, there was a contingency within the timeline during 2024 and this can now be deployed to make up the delay).

The project has appointed Pulse (project managers who will assist the design team) and Andrew Morton Associates (AMA – the quantity surveyors). Both of these organisations have now been brought up to speed. Pulse and AMA will now continue to embed themselves alongside the design team, developing the Project Execution Plan (PEP), Master Programme and overseeing the cost plan for the project.

The RIBA Stage 1 review has now been completed by design team Haworth Tompkins (HT).

The review of RIBA STAGE 1 has led to re-thinking some of pedestrian flow around the site which necessitated a re-thinking of some of the locations for activities included within the Business plan approved by BCKLWN. All activity in the business plan can and will remain on site but may be in a different building from that shown in RIBA stage 1 work.

The measured survey and Historic Buildings Analysis (HBA) has continued, with leading firm FAS Heritage providing some early insights to the design team ahead of the HBA report due in autumn. This will provide the first ever site wide survey of the entire Guildhall site to an archaeological standard and it is the first time that the site has been subject to this level of analysis and reporting. There will be a public lecture on the findings currently pencilled for October.

Activities at the Guildhall

The delivery of the Summer Activities for children and young people in association with Norfolk Museum Service (NMS) in the Guildhall has started and attendance/feedback from the events so far has been positive. At the time of writing all events have been fully subscribed. Again, we have seen success with children and young people generally, young carers and children who have parents for whom English is not a first language.

Work has also continued to prepare for an exciting visual art exhibition scheduled in the Fermoy Gallery and Shakespeare Barn for September and October. This will be the first time both spaces have been in use simultaneously for a very long time.

Planning and preparation is underway for further events for a broad spectrum of people in the autumn.

In the immediate future work will focus on the continuation of the RIBA Stage 2 design work, finalising the HBA, stakeholder engagement around that, review of the PEP and master programme, continuing consultation meetings with HE & NT regarding the CMP, appointment of Comms and Marketing tender and the delivery NMS Summer activities, Heritage Open Day (HOD), the exhibition scheduled for October and other events in Autumn.

Leisure

The results of the consultation on the future use of KASET has been completed and once the consultants have completed their 'cost certainty' figures on their proposals a report will be presented to Cabinet. Meanwhile, the current usage remains very disappointing and highlights the need to take action.

Membership

From 2013 until Covid-19 hit, public sector penetration rates remained above the 5% mark; the current rate of 4.9% was last seen over 10 years ago, back in 2012. Although the last 12 months have seen public sector penetration begin to recover from its post-Covid dip, it is yet to fully rebound.

Our penetration is considerably higher than the national average, despite increased local competition in Kings Lynn.

Sports Courses and sessions

We have seen considerable increases in participation swimming, tennis and walking netball.

Social media feedback has been exceptional on the main mother and toddler/parent and toddler Facebook groups for Kings Lynn.

Holiday activities and Parties

New birthday parties have been introduced at sites to include an electric go cart party in collaboration with PartyKartz, a bouncy castle and Didi car party at Downham Market, and a water inflatable at St James.

Exciting new additions have been added to the summer holiday programme to include a STEM K'nex family Challenge.

Many local children have been offered the opportunity to access AWN activities through the subsidy provided by the BCKLWN. £1 and .50p subsidised attendances are 366 to date.

Over 525 children have received a free healthy meal and attended one of our holiday clubs so far this Summer holiday. With another 533 due to attend in the remaining 3 weeks.

Alive West Norfolk has become Norfolk's first leisure company to receive accreditation for its pools. We have been accredited with a nationally recognised standard for pool water treatment and quality at three of their swimming pools by the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG). The award has only been handed out to 30 sites across the country, with Alive being three of them.

The Corn Exchange team have been as busy as usual.

Cinema:

As at end of June the cinema is slightly down on attendance compared to 2022. This is all down to the quality of film being released. Last year Top Gun came out at the beginning of June which saw strong sales.

This year Barbie, Indiana Jones and Mission Impossible were late releases (July) so we are optimistic sales will be back where they need to be after the summer. That optimism has paid off and Barbie & Oppenheimer have come to the rescue and targets have been met.

Nationally cinema attendance levels have not yet returned to pre-COVID-19 levels and the operating environment remains extremely challenging.

Silver Screenings have gone from 1 screening to 3 screenings a month. This is in partnership with the Priory Rotary club and has become a very good social event for the over 60's.

In partnership with St James Pool, Toddler Tuesdays, during Term Time only. Parents with Toddlers have been watching a child film and have a free drink for £4 and/or pop to St James and have a swim and a drink again for £4. All are given a loyalty card which gets stamped when they arrive. After 6 stamps they get a free film/swim. This has been hugely successful with attendance at the cinema and swimming pool selling out.

Special dementia screenings have taken place which have been attended by various care homes.

Birthday Parties are still going well. The Majestic no longer are providing Birthday parties and are now passing any enquiries on to the Corn Exchange. Another example of both cinemas working well together.

Corn Exchange are also taking hires from local schools for end of term outings for their children. 3 schools have hired the cinema.

Theatre:

Theatre is slightly down on predicted Income. This has been due to 3 shows cancelling their tours in April and May. However, we are 38% up on ticket sales than June 2019 (pre covid) which shows customers confidence is returning. With sell out shows in the rest of the year the theatre should get back on track.

Some new shows/ideas have been trialed. Last week corn exchange had a Cheesy Bingo night. This is Bingo with a difference when people sing, dance, win prizes and of course play bingo. They could have sold it out 3 times over. As it was a huge success it has been re-booked it for 2 nights in November, hopefully for office Xmas parties. I'm sure Councillors could get together to organise a night out at the cheesy bingo!

The new Corn Exchange brochure landed 13th July. This is posted to 11,500 customers and there have been 36,000 printed which are distributed around the borough.

All stage lighting is now LED, funded through the Council capital programme. The Lighting engineer gave calculations on electric saving. Before there were 58 x 1KW par can lights. Each cost £280 a year in electricity, which at today's prices is roughly £16,000 in total. They have now been replaced with just 4 LEDS which cost £40 a year to run, Total £160. A huge saving. Currently going out to tender for the auditorium lighting, which will then mean the Corn Exchange is nearly 100% LED lighting throughout the building.

There was another successful day with Orchestra Live and 6 local schools performing 2 shows at the Corn Exchange. The afternoon show was for Key stage 1 pupils and the evening was for the parents. This is the 10th year of this partnership, although Orchestra Live have been partnered with the Borough Council for 20 years. There is one year left of the current funding and I will be recommending an extension to that funding after seeing for myself the wonderment in the eyes of the children performing. This type of cultural activity that reaches out to some of the schools in wards with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the County, a statistic we all should be ashamed of.

Highlights/coming up:

Kaleb Cooper (from Clarkson's Farm) has been booked. He is going on a National tour which had originally missed out Norfolk completely. Because of Philip's relationship with the promoter, he was able to get him booked into Kings Lynn. The 1st show sold out within a day, and he has now agreed to do a matinee the same day. This is bringing a whole new audience to the Corn Exchange from across the County as he isn't going to Norwich.

We are very fortunate to be having 2 west end musicals in the programme. "Buddy The Musical" is on for a week in September and "Blood

Brothers” is on for a week in March 2024. We also have the National tour of “The Mousetrap” coming for a week at the end of October. All are expensive shows but with the correct marketing should do very well, and again bringing in a new audience.

Pantomime sales are up 800 on 2022. There is a new Panto dame this year as Ian Marr has decided not to do Pantomime this year. Ian has been the dame for 12 years. Public feedback about Ian not being here, has been Ok. The proof will be in future sales and feedback of the new dame. The new dame, Nick Barclay, has worked for Jordan Productions for many years and is a very experienced dame.

Town Hall

Activity days are planned for the summer, which are drop-in sessions. These are at Stories of Lynn and the Guildhall.

Work experience placements are taking place with Rachael through NCC
Stories and museums have had a couple of sleepover events.

20 July – Dementia home residents came for homemade biscuits, tea and a look around

Town Hall bookings coming in well, 40+ weddings booked for this year, 20+ booked for next financial year and already 4 booked for 25/26 financial year.

Once again this is a very long report but I think that at least once a year Councillors are reminded about the superb work that is being carried out on their behalf by officers in all of these areas.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

I will be attending many more events over the coming month and have scheduled countless meetings in order to give me sufficient knowledge to enable me to lead on this portfolio.

Work is urgently needed to restore the relationship with volunteers and outside groups, as well as taking decisive action where we are not efficiently utilising our resources. Facilities do not all have to make money, we are not a business, but where we are subsidising activities it has to be value for money and there are many areas where it is not. I and this administration are not prepared to leave the problems to future administrations and future generations.

I intend to bring to Cabinet a number of reports in line with the objectives within our Corporate Plan, that will take this Borough forward and deliver a quality, value for money product to both residents and visitors alike.

Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

I have had numerous meetings with officers and outside bodies

Officers

Oliver Judges
Geoff Hall
Duncan Hall
Martin Chisholm
David Morton
Philip Eke
Bethany O'Brien
Philip Bayfield
Jemma Curtis
Tim Fitzhigham
Honor Howell
David Oudsby
Michelle Drewery

Outside bodies

Civic Society
Town Guides
Festival
Hunstanton Action Group
Old Lenensians
Norfolk Records Committee

I have regular scheduled meetings with most of the above officers and will continue to meet and fact find with outside bodies including those already met with.