

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

24 August 2023

COUNCILLOR – JO RUST CABINET MEMBER FOR – PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

For the period 24th August to October 5th 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters. –

Housing register

1417 live applications

3 Emergency

225 High

462 Medium

727 Low

219 new or change in circumstances received

Housing Options

155 applicants given housing advice, of these 86 progressed into new homeless declarations and/or are ongoing investigations.

Lets advised - 33

I attended an event with Freebridge called Out and About. They hold these approximately 8 times a year. It's an event where many staff go to one of their housing areas and knock on the doors of residents to ensure that they're happy with everything and to find out if there are outstanding pieces of work that need to be undertaken and if there are any other issues they want to raise. With a lot of focus recently being on negative issues with Freebridge and the number of void properties there are, it was really uplifting to see this very positive piece of work and how well it was received.

The state of our local dental services has quite rightly been the focus of attention recently and in order that we can get a better perspective on the issue I organised an online meeting with a campaigner from Suffolk where he gave us the benefit of his experience and an in-depth view of the nationwide situation. I think I'm correct in saying that all those who attended found it very useful.

There have been concerns raised over the situation with the Winter Night Shelter and I have been working closely with the housing team to try to bring the matter to a more positive resolution. We absolutely recognise the ongoing need for this facility, however the operating model isn't functioning in the manner that enables it to obtain the necessary amount of funding that it needs. Having been a volunteer at the night shelter since it opened back in 2017/18, I do have first hand experience in the matter and I'm confident that the housing team have taken all steps that they can to provide support to ensure the facility was able to alter its model, but this support wasn't taken up. However, we will continue to do what we can and the council and officers will work to provide solutions, suggestions and support.

I attended my first Norfolk Integrated Care Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board meeting in Norwich on Wednesday 26th. It was a jam-packed agenda, but useful and informative. The meeting started with the Health and Wellbeing Board presenting annual reports on the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board. It was felt that the work being done with children was very good. It was acknowledged that there are areas for improvement for adults. This was followed by a presentation on the better Care Fund which is focussed on the NHS and local authorities working together supporting people centred care to prevent hospital admissions and trying to get people discharged from hospital to their normal place of residence. It has a range of services that benefit our population. Reablement was identified as being an important service, so I asked why Benjamin Court in Cromer had closed, if this was the case. The answer I received was the same justification given for closing Children' Centres – It's just a building and the services will be delivered in the community and the staff are all being given work to do.

We then heard of the "Aging well" priorities from the Integrated Care Partnership. There are 7 priorities. It was recognised that there are significant inequalities in the social and economic situation of our elderly population. We want to support people to age as well and as healthily as possible. The gap in life expectancy between the rich and the poor is growing bigger. 1 in 4 people in Norfolk are over 65 and by 2040 the number of people over 70 will increase by 55%. As I'm in that bracket I was glad to hear of the work that is being done to help me age healthily, but I questioned why it was so hard for our residents to get a blue badge to help them remain independent. There appears to be a lot of good work that will take place, but I am keen to hear from you if any of your elderly residents feel they are not getting the support that they need to live independently and healthily. It was clear from this presentation that there is a move to offer more services in the community and only offer those service which must be delivered in a hospital, in hospital. This also is echoed in the West Place Quarterly Newsletter and is the reason why we will likely be faced with having a new hospital that is built to offer the same number of beds as it currently has. I have asked the CEO of the QEH for a meeting to discuss this.

We heard from Assistant Chief Constable Nick Davison about the "Right Care, Right Person" implementation. This has been co-produced with the Mental

Health team and is about avoiding inappropriate and avoidable intervention by the police with people who are in a mental health crisis. They have adopted the Humberside approach and the project has been split into 4 areas. 1. Concern for welfare. 2. Walk out of care facilities – AWOL from MH establishments. 3. Transportation of patient and 4. Section 136 of the MH Act – voluntary MH patient. This was presented to senior LA officers in June 2023, and they went back and looked at their own responsibilities and how the roll out might affect them. It was reinforced that the police aren't walking away, but they are making sure that they deal with their duty of care and statutory responsibility. Concern for welfare calls will be dealt with when there is a real and immediate concern for life. This is about delivering a better service for those who are in crisis. Basically, it's similar to the police no longer using their emergency powers to close roads during events like Remembrance Sunday. It's not an emergency as it's a planned event. So, event organisers now have to pay for security firms to administer the road closure. In the instance of those experiencing mental health crisis, the police are not the appropriate agency to deal with that unless the person is in immediate concern for life.

We were given a presentation on the integrated winter plan for 23/24. The ICS hasn't had a summer where the pressures have abated, and this is evidently going to cause challenges in the winter when health pressures are more demanding.

Finally, we received a presentation on respiratory disease: Public Health Outcomes and Prevention Priorities for the System. Sadly, Gaywood was named as one of the worst areas for respiratory diseases. Some of this is down to issues like smoking, BMI, air pollution and occupational risks – environmental and societal, but there are many other causes too. Damp and mould in housing was one reason. Each year there are 50 extra early deaths than expected in the most deprived Core20 communities. I have written to Freebridge to ask them how many of their properties have been identified as having damp and mould and have asked to be a part of the solution.

At a shared prosperity funding meeting held on Wednesday 27th Cllr Beales and I raised questions about the planned MUCH accommodating some health facilities. It was explained that this had been queried some time ago and while it could accommodate some teaching and learning, it would not be suitable to actually deliver NHS services. I will continue to seek alternative premises where this could be achieved, working with the relevant cabinet members and officers.

I attended a meeting with the Project lead of the Hanseatic Union and the manager of Lily to discuss the important work that they are doing. I hope to find a way to make this a permanent service but will of course need to find a more secure way to fund it.

The number of empty properties that we have in the borough has been raised by residents and fellow councillors and I am working with the relevant officer to explore the benefits of restoring the role of an Empty Properties Officer to

manage this. While we do benefit from additional council tax payments from long term empty homes, I think we'd all agree that we would prefer the homes to be brought back into use to accommodate families.

I visited The Workshop on Friday 29th September and learned of the creative courses that they offer to those aged 2 and upwards. Making sure that dance, drama and the arts are accessible is vital to ensure our creative side can grow and flourish and we're not just made to be tools of business.

I attended a meeting arranged by the Independent Leader, Terry Parish, for the chairs of Parish Councils. It was to hear of the that Parish Councils have and to work more closely with them. The meeting was well attended and I was glad to be able to speak to them about some of the issues that they had.

At E7C on Tuesday 3rd we had presentations from our Energy Efficiency Officer, Jacob Medlock, who gave an informative presentation on the different ways that council is assisting our residents to take up one of the numerous energy efficiency schemes on offer and in doing so, cuts the cost of their heating bills and lowering their carbon emissions. The committee agreed the Care Leavers Covenant and to extend the funding for the Boost project, previously known as the Youth Retraining Pledge and only operated in the boundary of King's Lynn. It will now be expanded to cover the whole of our Borough area and will continue to provide the necessary support to get people who are at risk of being not in education, employment or training, or are socially isolated, engaged in skills and training.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

I will be chairing my first meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership on Thursday 5th October.

I will be meeting with the Freebridge CEO on Friday 6th October where I will be asking how many of the homes have damp and mould and how we can work together to remedy this situation.

I am looking forward to attending a flute solo at Snettisham Church on Friday 13th October, hosted by Classical Music Rocks. I hope others will attend this event which makes classical music accessible for all.

I will be attending an Integrated Care System summit in Norwich on Tuesday 17th October.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

18/08/23 Purfleet Pantry

19/08/23 Pride

21/08/23 Supported Strike Action at Juniper House for Unite members at Freebridge Housing

21/08/23 Briefing re Freebridge Housing

23/08/23 Meeting with CEO, Leader and officers of Freebridge Housing

24/08/23 Ukrainian National Day

24/08/23 Full Council
26/08/23 Greyfriars Art Space
29/08/23 E&C Town Hall
31/08/23 Portfolio Meeting
31/08/23 KLACC sifting
01/09/23 one to one with CEO of Freebridge
01/09/23 Magistrates Court Open Day
02/09/23 Groundworks Art Gallery exhibition
03/09/23 Burstn Strike School Rally
04/09/23 Planning
06/09/23 Planning Sifting
07/09/23 Portfolio meeting
07/09/23 CIC meeting and shadowing session
19/09/23 Dental Services campaign meeting
20/09/23 Place shaping day Out and About team Freebridge
21/09/23 Portfolio briefing
22/09/23 session 3 member's induction Other Major Projects briefing.
25/09/23 Shared prosperity funding briefing.
25/09/23 Cabinet Sifting
26/09/23 Cabinet
27/09/23 Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board - NCC
27/09/23 Town Deal Project Meeting
27/09/23 Cabinet Briefing
28/09/23 Portfolio Meeting
28/09/23 Additional Cabinet Meeting
29/09/23 – Freebridge Picket Line support
29/09/23 Hanseatic group meeting
03/10/23 Democratic Services meeting
03/10/23 E&C
04/10/23 Enterprise Zone Briefing
05/10/23 Health and Well-being Partnership meeting
05/10/23 Housing Briefing