

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**23 November 2023**

### **COUNCILLOR ALISTAIR BEALES - CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS**

For the period 19 October to 23 November 2023

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

##### **Major Housing Project**

###### **Florence Fields**

The first phase of piling continues, with minimal disruption to neighbouring properties as a priority. To that end, much of the piling directly adjacent to King's Lynn Academy was completed over half term. Whilst this activity is going well, progress on other activities has slowed due to the heavy rainfall from Storm Babet. This has caused significant water management issues, with parts of the site now being bunded to create water storage to ensure local homes, roads and footpaths are not impacted by water runoff. The situation is difficult but manageable. The problem is greatly exacerbated by a collapsed culvert under the adjacent network rail line which is reducing water flow. The Corporate Projects team and Property Services team are applying pressure to Network Rail to resolve as soon as possible. Once resolved, the improved drainage will benefit all properties upstream including the playing field at Kings Lynn Academy and the water on the site itself can be discharged into the local drainage network allowing works to progress quickly. A further technical issue arises in that the Internal Drainage Board are unable to issue the allowance to discharge until the culvert issue is resolved.

The corporate projects team are working with the Ward Members to produce information boards that will help communicate to local residents the many advantages of the development.

Whilst the vast majority of trees on site will remain, Lovell are preparing to remove the handful of mature trees necessary for the works, subject to prior animal surveys. The team has met with artists who may be able to use the wood to create public furniture and sculptures.

Whilst Cllr Moriarty and Cllr de Whalley are reviewing a delegated decision on the future management of the wildlife site, a group of local volunteers attended the area on the 23rd and 30th of October to support the Borough Councils Public Open Space team in clearing debris and creating wood piles to improve natural habitats.

###### **Southend Road**

Storm Babet also caused concerns at Southend Road, but it was the wind and not rain which impacted this project. Crane lifts of the concrete floors and roofs could not take place, causing a delay to all trades. The corporate project team is working with

Lovell to identify opportunities that will offset these delays. It is now expected that all roof trusses will be in place for the 18th of December (subject to weather).

Marketing of the properties should be commencing imminently (of the time of this report) subject to final review of the marketing information and legal information.

### **Salters Road**

Progress at Salters Road remains very good, with the first handovers to Freebridge Community Housing predicted for early January. Handovers to Freebridge are planned in phases at their request, to assist with the logistics of letting and occupying the properties. 15 properties will be handed over in January, with the first of the houses almost complete other than the surrounding landscaping. I plan to arrange a site visit for elected members sometime in the next two months so they can see the new homes for themselves.

Existing problems relating to Homes England restrictions delaying the first handovers and payment have now all been overcome and Freebridge monthly payments for the properties has begun helping to support the wider capital programme.

Freebridge and the Borough continue to work towards a creating communities event that will help integrate occupants into the local community.

### **ITC**

#### **Members ITC equipment**

Since taking on ITC relatively recently as part of my portfolio, a priority has been to update Members ITC kit, which in some cases is outmoded making it close to being unfit for purpose. The ITC Dept. have contacted Members a number of times asking for update needs. As a result, the following action has been taken (as at 10-11-23).

- Number of 10<sup>th</sup> generation iPads requested – 23
- Number of 10<sup>th</sup> generation iPads issued – 12
- Number of Dell Latitude 3440 laptops requested – 18
- Number of Dell Latitude 3440 laptops issued – 7
- 19 Members yet to respond.

The Department had hoped to put in a single order for Councillor kit to make the roll out as efficient as possible in terms of officer time and resource. Some late responses and the lack of response entirely from some 19 councillors delayed that, but delivery has now been expedited and those members awaiting equipment should soon receive it.

### **Business Support & Grant Funding**

#### **Love Your Town**

The Love Your Town Fund is a grant funding scheme for the King's Lynn & West Norfolk area, specifically the towns of Downham Market, Hunstanton and King's Lynn, with an investment fund of £6,000. Community groups or businesses can apply for a grant of up to £1,000 to help generate footfall into town centres.

The investment fund is a partnership between us (Norfolk County Council) and the borough council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk.

- [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/LoveYourTown](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/LoveYourTown) to see if you're eligible.
- Submit your expression of interest by **5pm on 8 December 2023**

### **Business grant funding – an overview.**

Despite the already lengthy report to Council, I have reproduced below in full, an excellent article from one of our officers. The article has been widely circulated and she was generous in ascribing it to me, but it is entirely the work the BCKLWN Regeneration Programmes Manager.

West Norfolk supports more than 5,000 small businesses, most of which are micro and small enterprises, making them crucial to a healthy economy and job growth.

In this article we'll be telling you some of the support you can apply for that could help **your** small business to thrive. The **Shared Prosperity Fund**, administered by the borough council, aims to support small businesses who:

- provide leadership for west Norfolk as a centre of excellence for the visitor economy.
- promote innovation and entrepreneurship.
- support people to access training opportunities.

Our website gives more information on opportunities at [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/wnsfpf-grants](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/wnsfpf-grants), some of which are detailed below. Central to this is our financial support to the New Anglia Growth Hub to provide businesses with a 'one stop shop' for free, impartial and bespoke advice; they will tailor the business solutions that are available from a range of organisations that match your business needs including:

### **Getting started solutions**

Any small business or start-up needing help with market research or developing business skills, finding funding sources or accessing company reports can check out their local Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC). In King's Lynn, BIPC Norfolk provides free access to a range of business databases and publications, guidance on protecting intellectual property (IP) and hosts networking events. Find out more at: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/business-and-careers-support/bipc](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/business-and-careers-support/bipc).

### **Funding solutions**

- **Love Your Town** offers business grants of up to £1,000 to support initiatives, events and activities that will increase footfall in King's Lynn, Hunstanton and Downham Market. Visit [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/loveyourtown](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/loveyourtown); expressions of interest are open until 8<sup>th</sup> December.
- **Go Digital** has supported more than 1,000 Norfolk businesses to move online, with excellent feedback. An expert conducts a digital audit and provides a report to identify digital opportunities. Businesses can then apply for a grant of up to £500 to implement their action plan.

Apply online at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/godigital](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/godigital)

- **Rural Business Capital Grants** support new and established rural businesses, including farm businesses looking to diversify, to develop new products and facilities that will benefit the local economy. Businesses can apply for capital grants of £10,000 to £100,000. The maximum grant is 50% of eligible costs, up to £100,000. Projects must be match funded, ready to proceed and completed by 31 December 2024.

#### Training solutions

- **West Norfolk Training Grants** can help businesses to upskill employees, improve resilience and productivity, and support staff. Grants of £500 to £3,000 are available, with funding covering up to 75% of total training costs. There is no limit to the number of employees being trained (subject to a maximum grant award per business).
- **Apprenticeships Norfolk** offers impartial advice in a range of areas, from choosing the right scheme and training provider to navigating the process. The team also matches larger businesses with unspent apprenticeship levy to smaller businesses who need help with training costs. Just under £1million was raised in our initial trial period. [www.apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org](http://www.apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org).

#### Innovation solutions

- **Innovate UK** funding helps businesses to develop new products, processes and services. The application process is complicated, but the county council offers mentoring to guide business owners through. You can find out more at: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding/innovation-grant-mentoring](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding/innovation-grant-mentoring)

If you are running a business of any size, I urge you to contact the New Anglia Growth Hub to find the right support for you. Visit [www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk).

## 2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

### Lynnsport 1

A report is being prepared for cabinet to review the viability of the Lynnsport 1 site, which if agreed, will see development starting in Q1 / Q2 2024.

### Members expenses

The ease of use (or otherwise) of this system has bene widely commented upon and will be reviewed in detail by the ICT Development Group. A user guide has also bene included in the latest Members Bulletin.

## 3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

- 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct – Shareholder Committee.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct – meeting with Deputy Leader.
- 25<sup>th</sup> Oct – Cabinet briefing.
- 27<sup>th</sup> Oct – Town Deal Board (apologies given).
- 30<sup>th</sup> Oct – Cabinet sifting.
- 31<sup>st</sup> Oct – NCC briefing on new rail infrastructure costs (Teams).
- 6<sup>th</sup> Nov – grant funding meeting (UKSPF) with officers.

6<sup>th</sup> Nov – Equality Training.

8<sup>th</sup> Nov – Cabinet briefing.

9<sup>th</sup> Nov – Town Deal Board facilitated development session.

9<sup>th</sup> Nov – meeting of NCC and BCKLWN Cabinets.

10<sup>th</sup> Nov – ICT Development Group

13<sup>th</sup> Nov – grant funding meeting with business/partner bodies (Teams).

14<sup>th</sup> Nov – Environment & Community Panel.

15<sup>th</sup> Nov – Town Deal Board meeting re skills (Teams).

16<sup>th</sup> Nov – Shareholder Committee (may be reorganised).

17<sup>th</sup> Nov – accounts training.

18<sup>th</sup> Nov – Special Cabinet.

21<sup>st</sup> Nov – portfolio meeting.

22<sup>nd</sup> Nov – Cabinet (budget development).

22<sup>nd</sup> Nov – Cabinet briefing.