

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 November 2023

**COUNCILLOR – JO RUST CABINET MEMBER FOR – PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**

For the period October 5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2023

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

Housing register

1469 live applications

3 Emergency

224 High

477 Medium

765 Low

187 new or change in circumstances received

Housing Options

125 applicants given housing advice, of these 76 progressed into new homeless declarations and/or are ongoing investigations.

Lets advised - 25

On Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October I chaired my first Health and Well-Being Partnership meeting. This group brings together a variety of stakeholders from Norfolk County Council, health services and the wider Voluntary and Community services. The purpose of the partnership is to make a positive impact on people's health and well-being. The partnership works collectively to drive strategies and activities to promote the health and well-being of residents, address the wider determinants of health, tackle health inequalities, develop and deploy support which will prevent a crisis from happening and align, develop and influence NHS and local government services and commissioning.

Local government hasn't traditionally had a role in health services, but the relatively new Integrated Care System (ICS) and Integrated Care Boards (ICB) are changing the way in which our health services operate. They have brought together a wide range of organisations and stakeholders to improve services and provide more joined up health and care for our residents. The Health and Well-being Partnership is a sub group of the Integrated Care Partnership. Basically, the ICS wants to stop us getting ill and keep us out of

hospital. They plan to do this by early intervention. I have noticed that the ICB have not got a representative from dentistry on their membership. I will work to address this.

On the same day I attended my first meeting of the Gaywood Allotments Trust. I discovered that it wasn't related to allotments, but a charity to provide support to families within the parish of Gaywood, with some financial support. I was pleased that we were able to provide support for two families in our area at that meeting and more followed on-line.

On 6<sup>th</sup> October I spoke on Radio Norfolk about a Careline scam where our Careline users were being contacted by organisations other than Careline, to swap their analogue unit for a digital one and either being swapped to another provider or asked to pay money up front. Our Careline service would never ask for money up front. The following week was national Scam Awareness week and so I spoke again with Radio Norfolk about the matter. Getting this information out there would undoubtedly help to stop some of our vulnerable Careline users being scammed.

I have met with the Freebridge exec to further discuss ways that we can work together and to find out the situation with houses with damp and mould. Sadly there are 195 properties which are suffering from this problem. They are treated chemically to eradicate the problem followed by a root cause analysis to ascertain the reason. While some of the problems are structural, some are related to poverty. All properties categorised as being most serious will be treated by the end of November. Freebridge have a support fund that some residents can access. They also have accessed wave 2 funding of the decarbonisation fund and will be concentrating on a fabric first approach. Freebridge are launching their academy in January, working with the College of West Anglia (CoWA) around apprenticeships and skills and learning.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October I attended an Integrated Care Summit in Norwich. The ICS (Integrated Care System) is now 1 year old. The day was used to hear about some of the wonderful work that is taking place in Norfolk and to discuss what changes we need to make to ensure that we are able to support people to live independently and well for longer and avoid hospital admissions. We had discussions around Courageous Leadership – being bold enough to put forward ideas that go against the “we've always done it that way” way of thinking. Sometimes it is about relinquishing power and sharing responsibilities and doing things differently and better. The ICP (Integrated Care Partnership) is ambitious for Norfolk but it will mean doing things differently and sharing budgets. This will be painful in some cases, as our Borough Council provides services which stop people going into hospital which some might think should be paid for by the NHS. We do receive Better Care Funding (BCF) to provide some services, but we also provide some discretionary services which our council funds. I believe that this is appropriate and will continue to make a strong case for the continuation of these services.

I was pleased to attend the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of The Purfleet Trust

on the same day. It was wonderful to see so many people who had been successfully supported by Purfleet now being part of the staff group and to hear how all those who had been supported into permanent tenancy had retained it.

On 18<sup>th</sup> October I attended another Freebridge Out and About day along with Cllr Sandell. I spoke to many residents and was pleased to be able to signpost quite a few to apply for Attendance Allowance which is money available to those who need extra help at home due to an illness or disability for those aged over the State Pension Age (SPA). There are two rates, £68.10 for the lower level and £101.75 for the higher rate. Claiming attendance allowance won't reduce any other income you receive and it's tax-free. Claiming it can even help you get other benefits such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support. I'd urge you to check in with your local ward residents to see if they might need it.

That evening I popped along to the West Norfolk Young Carers Halloween Disco. I and a number of other councillors used some of our councillor grant to support. It was lovely to see so many young carers having a wonderful time dancing, apple bobbing, pumpkin carving and chatting. A short period of brief respite from their caring responsibilities.

I've been having some discussions with officers and residents over Community Led Housing which is about local people playing a leading and lasting role in solving local housing problems, creating genuinely affordable homes and strong communities in ways that are difficult to achieve through mainstream housing. I am attending an on-line meeting to gain further information to top up that which some of our officers provided me.

On 20<sup>th</sup> October I visited The Swan Youth Project and I'm so pleased to hear that our council is planning to provide vital funding to see the work that they do is able to continue. The amazing organization provides a plethora of services to support young people and their families. They're based in Downham Market and I was incredibly impressed by the work that they do and thank Cllr Bullen for inviting me and Anna for giving me the full tour.

I met with the CEO of the QEH later that day and was rather concerned to hear that the deadline of having both phases of the MSCP (Multi Story Car Park) open by January 2025 in order to be able to start the build of the new hospital by January 2026 might be a real challenge. So far the funding has not been released and is only due mid year 2024. It takes away all flex time and makes that burning bridge of 2030 even more worrying.

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October I attended 1 of the 12 Food for Thought sessions taking place in Downham Market. I spoke to the CAB (Citizen's Advice Bureau) officer about the work that they are doing working alongside the Trussel Trust. I then saw the amazing work undertaken by the Lily staff (huge thanks to Betsy, Becky, Judith and Chef Jenny [and Tim B]) for doing so much to make sure the session ran smoothly and was publicized. Radio Norfolk were there to hear more. I tasted 3 delicious dishes cooked up from very

little. I took the recipes home and will definitely be making them myself. It was heartening to see so many people attended. Ages ranged from 6 months to 80.

On Friday 27<sup>th</sup> I attended an online meeting about the South Lynn Health Centre which is in the process of being built.

In the evening I attended my first meeting of our Twinning Towns group which works to arrange our twinning times with Emmerich En Rien. It was lovely to share a relaxing time with so many people and to enjoy a delicious meal provided by Sarah Shapeero-Lown.

On Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October I was at The Place from 10am until 1pm for a Beat The Bills Session. I genuinely can't express how proud I am of the work that our council and our officers do to try to make the lives of our residents better. Each and every one of the council officers in attendance were an absolute credit to our area. I give a huge thanks to Judith, Emma, Jo and all those who made this possible. The large number of our residents who called in and received a first class system to support them was just wonderful. I'd urge you all to attend one when they're in your area. On a really personal note, I called my mum and asked her to come along and as a result, she organized a visit from our Energy Efficiency Officer Jacob, to see what retrofitting energy efficient measures that her house might benefit from. Please do the same for your residents (and of course, family!).

I met with Lynnsport on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November and learnt more about the proposed 3G pitch. I received some very reassuring information and will be arranging a meeting with concerned local residents to chat with them about it.

On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November I attended a Wash Barrier meeting at the Princess Theatre Hunstanton. There were a number of other councillors present including our Leader, Terry Parish and Cllr Andy Bullen who were speakers. Cllr Squires contributed to our climate change targets by car sharing with me. The meeting was very lively and residents made clear their opposition to the proposal.

I was fortunate enough to be invited to attend an event hosted by Classical Music Rocks (CMR) on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November. The quality of the show was amazing. The Tenor Anthony Flaum and pianist Siobhan O'Higgins has played to two schools that day bringing access to classical music to a large audience of children. I am looking forward to attending a school visit with Cllr Ring as part of the wider work that CMR does and would urge you to check out their website and attend one of the concerts offered at the end of the day after the school visits have taken place. They genuinely are wonderful.

On Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November I attended the ICS meeting held at County Hall and heard more of the partnership work being undertaken. I am happy to provide written information should any councillor request it.

As a newly appointed member, I attend my first Internal Drainage Board (IDB) meeting on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November at Pierpoint House. I found it incredibly

interesting and learnt about Fools Watercress and the risks that it can present is not properly managed. I also heard a very firm message that the Gaywood Chalk stream river was NOT dredged.

Following that I met with the Care and Repair team and heard more about the work that they do. While a lot of it is statutory and funded through grants such as the Disability Facility Fund, some of the services are discretionary, which means that we don't have to provide them. As these services can help people live at home independently and well for longer, I will continue to make the case for these services to carry on.

I then had a monthly meeting with Freebridge exec team along with our Assistant Director for Place. I'm really pleased that we're strengthening our relationship with one of our key partners and look forward to hearing from them when they speak to elected members in the New year.

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

7/11/23 – LGA Cabinet Leadership Development Session  
7/11/23 - Norfolk IV service meeting  
7/11/23 - King's Oak Art Exhibition – Shakespeare's Barn  
7/11/23 - Classical Music Rocks – Town Hall  
8/11/23 – Integrated Care Partnership Meeting – County Hall, Norwich  
8/11/23 – Budget Meeting – Cabinet  
8/11/23 – Cabinet Briefing  
10/11/23 – Regis House Care And Repair team meeting  
10/11/23 – Freebridge meeting  
13/11/23 – Homelessness and Housing delivery meeting  
13/11/23 – Freebridge Board meeting  
14/11/23 - Environment and Community  
15/11/23 – Homestart AGM – Norwich  
16/11/23 – Health and Wellbeing partnership meeting  
16/11/23 – Ethics in Politics meeting  
16/11/23 – Housing briefing  
16/11/23 – KLACC special meeting re special expenses  
17/11/23 – United for Warm Homes  
20/11/23 – Statement of Accounts Training  
21/11/23 – Open Road visit  
22/11/23 – Freebridge 1/4ly CEO meeting

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

5/10/23 – Health and Wellbeing Meeting  
5/10/23 Portfolio Briefing – Housing  
5/10/23 – Gaywood Allotment Trust Meeting  
6/10/23 – Freebridge Meeting  
9/10/23 – Role of the IDB  
10/10/23 – SLA (service level agreements) Meeting  
10/10/23 – Retrofitting Meeting

10/10/23 – Group Meeting  
11//10/23 – Cabinet Briefing  
19/10/23 – Community Led Housing Meeting  
19/10/23 – Housing Briefing  
19/10/23 – Full Council  
20/11/23 – Cabinet Meeting  
25/10/23 – Licensing Sub Committee  
25/10/23 – Cabinet Briefing  
26/10/23 – Portfolio Briefing  
30/10/23 – Cabinet Sifting  
30/10/23 Independent and Labour Meeting  
31//10/23 – Councillor Briefing West Winch Railway Station  
31/10/23 – Cabinet Meeting  
1/11/23 – Planning Training BNG (Biodiversity Net Gains)  
2/11/23 – Equality Training