

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

21st March 2024

COUNCILLOR – JO RUST CABINET MEMBER FOR – PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

For the period February 8th – March 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters. –

It doesn't seem like a week ago that I submitted my last report! But here's my most recent cabinet report on what I've been doing as your portfolio holder covering People and Communities.

On Friday 9th Feb I took part in an internal discussion about Community Led Housing. I really feel that there is scope here for our council and our communities to make a difference to the lives of the communities that we live in. With the help of a fellow Independent Partnership Cllr I would offer this information

Community Housing encourages local communities to take control of solutions to local housing problems. Places where it has worked are areas of housing that is in real need of a refresh – e.g. Toxteth, Hull.

In our area, we have

1. A need
2. A community of parish councils
3. A supply of housing needing improvement
4. Credible local skills, supported by KLWNBC with advice and support
5. Possible access to grants.

A potential model that alleviates many of our calls as Ward Cllrs, might be that FB transfers ownership of properties, either for a leasehold period or freehold to Participating Parish Councils.

PPC's then funds these through access to the Public Works Loans Board and established local community groups to (1) repair (2) manage these homes, with the intent of providing truly affordable local homes. It is clear that one aspect is the terms on which FB might release homes. It might be that refurbishment sites might allow for new build as well to the advantage of FB. They could, after all be leased out for a peppercorn on one model. There will be other models.

Such a scheme might involve grants from KLWNBC to guarantees from

KLWNBC underwritten by the property values. If so KLWNBC might retain control of a number of properties for our own homelessness needs. There is no doubt that there will be other sources of grants such as DHULC, Homes England, NCC. This is especially so as it meets so many different criteria and we may have a new government coming soon.

I also met with the CEO of West Norfolk Carers about the financial situation this organisation finds themselves in. This service is sadly not a statutory function that we are funded to commission, but I think I speak for all of us when I say we feel that there are too many people who get support, advice, and guidance from WNC and we should work to find out what can be done to support it to continue. Our officers and I are still working to assess the situation and see what can be done. We did provide some funding to tide the group over last year and could do the same again. But we must always do a sense check to ensure that this is the best use of our funds. Potentially a better option could be to provide a site to work from and other administrative supportive to alleviate the pressures of those costs.

I went on to take part in a meeting with the head team of Freebridge where we had some of our usual discussions.

This was followed by a celebration of our Council's amazing Apprenticeship students. I don't want to appear as if I'm lecturing, but it's well worth remembering that at any age we can use the apprenticeship route to gain an advanced qualification.

Well done to all those who took part in the Swim for Rotary event on Saturday 10th Feb.

On 12th Feb I took the day off from looking after my grandchildren to attend the Beat the Bills event in Marshland St James. It was another brilliant event that our council puts on to provide support for our residents. Whatever the financial situation our council finds itself in, the officers who provide these services are absolutely doing everything that they can to try to ease the very real financial struggles residents in our borough finds themselves in. The Parish Council were also awarded a net zero certificate as they're taking part in an initiative that falls under Cllr De Whalley's portfolio area to decrease the amount of carbon their community generates.

I met with a Norfolk County Council youth worker, two of our local police offices and the Rector at St Faith's to discuss setting up a targeted youth project on the Fairstead Estate and then, at South Lynn. We're currently making good progress with this and it's expected that the Pizza Project will start on Fairstead in April, running from the Community Centre.

On 13th February we held a special KLACC meeting where it was agreed that we wanted to move forward with a different method of operating; one which gave KLACC members a real say over decision making. With this in mind it was agreed we would move towards becoming an Area Committee, something that wasn't an option under the former administration.

Following that I attended my first meeting as a trustee of King's Lynn Community Football. It was enlightening to see how much was on offer by this group all around community engagement through sport. The group were established in 2002 to develop footballers in the local community and has evolved to engage lots of people in sport, not just football. They are accredited with the FA and cover the ages from 2 – 78. They have an active community programme which goes out to areas of disadvantage to offer free sports courses. I look forward to the work I do with them.

What else would any of us do on Valentine's Day but attend the opening of the Mart. Led by our Mayor and our Leader the opening went smoothly and was very well attended. I attended on the last day with my grandchildren and family and it was reassuring to see the crowds still supporting the Mart. It plays such an important part in the history of our town and long may that continue.

In Thursday 15th I and other cabinet members attended a meeting with the director and the head of West Norfolk Community Transport. It was incredible to hear how much they already offer and their plans for the future. Also illuminating to understand more about the different type of license they hold and what this means they can offer in the way of services. The organisation has been running since 1992 and started its public bus service in 2018. They help overcome rural isolation, with the Go to Town service providing funds to help support the charitable side of the operation. Most of the work that they do is under a section 19 permit and they also offer their dial a bus service which is door to door and can be used for medical appointments, hair appointments or shopping trips. They also offer a rural Dial a Bus which mainly offer shopping trips and runs around school contracts and day care contracts so has a later start. The office is located in St James Car Park and you can also hire a scooter from them to use around town. If you have a resident who is without a car, it's well worth pointing them in the direction of West Norfolk Community Transport to see how they can help.

I attended a meeting as trustee of Gaywood Allotments Trust that evening and was pleased to be able to award some funding to a family in need.

On Wednesday 21st February I attended the District Councils meeting for the Integrated Care System. We spoke about how we can work to address the needs within local populations by working together in multi professional teams to link community organisations and support the local population to live better and healthier at home together. We also provided information about our work to become a Marmot Place and the work that we will do with the Institute of Health Equity to see this come to fruition. From a health perspective this is the right thing to do and it will be led from the bottom up. We had a presentation about the impact that housing has on our health. Poor housing costs the NHS £1.4 billion a year. We have higher than average winter deaths due to cold homes. 15% of our households live in fuel poverty compared to 13% nationally. This is a shocking and distressing situation and reinforces the case for our council to provide decent and secure homes for

our residents. Housing issues are highlighted as one of the key wider determinants of health. In the county we have a number of different schemes to try to alleviate fuel poverty for our residents and ours is led by our Housing Efficiency Officer and uses the ECO Flex 4 scheme to get GPs to make referrals of vulnerable, poorly people with the aim to get their homes retrofitted with energy efficiency measures and so reduce their costs as well as improve the carbon emission levels. We learnt of the difficulties we experience due to a lack of staff to carry out the necessary work and the potential to establish a housing retrofit academy to address this shortage.

The following day I chaired our local meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The meeting produced such a lot of information and debate that we overran time wise, but it was well worth it. We heard how our population is expected to grow by about 8000 people between 2020 and 2040 with the largest growth expected in the older age bands. Around 23,300 people in our borough live in areas that are among the 20% most deprived in England and the life expectancy of both men and women are lower here than the England average. The strategic actions we are working to address are to enhance mental health and wellbeing, improve weight management and reduce alcohol consumption. We work with partner organisations to run schemes and embed changes to help us achieve this. I have previously reported on some of the ways we are doing this.

I later met with a representative of the Motor Neurone Disease association and learned more about the tragic condition and that once this terminal diagnosis has been made, 1/3 of sufferers will die within the year. I was asked to move forward with our council signing the MND charter and to promote Carers Assessments, which I have started to look into.

On Friday 23rd February I attended the launch of Everyone has the Right to Play at Barnham Broom. I was pleased to attend with one of our officers and hear about the need for accessible play equipment. Our Borough has already recognised this need and we're in the process of applying for funding to add accessible play equipment to the area at The Walks. However, so enlightening was the presentation that we're considering pausing our plans with a view to widening the scope of what we provide to ensure that we fully integrate the scheme rather than merely add on. Article 31 on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the right of all children to have rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities. We heard how YABs (Youth Advisory Board) have trained 270 young people to act as youth commissioners and commissioned 50 projects including anti bullying campaigns and 20 youth led campaigns. Young people are the experts in what it means to be a young person in Norfolk today and we should be doing more to engage with them to find out what they need. It was depressing to hear how 1 in 8 households have no access to a private garden and 793 playgrounds have closed in the last 10 years. One of our local people, Lexy, spoke of her campaign, which was delivered to our KLACC group last year, to get accessible play equipment. We heard from Miram Guard who had set up an accessible play area in Exeter and it is the which we would love to mirror in The Walks. Disabled children are 4 times more likely

to feel lonely and excluded than their able-bodied peers. In February 2024 a national Disability Action Plan was launched which specifically refers to accessible play equipment in actions 16 and 17. There is a long list of benefits to having accessible play equipment. It costs 3 times more to raise a child with a disability and this is all too often overlooked. We saw a clear image of the difference between inclusion, segregation, exclusion and integration. We want our play areas to be fully inclusive and it's for this reason we may choose to pause our process and go back to the drawing board. I've spoken with YAB about this, and they want to work with us on this project to make sure that we get it right. 24% of the UK have a disability and 11% of those aged 0-16 do, this reinforces the need to get it right, for everyone. Less than 50% of play areas are accessible. We were encouraged to include an affirmative statement in any play area and community amenity policy that all play areas have inclusion and accessibility to all. Making play areas more accessible prevents issues and concerns and I really want our Borough to get this right.

On Saturday 24th February I attended two events, one in Sainsburys foyer with survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and in the afternoon a service of reflection to remember two years of the war in Ukraine. Both were very moving and involved hearing of the personal accounts of people who had suffered and were still suffering.

I attended CPP on Monday 26th February and spoke about both the need to form an Area Committee for the unparished area of King's Lynn and briefly about the Annual Complaints monitoring report which had been compiled by one of our officers.

On Tuesday 27th February we held another well attended beat the Bills session in Hunstanton Town Hall. Food for Thought was also running in the community hub downstairs, so we had a very visible presence in Hunstanton that day. I spoke to several residents as well as the Town Mayor. Everyone commented on how helpful the event was, with some people finding out from our officers that they were entitled to more financial support than they had been claiming. The event really does do what it says it will. Once again, a big thank you to those staff who go all out for the residents.

E&C was later in the day and it was good to hear from Freebridge about the work they're doing to reduce their carbon emissions and improve the energy efficiency of their housing stock. While there remains a lot of work to do, the commitment to do this is there. It was also amazing to see the presentation about their proposal for a nature area off Dairy Way. I had been made aware of this some time previously but it was great to see it being presented to others and the positive response it received. This area will be a not-for-development site and a native wetland habitat of nearly 22 acres.

I attended a briefing about the potential for an alternative hospital site on Wednesday 28th February. This is something I am now in support of due to the failure of government to release funding in a timely way and the additional pressures that the development of the current site would have on patients and

staff. I think we were sold a vision, which had it come to fruition would have been satisfactory, but I have no faith that it will come to fruition so we must instead work towards something better. This would be an off-site development with real scope to grow.

There was a homelessness and housing delivery task group on Thursday 29th February. We discussed our strategy and the review on homelessness and the need to work at pace, but to get it right. With that need in mind, the timeline is going to be extended. We are gathering the voice of those with lived experience and ensuring that this is fully incorporated into the review and then strategy. It's important that we seek the views of wider contributors and not just work in an echo chamber. We will look to holding a cross partnership launch in October. As a borough we're looking to make sure that we are data driven and led. While it's gratifying that our numbers of rough sleepers are relatively low in comparison to elsewhere, we know this is not good enough as we want to eradicate rough sleeping entirely. We have seen a 325% increase in households with a Full Housing Duty owed who are awaiting social housing, while we have a 41% decrease in available social housing. We had no properties available for private rent that were at the rate paid by Local Housing Allowance in King's Lynn during the snapshot working period.

Later that day I took part in a Sports England Briefing for Councillors on the extension of Place areas. It's about supporting and encouraging our residents to get out and be more active. It's not necessarily about getting people to run a 10k race, or go to a gym session, but to move more in whatever way that's best for them – dancing, walking, going to the park. There are so many things that we can be doing that don't involve scary thoughts of gyms or strenuous activity. We hear how 30% of our children are inactive, but also how 40% of those who go to gyms have been affected by the cost of living. The government have a Get Active strategy and wants 2.5 million more adults and 1 million more children and young people to be active by 2030 and we will only do this by embedding physical activity of part of everyone's day to day life. This helps to tackle health inequalities too. But we also know that councils have a growing financial crisis and there are significant problems being faced by local authorities. I'm hopeful that with the work we're doing with Sports England and our work to become a Marmot Town, we will be able to bring about these improvements to the lives and activity of our residents.

I met with the director of the Night Shelter on Friday and we established a new way of working away from me being a volunteer there, which I will step back from. We remain in dialogue with the organisation and I look forward to seeing their governance review and strategy later this year.

On Tuesday 5th March I had a meeting with the chair and trustees of Open Road, an amazing organisation which helps young people remain in study, albeit a different type of study. Young people there gain qualifications which they can use to get employment. The organisation is looking to improving their premises so they become a more modern building better suited to the needs of those who use it. Open Road are also happy to share their building

with other charities who might be struggling to pay for their own premises.

We had cabinet that evening and we heard that for the first time we now have a comprehensive list of the statutory and discretionary services that we offer. We will be looking closely at these as we work through our transformation process. We also heard from the CEO who has since publicly announced her resignation. We have a long run-in time to find a replacement and do a handover, but from my personal perspective, we will sorely miss Lorraine's calm and experienced hand at the lead.

On Wednesday 5th March I attended the regular Integrated Care Partnership meeting at Norfolk County Council. This meeting was chaired by the Right Honourable Patricia Hewitt in the absence of the usual chair. We heard that the 18-22nd March is Social Workers Week. Thank you to all those who take up this challenging position. We had a report from the director of public health – Stuart Lines and this report was themed around smoking and the cost to our society. Smoking hasn't gone away and it's the single biggest contributor to poor health and the single largest cause of death. While rates have come down our Norfolk rates stand at 13% which is some way off the government target of 5% by 2030. Diabetes, stroke and dementia are risk factors and there are deprivation factors too, with their being higher rates of smoking in more disadvantaged communities. Our smoking rates for pregnant women are higher than the national average. Yet people can save £3000 a year if they quit smoking, as well as getting their taste and smell back and reducing the likelihood of dying of heart disease after 10 years. We also heard that neonatal deaths were 100% smokers. We then had a report on the Better Care Fund which is the driver for closer integration work with the Health and Wellbeing partnership which referred to the excellent collaboration between local government and health and social care as we're all looking after the same people. However, we also heard from the QEH explaining that 20% of people in hospital beds didn't need to be there, so evidently there remains a lot of work to do to get it right. We had the annual report from the NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB who have to provide a narrative about how they have contributed to the work of the Health and Wellbeing boards. We then moved to the ICP part of the meeting where we were presented with the Learning Disability Plan. This was changed from a strategy to a plan as that language better suited the people it was aimed at. There was an imperative to listen and to take notice of people who are disabled and their carers. An easy read plan was produced first which went to the group for their approval. The co-production won't end there though. There were 5 priorities for how people with learning disabilities and their carers wish to live their lives. Concerns as raised about the potential for a reduction in the Minimum Income Guarantee and how that might limit the ability of those with a learning disability to live the plan. The chair of the QEH asked about the transition for young people with LD. This is an area which in any group often slips through the net or takes too long to come into being. I asked about what support was being given to carers to help them get a carers assessment. As I have referred to earlier in my report, having met with a representative from the MND association, getting a carers assessment is an important step to see what might help make their life easier. I might recommend things like:

- someone to take over caring so they can take a break
- gym membership and exercise classes to relieve stress
- help with taxi fares if they don't drive
- help with gardening and housework
- training how to lift safely
- putting them in touch with local support groups so they have people to talk to
- advice about benefits for carers

A carer's assessment is free and anyone over 18 can ask for one.

We saw the health Inequalities strategic framework for action which had the engagement of over 100 organisations and is the first step towards a whole system approach towards tackling health inequalities. It seeks to address unfair and avoidable differences in our health outcomes. There was a clear message – that everyone needs something, but that some people need more. We saw the priority action areas. Housing is a vital component in this, and community led approaches are a part of the foundation that we want to build on – empowering communities to take their own action is one way to achieve success. This links well with our hopes for community led housing in our area. We went on to the recommendations for committing to the Hewitt review. Which focuses on shifting the focus to promoting health and preventing illness. I endorsed the review and referred to our work on becoming a marmot Place, working with Sports England on the expansion of Place and trying to bring on some Community Led Housing. Sadly, we also heard how there is a Wellness on Wheels bus in Norwich which goes out to children with rickets. How have we come to a situation where something like this, which was common in the past, but almost disappeared in the world during the early 20th Century after foods and cereal were fortified with Vitamin D, have made a resurgence. The cost-of-living crisis is very real for too many people. I referred to the Nourishing Norfolk scheme which was the subject of a radio four show recently. We had a cancer report which showed that while overall mortality rates for cancers are lower in Norfolk and Waveney compared to England, early deaths (under 75 years old) are higher than expected in the more deprived areas. Patients from more deprived areas are more likely to have cancer diagnosed at a later stage and have lower survival rates. Smoking is the largest single preventable cause of cancer, accounting for 15% of cases. As deprivation increases the proportion of people with higher risk health behaviour also increases. In Norfolk and Waveney there were 3226 deaths from cancer in 2020, a quarter of all deaths in the area. Across N7W early deaths are higher than expected in the most deprived areas. There is an excess of 50 deaths out of a total of more than 200 deaths per year in the most deprived 20% of people under the age of 75. People from deprived communities are less likely to recognise symptoms, less likely to attend screening and are more likely to report barriers to seeking treatment. 38% of cancers are preventable and smoking is the largest single preventable cause of cancer – 15%. As deprivation increases the proportion of people with higher risk behaviour also increases e.g. smoking, alcohol, healthy eating and excess weight. **This all reinforces the need for a more equitable society.** We hope that our new Diagnostic Assessment Centre at the QEH will help us overcome some barriers to screening. There were a few more reports, but the one which was of most interest to me was the one on the

Norfolk and Waveney NHS System Capital Distribution for 24/25. The Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) distribute system resource to the N7W organisations for capital infrastructure investment. Of the £77.9 million available in our area, the QEH received £33.1 million of it for the RAAC remediation work. It shows how much money is spent propping up our hospital.

In the afternoon I attended a friendship café, which I go to every week. It's for friends, carers and people with Dementia. The previous week I had organised that some of our careline team would attend the café and speak about the careline work and what equipment could be installed to help them (as many are elderly). This week I got some amazing feedback. Everyone was so impressed with the two team members and they'd had equipment installed just days later. I have attended events with both officers so I know how hard they work and the whole of the wider Lily team. On a week when Radio five had a call in where councils and the work they do was being discussed ahead of the budget, I was proud to get this positive feedback.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Saturday 9th March – Attendance at an International Women's Day event in Wisbech.

Tuesday 12th March – Informal Dentistry Meeting

Saturday 16th March – Opening St Faith's Spring Fair

Sunday 17th March King's Lynn Minister to celebrate our Young People

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

23/02/24 – Right to Play Barnham Broom

24/02/24 – CSA Exhibition

24/02/24 – Service of Reflection for Ukraine

26/02/24 – CPP

27/02/24 – Beat the Bills

27/02/24 – E&C

28/02/24 – AHL briefing

29/02/24 – Homelessness and Housing Delivery Briefing

29/02/24 – SLA review with Cllr Ring

29/02/24 – Planning Training

01/03/24 – Flooding and AW meeting

01/03/24 – Meeting with Night Shelter Director

04/03/24 – Joint Group Meeting

05/03/24 – Open Road meeting

05/03/24 – Cabinet

06/03/24 – Integrated Care Partnership Meeting at NCC

08/03/24 – Freebridge CEO monthly meeting

08/03/24 – Sisterhood Village meeting

12/03/24 – Tender meeting for homelessness and money advice services

13/03/24 – Cabinet Briefing

14/03/24 – Housing portfolio briefing

14/03/24 – Portfolio briefing – Care and repair etc

14/03/24 – Portfolio briefing – CIC etc

14/03/24 – KLAC

18/03/24 – Group meeting

21/03/24 – GRT briefing

21/03/24 – Full Council