

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK – MY PERSPECTIVE

We have been nominated for 2 Local Council Awards;¹ as most improved Council and 2 our housing scheme. We await the adjudication but notwithstanding the result, we are in a cohort of top local Councils which is not only where we want to be but, also, we will continuously improve from here. Any suggestions as what we can do even better are welcome but, until we become a Unitary, our powers are limited.

FINANCE – To balance our budget we had to increase our Council Tax by £5 per household and our discretionary fees by 7%. This resulted in a Band D charge of £152.87 but only 7p in the £ against the total Council Tax you pay at this Band when the County and Police demands are added to total £2,318.64. We still have to give 40% of our Council Tax receipts to support Internal Drainage Boards. We can't wait for both the Government to come up with a more equitable way of funding IDBs and for us to manage the existing County Services more efficiently. We have already delivered efficiencies of 15% since taking over and have built in a further 10% for 26/27. With a pay bill in excess of £25m you can easily calculate the efficiency impact. It has given us a General Reserve of £10m and ensured we pulled ourselves away from the black hole we inherited. We can now start to significantly invest in our communities and I look towards my colleagues to come forward with plans and projects to do just that. We are not waiting for a "rainy day", further significant improvements start now. Those visiting King's Lynn should already notice the work currently under way on major construction projects, this is only the start for the whole District.

In Bircham with Rudhams we will have 2 new Reform colleagues and we look to them, for the short while they will be with us, for considerable support.

OTHER ASPECTS OF NOTE:

OUR HOUSING PROGRAMME – a programme to build 1,000 houses, primarily for rent, with a significant number being affordable. To date 972 are completed or under construction. 260 market sales, 127 affordable houses being occupied, 27 sold under shared ownership, 92 in occupation by private rental. A programme worthy of significant recognition and not only in my view.

COASTAL – You will recall the extensive work we helped coordinate to remove the oil nurdles from the North Coast beaches, we have recently fixed the extensive sink hole in the promenade and put significant £m's on one side for coastal repairs. In our capital programme we have also set aside many upgrades to welfare and public facilities.

CIL – the process changed and training delivered to Parish representatives. Syderstone have a Neighbourhood Plan which will evolve. It would benefit all Parishes to prepare a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan to support future CIL application; help is always available.

LOCAL PLAN – the Government, in setting political targets before analysis, are reducing the weight of public opinion. I recommend each Parish sends a representative to training sessions, (currently arranged for 15th and 22nd June).

ASSET MANAGEMENT – we want to make best use of our buildings as well as our finances. Contrary to initial reactions, we do undertake a very considered and community approach to changes. We have an ageing or limiting estate but we will invest to deliver better outcomes in many ways, health, well-being, enjoyment, sport and the like. This goes hand in glove with a Marmot programme to reduce health inequalities in West Norfolk.

YOUTH EDUCATION – where your tax and fees help deliver our own apprenticeships and showcase opportunities and learning for this important sector for the future prosperity of the area.

WASTE and FLY TIPPING – we have invested in a team to address this, sadly, ever growing problem and have extensive powers to prosecute and fine. We will do this.

This is just a “potpourri” of my view of our actions to support our communities. Each Borough Councillor will have their own perspective of “deliverables 2025/26”. We are all available to help.

Chris Morley

Cabinet Member for Finance