

Borough Issues of Interest. September 2021.

1. QEH

The NHS/QE – NCC – BC has a joint team in producing a submission to Government for a new hospital primarily based on dilapidation due to RAAR (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) failure necessitating extensive use of props to support ceilings. The hospital design also has to cater for a growing and ageing population. It was not selected as part of the 40 “new hospitals” promise by the Prime Minister but is in a competitive arena for the last allocation of 8 places. Unfortunately, there are other hospitals in the East Region in a similar position. The submission is based upon a rebuild or a phased rebuild at the existing site. The lead “owner” of the hospital will be the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Service, and whilst it is not against a new site, to be successful in the bidding process (as advised by NHS England) it has to use the existing property site for reasons of time and cost.

At the last briefing by the QEH management team there was the fear expressed that only partial funding, for, say, a new wing, may be offered, if the bid fails.. The next such briefing is scheduled for 22nd September.

A separate proposal, promoted by Browns & Co., is doing the rounds and is based on a new site on 100 acres of land SE of the Hardwick. A separate and larger site at that location makes eminent sense and can cater better for: population growth and in particular the 4000 homes planned for West Winch, fit with the new A10 relief road, improved road connections generally and avoid disruption to the QEH service. From the information I have received I very much doubt that offer will gain traction.

2.CITB

I have put this on the Agenda of the Borough’s Regeneration & Development Panel for October. I trust a new CITB Top Team will then be in place and Borough Officers will have met with them to learn of their plans. I hope to have a follow up meeting, myself, with the management team and will cascade their news to Parish Councils.

3. Government Grants

Another new Business Grant – Refresh and Reopen – is available and £700k has been allocated already. This means the Borough has awarded some £70m of Government Grants to businesses since the start of the pandemic. The figures for various personal hardship grants are not available but I am making enquiries.

4. Climate Change

The Borough has at last declared that there is a climate emergency and a strategy and embryonic plan has been produced for the Borough which is based upon carbon neutrality by 2035. I believe we should do better and will be making this point personally to the Council Cabinet later this month. Consultation with Businesses in the Borough to discover and encourage their plans should now start in earnest.

5. Areas in Borough outside of Kings Lynn.

There is the feeling that areas such as Hunstanton, Heacham, Downham do not receive sufficient attention when compared to Kings Lynn. We are trying to address this through the Council's scrutiny panel system. More on this in the future.

6. Incinerator at Wisbech.

The (extensive) consultation process for a new waste incinerator outside of Wisbech is underway. The Council is opposed to Waste Incineration although I personally think it has a place in waste eradication and the production of electricity. The Borough has 3 main interests, even though the site is in the next District.

1. air pollution from the waste chimney due to prevailing westerly's',
2. Extra haulage traffic &
3. Power cable distribution to the site.

You may recall the brouhaha surrounding the proposed incinerator a few years ago at Kings Lynn. Why Wisbech? Possibly the developers thought there would be less objection but it would mean, in a comparative rural site, significant more traffic on roads such as the A47 and A17 that need further investment themselves.

7. COVID

This isn't going away and figures are slowly on the increase. Masks seem to be abandoned a little too early in social settings and I include nearly all of the Council Members opposite me in the Assembly Rooms! We wait to hear more from Government.

8. Community Infrastructure Levy. (CIL).

The Council is looking to make the process a little less bureaucratic and make a smoother pipe line of approvals rather than bulk applications. Councils should start their process for completing an application, or further one, in the near future.

9. Food Waste Caddy Collections.

There have been issues with the start up of these collections. Please let me know if any are reported to you.

10. Floods.

The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance has identified 4 sites as priorities for investment including the Creakes. Those in South Creake will be aware of the meeting with the Environment Agency and Anglia Water, chaired by General Lord Dannatt, at which parishioners and Council representatives could put their views. I would place particular emphasis on ensuring that Anglia Water complete their review of and improvement to the waste system.

The remaining 3 sites are Burnham Market, Gayton and Welney Wash Causeway.

A Strategy and Action Plan to improve coordination and action across Norfolk will be on the table for General Lord Dannatt later this month.

11. Local Minor Grants.

Borough Councillors are to be given up to £1000 for allocating to Parish Councils and other recognized bodies to help fund their activities/needs. (County Councillors now receive £10k.) I will let you have more details shortly when I have digested them myself.