

The future, I'm sure, is something everyone has given more thought to recently, as the vaccination programme continues apace and we follow the Government's roadmap to reopen society – making plans, moving forward hopefully.

At Great Yarmouth Borough Council, investing in a brighter future for our place has remained high on our agenda throughout the pandemic, alongside supporting our residents and businesses with their immediate challenges and maintaining essential day-to-day services.

Over the last year, we have administered more than £40m in business grants, run community and business helplines, delivered food and medicine to those in need, handed out hardship funding, assisted rough sleepers into accommodation, undertaken resident welfare checks and contact tracing, trialled symptom-free testing and supported the vaccination programme.

Alongside helping local people and businesses in the here and now as part of the multi-agency response, we have continued our important work with partners to drive investment and regeneration – shaping our exciting vision, submitting bids and securing major national funding to support local economic recovery in the medium to long terms.

Our communities across the whole borough are at the heart of our ambition to re-invent public places, to tap into and grow a thriving arts and cultural scene, to support new homes, nurture new jobs, businesses and new opportunities to learn and grow, to make our people, businesses and visitors proud.

Over the next three to four years, more than £200m of public sector investment is going into our place – of which we've secured £42m in the last seven months alone. And this investment, from the borough and county councils – together with partners including the Government, New Anglia LEP, Sport England and Historic England – will help to attract further investment from the public and private sectors.

We recently celebrated the fantastic news that Great Yarmouth has secured a Town Deal of £20.1m to deliver our exciting £60m vision for growth and regeneration, developed through our Town Deal Board of local ambassadors, alongside significant public engagement around people's priorities.

The Town Deal announcement follows £13.77m from the Government's Future High Streets Fund to revitalise the town centre as a vibrant economic, cultural and community hub, plus £8m from the Government's Getting Building Fund to accelerate delivery.

Big change for the better is, of course, often a gradual process at place level, taking much careful planning and partnership working. However work on our £26m new Marina Centre is now moving apace and Norfolk County Council is delivering the £120m Third River Crossing, while the first phase of our new £4.6m Market Place redevelopment is now underway.

In the summer, we hope to hear the outcome of the next stage of our Lottery bid to save, restore and reimagine the Winter Gardens at the heart of Great Yarmouth's regeneration and daily life. On our road to recovery, we hope our residents and businesses will be part of this exciting journey. There is hope and we have a lot to look forward to as a place.