



## MINUTES

### COUNCIL

7.30pm – 9.50pm

17 July 2012

Present: Councillor Gayton (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Arthur, Barker, Blunt, Bradford, Bremner, Brimblecombe, Brociek-Coulton, Button, Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Gee, Gihawi, Grenville, Harris, Henderson, Howard, Kendrick, Lay, Little, Lubbock, MacDonald, Manning, Neale, Price, Rogers, Sands(M), Sands(S), Stephenson, Stonard, Storie, Thomas, Waters, Wright

Apologies: John Jennings (Sheriff) and Councillors Grahame and Stammers

#### 1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor said that since the last meeting he had visited Future Projects which was this year's civic charity. Together with the Lady Mayoress, the Sheriff and the Sheriff's lady, he was shown the facilities and support provided for disadvantaged children and young people. He had opened the Sewell Park fayre and visited Norwich Castle Museum and presented a performance based on the twelve iconic Norwich buildings. Earlier in the day he had presided over the annual general meeting of Norfolk and Norwich Scope Association and was most impressed by the range of activities the organisation provides for people who suffer from mental disabilities. Finally, the Lord Mayor expressed his gratitude to the council's events team for the magnificent arrangements and activities it organised for both the Olympic Torch Event and the Lord Mayor's Procession.

At the invitation of the Lord Mayor, Councillor Alan Waters, deputy leader of the council, informed members that this would be the last meeting attended by Bridget Buttinger, the former deputy chief executive officer. He commented on the important contribution Bridget Buttinger had made to the work of the council and members showed their appreciation in the usual way.

#### 2. PRESENTATION OF LONG SERVICE AWARDS

The Lord Mayor presented long service awards to the following former employees :-

Christine Collier  
Peter Riseborough

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Ackroyd declared an “other” interest in item 11 questions from the public.

The Lord Mayor said that a public question had been received in advance of the meeting.

#### **Mr Ben Walker to Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and development**

Given the council's recent consultations, which seek to foster a 'living river' in the heart of Norwich – one in which public access to the Wensum is prioritised – what is the council's position on the fencing that has recently been erected on ABC Wharf that obstructs public right of way? Will the council be acting to rule this obstruction illegal, given that planning permission has not been asked for, let alone granted?

#### **Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and development, replied –**

Thank you for raising this question with the council. In your question you suggest the fencing obstructs a public right of way. Whilst responsibility for public rights of way (under the Highways Act 1980) lies with the county council, this council is not aware that the area of land in question at ABC Wharf is such a right of way. Officers have not had time to inspect the fence in detail. However, from photographic evidence the fence appears to be less than 2 metres high and if so it would therefore not require planning consent. In light of these factors there appears to be little that the council can do.

### **4. PETITIONS**

The Lord Mayor said that one petition had been received from Mr Ben Walker.

Mr Ben Walker presented the following petition –

‘Norwich City Council and the landowner of ABC Wharf, King Street, Norwich: withdraw eviction threats and restore access to the land.

We the undersigned consider the people on boats at (at ABC Wharf and the Waterfront) to be an integral and welcome part of our community. We urge the landowner and city council to withdraw threats of eviction and restore access between the boats and the street.

The boat people at ABC Wharf are a valued part of the local community. Aside from the fact that the houseboats' presence prevents vandalism and theft in the area, the boat people rescue people and dogs that fall in the river.’

Councillor Alan Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, responded:-

‘Thank you for submitting this petition to the council. The petition mentions boats moored by ABC Wharf and those at the Waterfront. There is a distinction between the two.

In the case of boats moored at the Waterfront this is land owned by the council and there is no agreement between the council and boat owners to moor there. The council’s long standing approach has been to seek possession in such circumstances – in this particular case as

1. The boats do not have planning permission for a residential mooring.
2. Establishing residential use at this location would conflict with the long established late night uses provided at the Waterfront.
3. Concerns as to whether the council would retain liability and obligations over health and safety issues from occupation.
4. Not taking action would formalise the mooring where no such formalisation is intended.

Last year the council published a notice to seek possession and following mediation possession was confirmed with a deadline of 14 September 2012 in order to give the boat owners time to make alternative arrangements. In the meantime the council has not taken any steps to prevent access.

Such action is supported by the Broads Authority with the mooring being contrary to its relevant development management policy. Given late night use of adjacent buildings and potential for requiring the council to enter into unfunded obligations it is not a suitable location for either permanent or temporary residential moorings. There do not appear to be any exceptional recent change in circumstances to justify any change to the recent court order decision.

In the case of ABC Wharf the council is not the landowner and has no direct way to influence the actions being taken to seek possession. That said, the council may be able to provide assistance to boat residents for example housing options advice and I would suggest that boat residents contact the council through its normal contact channels accordingly if this is felt to be helpful.’

## **5. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2012.

## **6. QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

The Lord Mayor advised that four questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members and committee chairs, of which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of appendix 1 of the council's constitution. The questions were as follows –

**Question 1**                      Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for housing on cleaning communal areas of council flats.

- Question 2**                      Councillor Gee to the leader of the council on representation on the Greater Norwich Development Partnership
- Question 3**                      Councillor Carlo to the cabinet member for environment and development on transport measures related to the Norwich Research Park.
- Question 4**                      Councillor Sands to the leader of the council and cabinet member for city of character, culture and prosperous city on the recent Olympic Torch Relay and Lord Mayor's Procession events.

(Details of the questions and replies together with any supplementary questions and replies are attached at Appendix A to these minutes).

## **7.      MOTION – USING POST OFFICES FOR COUNCIL SERVICES**

Councillor Wright moved and Councillor Ackroyd seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to –

- (1) recognise the importance of local post offices to Norwich's neighbourhoods, residents and reinforcing strong communities;
- (2) ask cabinet to consider the potential benefits of working with local branches and Post Office Ltd to deliver council services with the objectives of -
  - (a) improving access to local services for residents;
  - (b) saving council taxpayers money.

## **8.      MOTION – WORKFARE**

Councillor Haynes moved and Councillor Howard seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

**RESOLVED**, with 33 voting for, 0 against and 3 abstentions, to ask the:-

- (1) Cabinet to ensure that council continues not to be involved in supporting any workfare schemes;
- (2) Leader of the council to send a message of support to the boycott workfare campaign and sign their pledge for refusing to participate in compulsory work-for-benefits placements.

## 9. MOTION – THE WENSUM

The Lord Mayor said that the following amendment had been submitted in advance by Councillor Bremner –

‘(1) In the preamble –

- (a) add ‘...city council recognises that the’ before ‘...full potential...’
- (b) delete the second sentence and replace with ‘.....that is why the Wensum Parkway Partnership involving the Norwich Society, Norwich HEART, Broads Authority and Norwich City Council was formed’

(2) In the resolution –

- (a) add ‘...continue to ‘ at the beginning of 1) **and** after ‘...ask cabinet to...’ in 2)
- (b) replace ‘...Wensum River Parkway project..’ with ‘..Wensum Parkway Partnership...’

The Lord Mayor said that Councillors Galvin and Henderson had indicated that they were happy to accept the first part of the amendment that is paragraph (1) above but not paragraph (2) above. With no other member objecting, the amendment to paragraph (1) above was accepted and became part of the new substantive motion.

Councillor Bremner moved and Councillor Waters seconded the amendment in paragraph (2) above.

**RESOLVED**, with 23 voting in favour, 11 against and 2 abstentions, to approve the amendment.

Councillor Galvin moved and Councillor Henderson seconded the motion as set out on the agenda and amended above.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that –

The city council recognises that the full potential amenity, and the social and economic value of the River Wensum has not been maximised. That is why the Wensum Parkway Partnership involving the Norwich Society, Norwich HEART, Broads Authority and Norwich City Council was formed.

A well maintained area encourages people to visit and to look after it. The river is a natural attraction that many people would like to see enhanced and it is also a richly diverse natural wildlife corridor. Well maintained and visited streets and routes are safer than deserted ones.

Council, therefore, resolves to –

- (1) continue to take all practical action to ensure that -

- (a) pedestrian and cycle access to the river is encouraged through the planning process;
  - (c) subject to regulatory issues, private developments will not be allowed to prevent access to public amenities, including the river;
- (2) ask cabinet to continue to –
  - (a) fully support the Wensum Parkway Partnership;
  - (c) encourage and promote safe waterborne activities.

## 10. MOTION – PRIVATE SECTOR TENANTS’ PETITION

Councillor Stephenson moved and Councillor Rogers seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that –

Norwich City Council participates in an Accredited Landlord Scheme to provide tenants with peace of mind and to ensure landlords maintain a positive and professional relationship with their tenants. Every week a number of private tenants seek help from Norwich City Council after being served notice by their landlords. Further national legislation would provide better security for tenants in the council private sector in Norwich.

Council, therefore, **RESOLVES** to ask the cabinet to support the petition for housing minister, Right Honourable Grant Schapps MP asking him to undertake an urgent review and update of UK housing legislation to provide protection worthy of a 21<sup>st</sup> century developed nation, to tenants in the private rental sector. In particular, the following issues must be urgently addressed and loopholes in current legislation removed:-

- Endemic lack of security for tenants.
- Endemic lack of rent controls.
- Inadequate legal and local authority powers against landlords who neglect their properties.
- Preventing rogue landlords from using complex ownership and changes of ownership to avoid compliance with court judgements over improvement notices.
- Failure of local authorities to fully take up their enforcement powers.
- Ensuring their local authorities use such powers that there is statutory duty of care to re-house tenants whilst work is carried out with the cost recouped from the landlord.
- Ensuring where enforcement is taken and the property upgraded, the landlord cannot make unreasonable rent hikes.

CHAIR

**Questions to cabinet members and chairs**

**Question 1**

**Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for housing**

“How often are the communal areas in City Council owned blocks of flats cleaned and maintained? All across the city there are communal areas in states of disrepair and many that look as if they have not been cleaned for a long time. Ones that Green councillors have recently seen like this includes blocks in West Pottergate in Mancroft and Russett Grove in University ward.

The efforts of the staff to keep communal areas clean in some blocks of flats should be commended, as should those of residents who take it upon themselves to keep their own blocks tidy. To ensure consistency in the standard of cleaning of communal areas, will the City Council issue guidance to contractors on the standard of cleanliness and frequency expected? Will the City Council display in a prominent place in each block of flats the cleaning schedule for communal areas so that residents will know when cleaning will take place?”

**Councillor MacDonald, cabinet member for housing’s reply:**

The council has a housing stock of around 17,000 dwellings, including leaseholders. The majority of the stock are houses and low rise blocks which do not have communal space and therefore do not receive or pay for a cleaning service.

There are approximately 2,000 homes on our housing estates which share communal facilities and benefit from cleaning and grounds maintenance of the communal areas. The external areas are covered by the grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts with citywide services and internal areas are covered by the Premises manager service.

The maintenance of the external areas does depend on the nature of the area. For example the grassed areas should be cut every two to three weeks; shrub beds are usually worked on in January, February and March whilst the hardstanding areas (such as the drying areas) are normally cleaned twice a year. I am assure all members will appreciate that the recent poor weather ha delayed aspects of the grounds maintenance work programme. Where there are issues outside of the routine maintenance such as fly-tipping these will be cleared as and when they are reported to us.

The Premises Managers service provides an on site "static" service for the city’s estates with tower blocks and a mobile team who clean communal areas of their blocks an annual programme and reactive work. There is a 7 days per week service for health & safety inspections and reactive cleaning together with a programme of deep cleaning which is run on an annual programme. Details of the cleaning schedules are published and visits are recorded at the entrance to the blocks. The

service standards are set out in the Tenant handbook (Premises management A guide for tenants).

We recognise that we need to continually review and assess our services with our customers so we have recently carried out a review of the service with staff and residents. We have identified the key actions required to ensure a premises management provision fit for the future; which provides a consistent, value for money service of clean, attractive and safe estates that meets the needs of tenants and leaseholders receiving the service. Further consultation with residents will be carried out over the summer and we aim to implement any necessary improvements in the Autumn.

These types of issues are often picked up via the neighbourhood walkabouts programme, which allows more detailed engagement between council officers, members and residents to discuss and consider solutions and the roles and responsibilities of the council as well as those of residents.

Finally, I would encourage all members who have any concerns about cleansing and grounds maintenance standards to report it.

**Councillor Haynes** asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member considered that these areas were cleaned often enough and were the contractors monitored adequately. **Councillor MacDonald** said that key actions had been identified and she had visited the sites and discussed options with tenants and officers. She would welcome any comments from councillors to help improve the process.

## **Question 2**

### **Councillor Gee to the Leader of the Council**

“The GNDP is a partnership of councils. Norwich City Council cabinet is represented by 3 cabinet members. However the breadth of the council is not represented. For example none of the City representatives represent city centre wards. Since the GNDP will make recommendations on the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy money, which can be spent anywhere in the Greater Norwich area, would the cabinet member consider it reasonable that Norwich representatives to GNDP should reflect the geographical and political balance of the whole council?”

### **Councillor Arthur, Leader of the Council’s reply:**

On a number of occasions I have explained to Council that the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) is not a decision making body. It is a forum for joint working where the four constituent authorities, Broadland, South Norfolk, Norfolk County Council and the City Council together with the Broads Authority and other interested parties, can discuss issues and hopefully reach a consensus. Currently, the GNDP partners are working together to establish a mechanism for securing appropriate funding for the strategic infrastructure required to help deliver new homes and jobs together with key environmental enhancements. Income arising from the community infrastructure levy (CIL) is one potential source of funding.



An example of strategic investment in the city is the creation of bus rapid transit corridors. These will serve various parts of the city and will provide significant benefits to bus passengers. These routes require significant investment and cross district council boundaries. They have been identified as the sort of scheme where CIL funding could be used. Collectively the GNDP could agree that schemes of this nature should have CIL funding that has been collected from developments across the GNDP area. However, I think most members are aware that any decision of this nature will require the consent of the three CIL collection authorities (i.e. Broadland, South Norfolk and the City Council). In this way all decisions on the investment of CIL income collected by the City Council will be a matter for the City Council again something I have said more times than I can remember.

In relation to the membership of the GNDP Board, a senior councillor from the City Council has always served on this important partnership. This reflects our commitment to the development of the greater Norwich area and our desire to deliver new homes and jobs that meet the needs of the whole community. When the deputy leader of the council, portfolio holder for environment & development and I attend GNDP Board meetings we represent the Council as a whole and not, as your question suggests, specific geographical locations. Therefore I see no merit in changing the current arrangements."

**Councillor Gee** asked, as a supplementary question, was it not the case that the GNDP partners had made a commitment to introducing CIL and agreed its use through a shared investment fund and did this not contradict her answer.

**Councillor Arthur** said that every time she had been asked about decision making she had been absolutely clear in her answers. Decisions were not taken by the GNDP Board. As a group of partners looking at developing a coherent strategic plan the board had discussed a list of priorities. However, she emphasised again, that final decisions on everything had to be made by the individual constituent councils.

### **Question 3**

#### **Councillor Carlo to the Cabinet member for environment and development:**

"Following the recent presentation to the City Council on the planned expansion of Norwich Research Park (NRP) off B1108/Colney Lane, how will the City Council endeavour to ensure that the proposed development is served by high quality sustainable transport, in conjunction with management of car travel to the area? Will the City Council endeavour to ensure:

- i) the integration of transport to NRP with wider sustainable transport plans for Greater Norwich;
- ii) provision of public transport links to NRP to act as a catalyst for improving current inadequate public transport services to the hospital;
- iii) development of a shared high quality travel planning strategy between NRP, UEA and the hospital;
- iv) no increase in traffic volumes along the B1108/Earlham Road as a result of the NRP?"

**Councillor Bremner, Cabinet member for environment and development's reply:**

The proposals for the expansion of NRP represent an exciting opportunity for the development of the Norwich economy with real opportunities for jobs and are a key element of our planning and economic development strategies.

The announcement of £26 million funding in last year's Budget and other more recently announced funding give a real impetus to the development of the research park and one that should be seized to provide a much needed shot in the arm to the local economy.

The City Council is a member of the NRP Stakeholder Board and part of the research park lies within our administrative area, though most is within the area of South Norfolk District Council.

As Councillor Carlo is aware the City Council is actively engaged with both Stakeholders and South Norfolk and Norfolk County Councils in relation to an emerging proposal for significant expansion of part research park to the Watton Road in Colney. We recently arranged a special briefing for those councillors in wards close to the NRP and I hope this was appreciated by Cllr Carlo. These are very significant development proposals which will take many years to be built out assuming they are granted planning consent.

Clearly although the proposal is within the area of South Norfolk District Council, through our role on the Stakeholder Board and our membership of the GNDP we are well placed to ensure that the implications of the emerging development for the west of the City are taken fully into account in both the formulation of the proposals and their subsequent consideration by South Norfolk.

The potential transport implications of the development will be very high up the list of matters that we will focus on to ensure that the transportation measures proposed are adequate. You will have seen that in the questioning at the meeting mentioned above and certainly the officers are very proactive on this at officer level meetings. Development of this scale should provide measures to significantly improve the quality of public transport and cycle links between the City and the research park and hospital as well as managing traffic generation which could impact on many residents in the west of the City including those in my ward.

**Councillor Carlo** asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would ensure appropriate pressure was placed on ensuring that the Norwich Research Park acted as a catalyst for sustainable transport investment citywide.

**Councillor Bremner** said that the council would continue to pressure for the best it could get and emphasised that the development of the NRP was a great opportunity for jobs in the local economy.

**Question 4**

**Councillor Sands to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for city of character and culture and prosperous city:**

I am sure that everyone who was in Norwich any time between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> July would agree that the city council events team pulled together a truly memorable range of activities and street theatre.

The city was full of individuals and families enjoying all that was on offer. Does the cabinet member know how many people came into Norwich for the celebrations and will she tell me what additional costs were incurred in staging the Olympic Torch relay and the Lord Mayor's celebrations?

**Councillor Arthur, Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for city of character and culture and prosperous city's reply:**

We were very fortunate to attract the Torch to Norwich. This was a whole city celebration and many organisations contributed to its success. While the events team led on this, employees from across the every part of the council worked hard to make this a memorable week for Norwich.

In all around 106,000 people attended across the celebration with 56,000 of those coming for the Torch and 50,000 for the Lord Mayors celebration.

The event was delivered within our existing budgets but thanks must go our funding partners, including our local charities, the Arts Council, the County Council and LOCOG who between them contributed £150,000 to support the community projects around the Torch and dressing our fine city. Without their support we would not have been able to deliver such impressive celebrations for which we have received nothing but praise.

I believe it is really important that we can continue to provide events such as this for free especially in these difficult times when people don't have so much to spend.

**Councillor Sands** asked, as a supplementary question, what had been the impact of the celebrations on the local economy. **Councillor Arthur** said that restaurants, pubs and cafes had been packed and many on-street catering vendors had actually sold out. It was estimated that over the 5 days there had been £3.5 million of visitor spend. This was good for the local economy, jobs and service providers and had been an excellent opportunity for local talent to be showcased.