



MINUTES

COUNCIL

7.30pm – 9.20pm

25 June 2013

Present: Councillor Gayton (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Arthur, Barker, Blunt, Boswell, Bradford, Bremner, Brimblecombe, Brociek-Coulton, Button, Carlo, Driver, Gihawi, Grahame, Grenville, Harris, Haynes, Jackson, Kendrick, Little, Lubbock, Manning, Maxwell, Neale, Price, Sands (M), Sands (S), Stephenson, Stonard, Storie, Thomas, Waters and Wright.

Apologies: John Jennings (Sheriff) and Councillors Galvin, Howard, MacDonald and Stammers.

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor said that since the last meeting he had attended the Rouen Armada "tall ships" event at the invitation of the mayor of Rouen. He was pleased to be able to spend time with members of the two twinning associations there and thank and recognise them for the good work that they do in promoting links between our two cities. Other engagements included greeting some German exchange students in the council chamber; attending the city of Ale event and launching the Go Go Gorillas. He was looking forward to the Lord Mayor's street procession and hoped all members would support the event

The Lord Mayor welcomed Doctor Andrew Lerner, chief executive of iESE, the organisation which runs the improvement and efficiency awards.

Doctor Lerner presented Councillor Arthur, leader of the council and Laura McGillivray, chief executive officer, the gold award for delivering through efficiency which Norwich City Council had won in the 2013 awards.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Lord Mayor said that one public question had been received from Peter Shaman.

Peter Shaman to the cabinet member for housing:-

Willow Housing Co-operative has been renting 3 residential properties from N.C.C. since 1987. We have a letter saying "Subject to the conditions on your rent card"

In 2006 Kristine Reeves tried to enforce a Lease under threat of re-possession and refused to supply Willow with any copies of their original tenancies. After media coverage and a meeting with N.C.C. the idea was dropped.

However in 2011 N.C.C. tried the same tactics under the guise of an "Updated Lease" and Willow were refused copies of the Lease N.C.C. said we had from 1997. Willow was told Nov 2011 "We will get back to you" instead in Jan 2012 "due to failure to sign a Lease" we received both 1 month and 6 month notices to quit in case we argued business or residential tenancies.

Willow stated that any Lease should be introduced by negotiation not enforcement. We asked our Rep and a Solicitor to look at the Lease and arrange a meeting between Willow and N.C.C. to discuss. N.C.C. refused to meet with Willow, ignored our representatives and the Lease amended by our Solicitors and again we were told April 2012 "We will get back to you" instead in Jan 2013 we received new Notices to quit saying our "tenancies" were ended last year.

Willow has complained about their miss-treatment, however the complaints process and F.O.I. requests are being ignored. We have been summoned to Court for re-possession on 9th July.

My question is this:

If Willow have no Lease and are renting according to the terms of our rent-books for 28 years and have put in numerous R.T.B. forms over the past 10 years why doesn't N.C.C. sell the 3 properties to Willow Housing Co-operative to ensure our long-term survival, thus avoiding more waste of tax payers money on a long, expensive court case and negative media coverage.

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing to provide an oral response.

The council confirms that it has claimed possession of three of its properties, currently occupied by Willow Housing Co-operative, and that those claims will be considered by a judge at Norwich County Court on 9 July.

The council is not able or willing to sell the properties to Willow. It requires the properties back for the most efficient discharge of its function as a housing authority in accordance with its policies and statutory duties.

The council appreciates that these are difficult and uncertain times for occupiers of the properties. Before making the claims, the council explained its decision to Willow, urged Willow to take independent advice and directed individual occupiers to take advice from its housing options team.

Peter Shaman said the council wouldn't enter into discussions with Willow. He believed that mediation would help and asked, as a supplementary question, if the council would be willing to negotiate with the Willow Housing Co-operative

on issues he didn't believe the courts would deal with. Councillor Bremner said no as this was now a matter for the Norwich County Court.

4. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

5. MINUTES

The Lord Mayor said that the minutes of the March council meeting should have been included on this agenda and they would now come to the July meeting for confirmation.

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the council AGM held on 21 May 2013 subject to the resolution of item 6 being amended to read”with 24 voting in favour and 12 against.”

6. QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL

The Lord Mayor advised that 13 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members and committee chairs, which notice had been received in accordance with the provisions of appendix 1 of the council's constitution, and the questions were as follows:

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| Question 1 | Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on 20mph zones. |
| Question 2 | Councillor Galvin to the leader of the council upon cabinet decisions pre 2012 and the current year. |
| Question 3 | Councillor Carlo to the leader of the council on GNDP (Greater Norwich Development Partnership) governance. |
| Question 4 | Councillor Boswell to the leader of the council on the community infrastructure levy. |
| Question 5 | Councillor Little to the cabinet member for housing on the increase in council rent arrears since the introduction of the bedroom tax/under occupancy charge. |
| Question 6 | Councillor Maxwell to the cabinet member for housing on the impact of the bedroom tax on rental income and the steps to address this. |
| Question 7 | Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on Shelter's campaign against rogue landlords. |
| Question 8 | Councillor Grahame to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on publicising licensing applications. |
| Question 9 | Councillor Stephenson to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and open spaces on correspondence to allotment holders. |

- Question 10** Councillor Henderson to the cabinet member for customer contact on filming council meetings.
- Question 11** Councillor Sands (S) to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the impact of budget pressures on traffic schemes.
- Question 12** Councillor Barker to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and open spaces on the pilot "neighbourhood agreement".
- Question 13** Councillor Storie to the cabinet member for housing on homelessness.

Details of the questions and replies, together with any supplementary questions and replies, are attached as appendix A to these minutes.)

7. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2013/14

Councillor Arthur moved and Councillor Waters seconded the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to –

- (1) make appointments to outside bodies for 2013/14 as set out in the appendix to the report;
- (2) devolve authority to the head of law and governance, in consultation with the leaders of the political groups, to agree nominations to any outstanding vacancies together with any vacancies arising during the year.

8. CONSTITUTION REVIEW – POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Sands (M), seconded the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to –

- (1) adopt the amendment to article 4 and revised appendix 2 of the constitution;
- (2) ask the head of law and governance to amend the council's constitution accordingly.

9. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY – ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHARGING SCHEDULE

Councillor Arthur moved and Councillor Stonard seconded the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED, with 22 voting in favour, 10 against and 2 abstentions, to –

- (1) adopt the community infrastructure levy charging schedule for Norwich and the phasing policy as detailed in appendix 4 of the report;
- (2) delegate any minor charges to the charging schedule for clarification purposes to the deputy chief executive (operations);
- (3) agree the proposed implementation date of 15 July 2013;
- (4) approve the draft regulation 1, 2, 3 list as detailed in appendix 2 of the report, and to delegate any further changes to the list before the implementation date to the deputy chief executive (operations) in consultation with the leader of the council.

10. POLICE REFORM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT 2011 – EARLY MORNING RESTRICTION ORDERS AND LATE NIGHT LEVY

Councillor Kendrick moved and Councillor Stonard seconded the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, -

- (1) to advertise in accordance with section 172B(1)(a) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the introduction of the three proposed EMROs detailed as Zone 1, Zone 2 and Zone 3 below:

Zone 1: an EMRO to prohibit the sale of alcohol between the hours of 03:00 and 06:00, Monday to Friday and between the hours of 03:45 and 06:00 Saturday and Sunday in the area marked as Zone 1 on appendix 9 of the police report (included in appendix A attached to this report) covering all premises with a postal address together with the highway and any external area within any part of London Street, Bank Plain, Queens Street, Upper King Street and Tombland which falls in the area marked as Zone 1.

Zone 2: an EMRO to prohibit the sale of alcohol between the hours of 03:00 and 06:00, Monday to Friday and between the hours of 03:45 and 06:00 Saturday and Sunday in the area marked as Zone 2 on appendix 9 of the police report (included in appendix A attached to this report) covering all premises with a postal address together with the highway and any external area within any part of Prince of Wales Road, Rose Lane and St Vedas Street which falls in the area marked as Zone 2.

Zone 3: an EMRO to prohibit the sale of alcohol between the hours of 03:00 and 06:00, Monday to Friday and between the hours of 03:45 and 06:00 Saturday and Sunday in the area marked as Zone 3 on appendix 9 of the police report (included in appendix A attached to this report) covering all premises with a postal address together with the highway and any external area within any part of the Riverside Development (including all premises facing onto the pedestrian walk way, and any external area, that commences on the junction of Koblenz Avenue and leads through the entertainment complex onto

Wherry Road), Koblenz Avenue and Wherry Road which falls in the area marked as Zone 3.

- (2) not to introduce at this time a late night levy as defined in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

11. PURCHASE OF NEW BUILD HOUSING FOR SOCIAL RENT

Councillor Stonard moved and Councillor Bremner seconded the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the inclusion of £1,770,000 for the purchase of 23 new build homes in the 2013-14 capital plan and programme.

12. SCRUTINY REVIEW 2013-14

Councillor Stephenson moved and Councillor Maxwell seconded a recommendation in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to receive the Scrutiny review 2012-13.

CHAIR

Question 1

Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport

On 8 June a renewed 20's plenty campaign for Norwich was initiated. That is - a 20mph default speed limit in residential streets without physical calming. Anna Semlyen the campaigns manager for 20's plenty and also a York City councillor called on both the city and county councils to work together to make Norwich a safer and healthier city by implementing a default 20 mph speed limit such as York and many other cities in the UK are doing.

Given that the council's corporate plan aims to achieve a reduction in the number of deaths and seriously injured on Norwich's roads by introducing 20 mph speed limits and that Norwich is now part of the Healthier Cities Network working with partners such as the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to place wellbeing at the centre of policy-making, will the cabinet member for development give his support to the campaign by agreeing to meet with members of the campaign to look at ways of engaging with the county council to identify funding for the scheme?

Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport response

I would like to thank Cllr Lubbock for the question and express my disappointment that I was not invited to the launch of the renewed 20's plenty campaign for Norwich. As you know the desire to see drivers not exceeding 20mph in residential areas is a priority for the whole of the city council, not just the opposition parties.

Saying that I do need to correct Cllr Lubbock over what the corporate priority is. It says "to maintain a safe highway network and reduce road casualties *including seeking to achieve the introduction of 20mph zones across the city*". There is a subtle difference between speed limits and zones; limits are signed only while zones may contain some physical measures to reduce speeds.

The experience in the city suggests that signed only 20mph speed limits have marginal effects on vehicles speeds and on roads whose layout and appearance do not comply with a drivers perception of a 20mph limit road, the limit is ignored. A classic example of this is Hellesdon Road which was made 20mph in the council's trial of such limits in 2008. A recent enforcement campaign by the police saw the majority of drivers significantly exceeding the limits and resulted in calls from the police and local members for measures to make the 20mph limit more obvious.

In Norwich we would all like to see safer, slower speeds in local neighbourhoods but this will require significant amounts of funding for them to be effective. A signed only 20mph speed limit across the city is estimated to cost over an entire years budget for highway improvement works and that is before any thought is given to the targeted physical measures needed to aid compliance with the limit. There is a question later on the agenda about how funding cuts have impacted

on the ability to introduce speed reducing measures and I will explain in more detail when we get to that question.

In answer to this question I would welcome the opportunity to meet with the campaign to look at ways of securing funding for the scheme, not just through the county council but any other potential sources for funding such as public health budgets or central government grants.

Councillor Lubbock welcomed the cabinet member's offer to meet with the local 20's plenty campaign. The national campaign was initiated by a labour councillor from York. She asked, as a supplementary question, if the work could be progressed soon.

Councillor Stonard emphasised that the clear council policy is about introducing zones which includes calming measures. He was concerned at the effect of government cuts on the transport budget and difficult decisions were required as to how to use the available funding most effectively. He said that hearing through a question to council was not how he would have wished to have found out about the launch of the campaign in Norwich.

Question 2

Councillor Galvin to the leader of the council

I noticed a statement in a recent Norwich Labour Party leaflet that "The city council went Labour in May 2012 and is now one of the finalists for the 2013 Local Government Chronicle Awards for Most Improved Council of the Year." What party was the council administration before May 2012 and what has the leader's administration done in the last year that the pre-2012 cabinet was unable to do? Why was the previous administration and cabinet unable to do this?

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council response

Councillor Galvin is right to highlight the changes we have made since the people of Norwich elected a majority Labour council in May 2012. Politics is about choices and by choosing a Labour city council I am proud that we can demonstrate to our electorate that we have achieved a great deal in the past twelve months through our leadership. To name just a few of our successes we have:-

- Delivered a living wage authority
- Promoted two switch and save auctions which have saved a large number of people significant sums of money
- Entered into a joint venture company which is wholly owned by the public sector to deliver many of services which were previously outsourced to the private sector
- Started to build council homes for the first time in 30 years
- Not introduced the invidious council tax benefit scheme which the government wanted us to introduce
- And led or promoted a number of initiatives to inform, help and advise the most vulnerable people who have been hit by the monstrous changes in our social security system.

Thinking of the differences since May 2012, I can contrast this with the previous negotiations with the Green group - in particular after 2006 - to ensure we could deliver our planned growth in respect of boosting house building, prioritising jobs and delivering the type of quality of life improvements which citizens rightfully look to the council to deliver.

Of course a great deal was accomplished during the minority Labour administration between 2006 and 2012 and I would pay tribute to my colleagues who made that happen. But now thanks to the people of Norwich we have a majority labour administration we are able to meet the challenges facing the city without some of the delays associated with minority administrations. We now have a city council exemplifying our labour values which are building council homes, creating jobs and apprenticeships, regenerating our communities and trying to protect the most vulnerable citizens from the vagaries of the extreme Tory/ Lib Dem government.

However as leader of the council I will continue to look for support from the business and voluntary sector as well as members across the political spectrum to do the very best for the people who elected us and to whom we are all accountable.

Question 3

Councillor Carlo to the leader of the council

On Day 3 of the hearing into the proposed submission Joint Core Strategy (JCS) on 23 May, the Inspector roundly criticised the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) councils for having merely re-instated the part of the JCS remitted by the High Court without any changes and without reflecting on the current economic situation. He lambasted the councils for their failure to provide basic information which he had requested on the five year land supply, housing trajectory, infrastructure and financial viability of the North East Growth Triangle. The Inspector said that he was unhappy and displeased with the councils and that he never had to adjourn a hearing before as he had decided to do that day and that as it stood, the JCS was unsound.

How does the city council as chair of the GNDP propose to address the culture of the GNDP which led it to simply reinsert the remitted part of the Growth Triangle without altering a single word? Does the council now accept that the GNDP must adopt an open approach to governance which includes the involvement of opposition party members on the Policy Board and not undertaking its main business behind closed doors or stage managing its meetings in public?

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council response

Being a participant in the hearing I am surprised by the nature and tone of the question from Councillor Carlo and I am disappointed that little or no regard has been given to the substantial amount of work that was undertaken by the GNDP officer team and submitted to the inspector. All of this is in the public domain and, rightly, has been scrutinised as part of the JCS repair process. At the end of the first stage of the hearing the Inspector made it clear that his starting point in conducting the examination was that the plan was sound and was requesting the

additional information to enable him to do so. Councillor Carlo therefore rather dilutes the points she wants to raise by appearing to misinterpret what was said by the Inspector.

Before the plan was resubmitted significant work was carried out by officers and technical specialists to identify the most appropriate option in the light of the High Court Order and updated information. This work included preparation of a fresh sustainability appraisal and updating much of the evidence base. The technical work undertaken and the evidence gathered have shown that the proposals described in the remitted text remains the most appropriate option.

This whole process has caused frustration and delay all round and created a number of technical difficulties because we are in uncharted waters. It has also led to the bizarre situation where developers seeking to invest millions in the local economy and build homes to exceptionally high eco standards are asking Broadland District Council to delay the determination of planning applications owing to the legal risks involved, while appeals are being lost on far less sustainable rural sites and concerns about 5 year land supply are being raised in the forthcoming appeal on Lakenham cricket ground.

With regard to governance arrangements, these do not need to be reviewed. With the imminent adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy and hopefully a City Deal shortly thereafter there will be ample opportunity to do this. This is not the time for a change to governance at the GNDP which already meets in public. The decisions on the way forward for the JCS have been taken in public and based on technical evidence and the feedback from the public, so there can be no question of the process being '*stage managed*'.

Councillor Carlo asked, as a supplementary question, whether the leader of the council would like to see her notes of the hearing after three days of which the joint core strategy was considered unsound. **Councillor Arthur** said she would like to see them as the other councils and their officers had worked hard to ensure it was not unsound.

Question 4

Councillor Boswell to the leader of the council

A recent South Norfolk Council report on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) calculated the shortfall to the district as £50 million as a result of the CIL Inspector's recommendation to reduce the levy on new residential development by 35%. I am concerned that the cabinet agreed on June 12 to adopt the new Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule on 15 July 2013 without any research into what the potential shortfall in Norwich would be. Will the leader and cabinet instruct officers to produce a model for the Norwich situation similar to that produced by SNDC to provide an estimate of the CIL shortfall in this authority's area, and will the cabinet revisit the previous commitment that it gave to the GNDP to contribute £10 million of the city CIL money to a proposed NDR, and will cabinet instigate a public consultation into the public priorities for how the much smaller CIL income from city development should be spent?

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council response

It is possible to get very carried away about the income to be derived from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). However it has always been the case that CIL would only be part of the funding necessary to finance the infrastructure required to deliver the growth in homes and jobs planned in the Joint Core Strategy.

Yes, like many others, I was disappointed when the inspector determined that the level of CIL would be below our expectations but on the other hand I am pleased that we have established a more robust way of collecting and pooling funds to support investment programmes for many years to come. It is the start of a new era and is something we can build on in future.

The reality of our situation is that, now we know what contribution CIL will make, we can focus our efforts and attention on securing other sources of funding – whether this is for schools, major junction improvements, new strategic cycle routes etc. For example, as Councillor Boswell is probably aware, the county council have recently been awarded additional capital funding for schools and some of this will be used to finance work identified in the JCS implementation plan. So the approach is working.

I do, however, accept that we will need to keep under review our investment plans but this is something all public bodies do on a regular basis. In this context I can reassure Cllr Boswell that a model has been prepared which shows the changed assumptions for CIL income. The forecast CIL income for Norwich based on the rate of CIL proposed to apply from July and assuming this continues to apply throughout the period to 2026 is about £12million lower than that originally proposed in the submitted draft charging schedule – a reduction of around 35% over the original predictions.

The Inspector recommended a reduced rate because he was concerned about the impact that the rate originally proposed would have on development viability. This means that development may not have come forward if the higher rate of CIL was adopted. If this happened then obviously no CIL would be received. In addition the rate of CIL will be kept under review so if at a later date, a higher rate of CIL can justified on viability grounds, then the necessary processes will be followed to get the rate increased. The model does therefore also look at scenarios whereby CIL is increased in 2018/19 by 25% and 35%. Under these circumstances the forecast CIL funding for the city would be £25,863,000 and £30,172,000 respectively.

The priorities for the investment of CIL will be on the infrastructure necessary to deliver the Joint Core Strategy. The provision of strategic infrastructure such as major transport schemes including bus rapid transit measures will require some form of pooling of CIL income between local authorities. This is tied in with discussions on a City Deal for the Greater Norwich area. Any arrangements for pooling, together with the governance process for investment priorities and funding will be developed as part of the City Deal process and subject to further decisions in due course by members of this council. Councillor Boswell is not correct in asserting that Norwich City Council has already committed £10million to the NDR. I realise he has only been a councillor for a short while and so may not

have heard me say on numerous occasions in the council chamber that no decisions have been made as yet as to how we spend CIL income. Indeed he will hear me say it again later in the agenda when we ask council to agree the adoption of CIL. This highlights another error in his question where he states that cabinet agreed to adopt CIL at our last meeting. We did not do that but agreed to recommend to full council that CIL is adopted from 15th July 2013.

Under the revised CIL regulations (2013) there is a requirement for 15% of CIL funding to be spent on local infrastructure projects to help communities to accommodate the impact of new development (this sum is higher where there is an adopted neighbourhood plan). In rural areas this will be passed directly to parish councils but in the city, the council will retain the Levy receipts and will engage with the communities in the locality of where development has taken place and agree how best to spend the neighbourhood funding in a manner that reflects the investment requirements of the JCS and local priorities. In this respect all the good work we are carrying out on engagement in the neighbourhoods will provide a very solid base for undertaking this particular task.

Councillor Boswell asked, as a supplementary question, why the likely shortfall of £12 million had not been included in the report to council so all members were aware of it from the outset. **Councillor Arthur** said that the final work on the figures was not available in time. She apologised that it was not there earlier but members had the information now.

Questions 5 and 6

Councillor Little to the cabinet member for housing

Has there been a noticeable increase in council rent arrears since the introduction of the bedroom tax / under-occupancy charge?

Councillor Maxwell to the cabinet member for housing

Can the cabinet member for housing advise the council on the impact which the bedroom tax is having upon rental income? What steps are being taken to address this?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing response

Thank you for your questions. I am not surprised that members from across the chamber are concerned about an issue that is of concern to a significant number of households in the city. I am afraid to say that, as we and many others predicted, the simple answer to your question is, yes, rent arrears are increasing and from what I know from other housing providers, they are in the same position.

At the beginning of April 2013, 2219 (14%) of council tenant households have had a weekly deduction from their housing benefit in respect of the bedroom tax.

The estimated total benefit loss for all households is £27K per week £1.36m per year. The £1.36m per year out of the Norwich economy is certain to affect local shopkeepers, and local jobs.

In more detail the picture is as follows:

- 1901 have had a 1 bedroom deduction, average benefit loss £10.87(14 % of their eligible rent). With the maximum deduction being £15.51, and the minimum deduction £5.53. The total average annual benefit loss per household is £543.
- 318 have had a 2 bedroom or more deduction, with an average benefit loss of £20.62 (25 % of their eligible rent). The maximum deduction £25.27, and the minimum deduction is £10.12. The total average annual benefit loss per household is £1031.

Early indications are that approximately 25% of this benefit shortfall is not being paid. Some households are not paying anything extra whilst a larger number are making part payment. Many of these households have had existing rent arrears/payment problems and do not maintain regular payment habits which mean it is unwise to make assumptions about the impact over the longer term. At the end of May 575 more households were in arrears than at the end of March, although in the same period 122 cleared their arrears.

Further analysis of the impact of the changes is ongoing. Finally I will ensure that a full analysis of the current situation is made at the end of June as part of the usual performance reporting regime.

Turning to the second part of Councillors Maxwell's question asking what we can do to address this issue, I can confirm that we are working hard across a number of fronts. However we need to be realistic we are not in a position to resolve all of the challenges that have arisen from a drop in income for a number of residents and their families, caused by this deliberate attack on them by the coalition government.

However, as you will know, we have been active on seeking ways to mitigate the impact of these changes for some time. During the last four months the council has successfully contacted approximately 60% of those affected by the bedroom tax to offer help and advice. The visits have raised awareness and established fresh lines of communication which will be useful in the coming months. At the same time tenants were asked about their confidence in dealing the need to increase their rent payments and how they planned to meet the shortfall. The responses range from 26%, who were not at all confident they could make up the short fall to 14% who were very confident they could. Unfortunately this suggests that 86% thought they would have problems. When asked how they would meet the shortfall 80% said they would amend the household budget with reducing expenditure on food and heating being the main options. Isn't that shocking that they should be forced to do this by Lib-Dem and Tory government policies?

Where appropriate, we are advising residents on income maximisation and considering changing to water meters and we have held a number of successful welfare reform events have been held over the past six months, including a multi agency open day at St Andrews Hall in April where over 450 residents attended.

The discretionary housing payment policy has been refreshed and consulted on with partner organisations and a review of transfers and mutual exchanges as part of the local lettings policy to help tenants downsize is underway.

Officers are attending local and national review meetings to understand the full impact and share best practice.

Work with the Department for Work and Pensions, Job Centre plus and LGSS is being undertaken to help 80 or so Norwich households deal with the implementation of a benefit cap. Early work suggests these households could potentially lose on average £60 housing benefit per week from July and August. A specific event for these households is planned for August / September when all these households will have been identified. This is on top of the cuts listed above and adds up to another £ 1/4 million pounds out of the local economy, putting shops and jobs at risk.

We have also referred first time tenants to a big lottery project, run by Cotman, which is designed to improve financial inclusion and tenancy sustainment and we have created two additional budget advisers posts for six months within the housing income team. These posts will provide a general advice service for people struggling to manage their rent and other household bills. Finally we are also piloting texting as a way to contact harder to reach customers.

Councillor Little asked, as a supplementary question, if the council was factoring in the effect on housing income on available budgets in the future.

Councillor Bremner said that some councils were 20 percent in arrears as a result of the 'bedroom tax'. This will have a significant effect on all councils including Norwich City Council and the council would need to make the necessary adjustments in future budgets.

Councillor Maxwell asked, as a supplementary question, if the council was monitoring the effect on individuals. **Councillor Bremner** said that the 'bedroom tax' was having a really severe effect on many families and this would also affect the economy of this city as people had less money to spend in local shops. This is a 'despicable tax'.

Question 7

Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport

Has the council signed up to support Shelter's campaign against rogue landlords yet? If not, why not?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport response

The leader of the council was directly contacted by Shelter in May about the campaign. We have indicated to Shelter that we intend to sign and officers have prepared the following supporting statement to be placed on their website:

'Norwich City Council fully supports Shelter's campaign to tackle landlords who let sub-standard, poorly-managed and unsafe homes. Norwich already takes a robust approach towards landlords who fail to comply with the law and uses the full range of powers available under the Housing Acts. For example, so far this year we have taken 6 prosecutions, served 65 improvement notices and prohibition orders and completely renovated a house through 'works in default'. Norwich was also the first council in the country to take a successful Proceeds of Crime Act case against a landlord who had been convicted for failing to adequately manage a house in multiple occupation. This resulted in the landlord being required to pay £53,000 in fines, costs and recovered proceeds of crime.

Officers are also working with Shelter to produce a joint press release to support this campaign locally.

Councillor Haynes welcomed the response and asked, as a supplementary question, when would the council sign up. **Councillor Stonard** said that the council was in discussions with Shelter and the plan would be to have a full launch and I will let you know when as soon as possible.

Question 8

Councillor Grahame to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport

Publicly accessible information about licensing applications is restricted to a list of applications that have been made but it does not show what has been applied for. Much more information is available to the public electronically about planning applications. Could details of what has been applied for be made available in the case of licensing applications?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport response

I am very pleased to report that for all new applications we will be able to provide additional information on our web site on the form and nature of proposals. Details of premises licence applications received will be available via a hyperlink contained alongside the list of applications displayed on the current webpage.

Councillor Grahame said she was pleased with the response and asked, as a supplementary question, when it would go live. **Councillor Stonard** said that the aim was to do this by the next licensing committee.

Question 9

Councillor Stephenson to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods

Many allotment holders in the city have received letters in the last few months threatening that they will have to give up their plots for a variety of reasons. Can the cabinet member reassure me that no allotments will be taken away from the people working them because they are re-using materials which may originally have had other uses rather than buying something new from a garden centre? Also, could the tone of such letters be clearer and less antagonistic in future?

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for neighbourhoods response

I am sure all members will agree that with allotments in high demand it is essential that existing allotments are used and operated in a correct and proper manner. The council currently has 1,772 allotments which are regularly inspected to ensure they are being managed according to the rules published in March 2011. Over the last three months approximately 3,000 plot inspections have been carried out of which 150 resulted in allotment holders being issued a notice requesting them to work their plots within the adopted rules. Of these 35 required a second notice and only 20 resulted in terminations. All of the terminations were as a result of allotment holders not working their plots properly.

Allotment holders are welcome to use materials that help them with the cultivation of their plots. They should only store materials for allotment use and must remove them if they are not used within six months. They must also take into consideration other factors and should not have materials giving environmental and health concerns include MDF, asbestos, laminates, and excessive quantities of painted timber, upvc windows and car tyres.

The process was reviewed last November which resulted in the development of a second notice and a fact sheet which is now circulated with the warning notices to ensure all recipients have an understanding of what is required. When allotment holders receive a notice they are invited to contact the allotment officer to discuss any concerns they have and given the opportunity to put in place an improvement programme. As part of the process the letters have been reworded to reduce unintended upset being caused.

Councillor Stephenson asked, as a supplementary question, if she could have assurance that in future, allotments holders would be treated on a more individual basis. **Councillor Kendrick** said that it was important to strike a balance. Allotment holders should not be upset by any correspondence but it was important that the council ensured that allotments were maintained properly. If anyone was unhappy with the way they were treated they could contact him.

Question 10

Councillor Henderson to the cabinet member for customer contact

Now the Local Government Secretary has urged councils to allow people to film and tweet council meetings, would the cabinet do the same?

Councillor Sands (M), cabinet member for customer contact response

For clarification the guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government is specifically for cabinet meetings, not council meetings in general.

Colleagues have gone on record in the past as having a good deal of sympathy for the suggestion of allowing council meetings to be filmed. However, I

recognise that a decision to do so is not a straightforward one. There are a number of issues that would need to be carefully considered. The best place to do this is the Constitution Working Party and I suggest that the matter be considered there at its next meeting on 15 July, 2013.

In relation to tweeting during meetings I would hope that members wouldn't resort to this as I'm sure what fellow councillors are saying should be well worth hearing and the public would expect us to be listening intently to the full debate. However, there is nothing to stop a member of the public doing this now.

Councillor Henderson asked, as a supplementary question, if it would definitely be considered at the next constitution working party. **Councillor Sands(M)** said that it would but personally he couldn't see the value of filming meetings.

Question 11

Councillor Sands (S) to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport

Many councillors, communities and campaigners have fought hard for 20 mph traffic calming across Norwich which has delivered improvements and safety calming measures. Since 2010 can the Executive member for Environment, development and transport explain what impact government cuts to public spending have made to the city council's budgets and ability to implement traffic calming measures?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport response

When the coalition government came to power in May 2010 they made an immediate cut of 25% to that year's integrated transport grant which is paid to the county council to fund highway improvement and safety schemes. The effect on Norwich saw our budget reduced from £1.4 million to spend in the city to £1.05 million that year. For 2011/12 the county wide integrated transport grant was reduced from £10 million to £2 million and has remained at that level since. The share of this funding for the city was £195,000 in 2011/12; £215,000 in 2012/13 and for this year the figure is £280,000. These budgets contrast with the one million or so per annum budgets seen in the preceding decade.

This budget cut has resulted in difficult decisions being made about what the money can be spent on. To give you some idea what these figures could fund, a standalone signalled crossing is in the region of £100,000; modifying a signalled junction to provide pedestrian crossing facilities is upwards of £200,000; an area wide traffic calming scheme can be between £100,000 and £300,000 and a major cycle improvement would range from £100,000 to £500,000.

It is therefore clear that the council's ability to deliver projects has been severely restricted and difficult decisions have to be made about where to target funding. Given the very constrained funding, the highways agency committee has

therefore adopted an approach on what types of improvement schemes to prioritise. These are

- Schemes that make an explicit contribution to delivering the Norwich Area Transportation strategy (NATS) implementation plan, such as walking and cycling schemes and public transport improvements.
- Local safety schemes to solve known accident problems.
- Small scale schemes that have local benefits, such as providing dropped kerbs to ease disabled access, making bus stops disability discrimination act compliant, introducing or amending essential parking restrictions, new bollards and new signs etc.

Whilst there is little evidence of modal shift due to traffic calming, in the past such schemes have been successfully introduced to help reduce known accident problems; most notably the ones in North Earlham and the Park Lane and the Nelson Street areas. Elsewhere in residential areas there is not the same accident problem, however. This is of course welcome but with funding being so tight, it also makes it very difficult to justify further investment in traffic calming compared to schemes with a better return in terms of accident reduction – such as local safety schemes – or those schemes that deliver tangible increases in walking, cycling or use of public transport.

Councillor Sands(S), asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member could expand on the effect of the government cuts. **Councillor Stonard** said that the huge cut in transport budgets meant that serious choices needed to be made on which highway improvements could be afforded. For example, if 20mph zones were to be introduced in all residential areas the whole of the transport budget would be taken up by this.

Question 12

Councillor Barker to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods

Residents in Sewell Ward have contacted me concerning the success of the pilot 'neighbourhood agreement' covering parts of Catton Grove and Town Close. Can the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety advise council on the successes learned from the scheme and if it might be expanded further?

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for neighbourhoods response

Thank you for your question I am very proud of what we have achieved so far on neighbourhood agreements. At their very heart is collaboration. It is core to how the council works and is fundamental to the council's work with communities and in neighbourhoods. This approach recognises that a successful, sustainable neighbourhood will:

- be clean and well cared for by the community and the council
- feel safe to live in and move around

- contain community facilities and activities that cater for the needs of all of its community
- have local people who take responsibility for their own lives and those of their families
- have lively challenging community organisations that champion the needs of the people and the neighbourhood and who work to meet those needs independently

Through greater collaboration we set out to achieve:

- The delivery of services as close to local people as possible
- To enable communities to have greater influence over how services are delivered
- A greater visibility and responsiveness of staff
- More accountability, by staff taking responsibility
- Targeting deprivation by addressing and prioritising local needs
- Better coordination of services
- A greater role for our front line councillors

This is bringing benefits to our communities from officers and members working much more closely with residents and partners.

As an example, one of the council's corporate priorities is for Norwich to be a safe and clean city which was the priority ranked most important by residents in our public consultation on the future priorities and shape of the council. To achieve this we work closely with the Norfolk Constabulary as we know that reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and protecting vulnerable people is not just a role for the police and that the council has a fundamental role to play.

The council came across neighbourhood agreements as part of a programme looking at best practice as we understood we had to work differently if we were going to continue to improve services with fewer resources and meet the expectations of our residents. The development of the two neighbourhood agreements in part of Catton Grove and the Arlington area of the Golden Triangle, clearly shows that communities are proud of where they live and want to play a role in keeping them safe and clean.

The two agreements provide a clear set of actions and commitments that the council will do; what the police will do and in the Arlington agreement, what the University of East Anglia will do.

Similarly, it sets out what residents can do - including:

- reporting issues the council and the constabulary in the correct way so that issues can be tackled quickly
- taking a more proactive role as community leaders, and
- communities taking action locally.

In a time of austerity the council cannot deliver all it wants to do on its own and should never work in this way in any case. The agreements may also provide a mechanism that helps us all resolve those niggling, recurring issues that come

back time after time. If we can achieve that, it will reduce demand for some services which can contribute to meeting the financial challenges in the future.

The two agreements were signed at a small ceremony last week with residents, partners and ward councillors attending. Through this work we have seen commitment and time that residents have contributed to getting these agreements in place and they have negotiated with officers and partners how some of the issues they are aware of, might be resolved. The resident groups are planning launches of the agreements in their own communities with the residents acting as ambassadors for the agreements, and seeking commitment from other residents.

We have learnt a lot from developing these two agreements and we now need to see how effective they are in resolving local issues that residents feel passionate about, to reduce demand for services and avoidable contact. Over the next few months the agreement will be monitored by and with the residents groups and partners. However, I believe that we can build on these and take the learning that has been pioneered, to other parts of the city where such an approach might work whether in this format or tailored to local circumstances and opportunities.

Question 13

Councillor Storie to the cabinet member for housing

Can the cabinet member for housing advise the council on the increase in the number of families and individuals who have presented as homeless over the past year and the impact central government policies have had on this problem?

Councillor Bremner cabinet member for housing respond:

The homelessness strategy of 2011, which I presented to cabinet, spells out the aim to "Deliver early intervention to prevent homelessness." That is still the aim in these very difficult times. Prevention is still the primary focus of the housing options team. We want to ensure that everyone can access the help they need, when they need it, to find sustainable solutions to their housing difficulties. Therefore the council focuses great efforts on the prevention of homelessness through the provision of specialist housing advice from the housing options team. In the past 12 months, over 2300 households that are at risk of homelessness have approached us for help.

Our housing options team provides a range of options and advice including provision of a homeless prevention fund, a private sector leasing scheme, mediation and legal advice. Over the past 12 months, this proactive approach by the council has directly prevented 700 households from experiencing homelessness and assisted many more in resolving their own issues. By being proactive we prevent the massive problems this causes to children, taken away from schools, friends, family etc. and we also save on B&B costs. The team do this by getting in early, and offering all the help mentioned earlier. It works, and the whole team need to be congratulated for their hard work.

Additionally, in 2012/13, 1400 households in need were allocated social housing through Norwich Home Options.

While the effects of welfare reform can only be measured since April, as an indication, year on year payments from the homeless prevention fund have doubled as we see an emerging pattern of an increase in presentations from single applicants threatened with homelessness through changes to the single room rate and to under-occupancy rules.

Single clients especially are faced with a narrowing of the housing options available to them and while the council is doing all it can to assist clients effected by benefit changes, it is clear that pressure on our services will continue to increase as the effects of further welfare reforms are felt.