

Report for Information

Report to Executive
10 March 2010
Report of Head of Legal, Regulatory and Democratic Services
Subject Motions to Council

10

Purpose

To consider motions passed by Council

Recommendations

- 1) To note the current position on issues raised in motions passed by Council
- 2) To consider whether to take action on any of the motions passed.

Financial Consequences

Any financial consequences of actions as a result of individual motions would need to be addressed as each matter is considered.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The motions listed in the report relate to all of the Council's strategic objectives and priorities.

Executive Member: All

Ward: All

Contact Officers

Andy Emms, Democratic Services Manager

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Background Documents

Nil

Report

1. Council has passed a number of motions asking Executive to consider various matters that are executive functions under the Local Government Act, 2000. These are listed below together with comments/status update by the relevant director or head of service.
2. The full motions, including pre-ambles, are detailed in Appendix A.

Subject	Motion and comments of director/head of service
Decent Work Day	<p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to put plans and time into:-</p> <p>(1). strengthening its existing commitment contained in the Corporate Plan including:-</p> <p>(a). supporting free English lessons for migrants and their families;</p> <p>(b). committing itself to a 'living wage' policy;</p> <p>(c). tackling deprivation and poverty in Norwich;</p> <p>(d). supporting the victims of exploitation and discrimination by providing services which are both accessible and available to all.</p> <p>(2). ensuring that the Decent Work agenda is included in the Council's work to tackle poverty and deprivation in Norwich;</p> <p>(3). working towards a living wage policy for the whole of the City.'</p> <p>Paul Spencer, Director of Transformation :-</p> <p>In 2009/10 the Council has already carried out significant work in relation to financial inclusion, and this has included several of the elements suggested in the motion (eg living wage work).</p> <p>As part of the 2010/11 budget process it has been agreed to allocate an additional £175,000 for financial inclusion work next year. A report is being developed for Executive on 24 March 2010 to consider how this money should be allocated to different areas of work and projects.</p>

<p>Local Advice Services</p>	<p>Council resolved to:-</p> <p>(3). ask the Executive to review the support that the City Council offers the CAB and similar services and consider whether this support could be extended.'</p> <p>Bob Cronk- Head of Community Services:-</p> <p>The Executive agreed an increased level of grant to the CAB during 2009-10 from the resources allocated to the implementation of the financial inclusion strategy.</p> <p>Scrutiny Committee will review progress of the financial inclusion strategy action plan and make recommendations to the Executive on medium term actions at its meeting on 11th March. A report on the proposed financial inclusion strategy actions for 2010-11 will be presented to the Executive on 24th March and this will include recommendations of grant awards.</p>
<p>Social Housing</p>	<p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to:-</p> <p>(1). explore the possibility of the Council buying up unsold properties and sites from building companies in order to replenish the social housing stock and help the property sector, using existing funding streams or asking the government to relax borrowing rules, allowing councils and social landlords to borrow against their assets to fund such a scheme;</p> <p>(2). open communication with private developers to see if localised solutions can be found to enable unused or unsold private housing to be used as social housing</p> <p>(3). use the strong partnership arrangements which Norwich City Council has developed with local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to continue to work with these RSLs to identify local solutions to enable unused or unsold private housing to be used for social housing.</p> <p>Alison Spalding – Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager :-</p> <p>At present the Council is not in a position to be able to buy unsold properties to add to our housing stock, however, the Housing Development Team work closely with our RSL and private developer partners in order to bring forward sites and</p>

	<p>unsold properties within the Norwich area. To date, the development team have enabled, through support for funding applications to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the conversion of 94 new build properties from open market sale to affordable homes, converted the tenure of 2 new homes from shared ownership to affordable rented, and have secured 'Kickstart' funding from the HCA to bring forward the stalled site at St Anne's Wharf, which will enable 32 affordable rented homes, 20 rent to Homebuy, and 32 Homebuy Direct properties.</p> <p>The council continues to work very closely with its partner RSLs through the greater Norwich Housing Partnership and the HCA to bring forward solutions for private stalled developments.</p>
Pre-Payment Meters	<p>Council resolved to ask:-</p> <p>(5). the Executive to look into the options offered by the energy provider Ebico, and other non profit energy suppliers.</p> <p>Pressure from this council along with other concerned organisations on energy providers has persuaded most of them to change their tariffs so that pre-paid meter users do not pay an iniquitous price. The council already helps individual households to identify the best tariffs although it should be noted that there is no 'one size fits all' option. Non-profit energy suppliers, like Ebico, whilst often the best choice may, in some cases, be a less favourable option when compared with some social tariffs offered by the larger energy companies.</p> <p>Work has now been started to look at the options available to the council to ensure that new tenants are offered a suitable tariff and also to see whether a standard tariff could be offered to all tenants through partnership with a non-profit supplier.</p> <p>Tracy John – Head of Neighbourhood & Strategic Housing :-</p> <p>Research has been carried out to assess the benefits to our customers and the authority of entering an affinity deal with an energy provider. Though there would be some advantages to the authority and its residents, there are also some disadvantages.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Cont'd</p>

	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="568 230 994 342">Advantages</th><th data-bbox="994 230 1428 342">Disadvantages</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="568 342 994 1742"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in customer satisfaction • Provision of an additional service for tenants and residents. • A good basis for promotion as a proactive and caring council • Reduce fuel poverty • Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the generation of an income stream (estimated to be about £30,000.00 per annum based on an average payment of £20.00 per void property) to invest in energy efficiency. • Reduce the local authority's work in managing voids. • A relatively easy way to get started on thinking about developing an energy services scheme. </td><td data-bbox="994 342 1428 1742"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a short term solution as this would take about a year to implement • Any cost savings may be offset by the cost in additional officer time about 4 days per month. This may require an additional specialised post to be created. • Any deal would have to be legally compliant with: - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Government (Best Value Principles) Act 1999 2. Competition Act 1998 3. Data Protection Act 1998 4. Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and Consumer Protection Act 1987 5. Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 <p>This means that any deal would have to be subject to a full tendering and procurement process.</p> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Advantages	Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in customer satisfaction • Provision of an additional service for tenants and residents. • A good basis for promotion as a proactive and caring council • Reduce fuel poverty • Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the generation of an income stream (estimated to be about £30,000.00 per annum based on an average payment of £20.00 per void property) to invest in energy efficiency. • Reduce the local authority's work in managing voids. • A relatively easy way to get started on thinking about developing an energy services scheme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a short term solution as this would take about a year to implement • Any cost savings may be offset by the cost in additional officer time about 4 days per month. This may require an additional specialised post to be created. • Any deal would have to be legally compliant with: - <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Government (Best Value Principles) Act 1999 2. Competition Act 1998 3. Data Protection Act 1998 4. Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and Consumer Protection Act 1987 5. Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 <p>This means that any deal would have to be subject to a full tendering and procurement process.</p>
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	<p>The main disadvantage is the time and cost, of implementing such a deal. IT costs in particular could be high. Below is a timetable indicating the resources that may be required: -</p> <table><tr><th>Action</th><th>Local authority officer (days)</th><th>Consultant broker (days)</th><th>Supplier (days)</th><th>Time-frame</th></tr><tr><td>Scoping the scheme</td><td>10</td><td>5</td><td></td><td>Month 1</td></tr><tr><td>Forming internal partnerships</td><td>20</td><td></td><td></td><td>Months 2-4</td></tr><tr><td>Council approval</td><td>5</td><td></td><td></td><td>Months 2-3</td></tr><tr><td>Appointing suppliers</td><td>5</td><td>10</td><td>5</td><td>Months 4-6</td></tr><tr><td>Marketing plan</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>3</td><td>Months 6-7</td></tr><tr><td>Implementation (procedures and processes)</td><td>20</td><td>5</td><td>8</td><td>Months 8-10</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>60</td><td>25</td><td>20</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Systems modifications and monitoring</td><td>4 per month</td><td></td><td>2 per month</td><td>Ongoing</td></tr></table> <p>A better solution, in the short term, would be to offer knowledgeable advice and assistance to our customers to enable them to seek the best tariff and deal for them. National Energy Action is able to provide a one day training course tailored to our needs (in house) for £926.00 plus VAT and expenses. If 20 officers are able to be trained this would be very cost effective and demonstrates good value for money. The main benefits of taking this approach are : -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Costs minimal• Minimal disruption to staff• Offers 'quick-fix' solution• Improvement in customer satisfaction• Provision of an additional service for tenants and residents.• A good basis for promotion as a proactive and caring council	Action	Local authority officer (days)	Consultant broker (days)	Supplier (days)	Time-frame	Scoping the scheme	10	5		Month 1	Forming internal partnerships	20			Months 2-4	Council approval	5			Months 2-3	Appointing suppliers	5	10	5	Months 4-6	Marketing plan	5	5	3	Months 6-7	Implementation (procedures and processes)	20	5	8	Months 8-10	Total	60	25	20		Systems modifications and monitoring	4 per month		2 per month	Ongoing
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Fuel Poverty	<p>Council resolved, in view of the impact of fuel poverty on the people of Norwich, to ask the Executive to:-</p> <p>(3) consider, in relation to fuel poverty, how to implement the recommendation set out in the Independent Commission for Older People report to use its financial inclusion initiative as</p>																																													

	<p>a means to improve access to information for older people;</p> <p>(4) explore ways of providing a free insulation scheme for all households in Norwich including private sector housing, as a way of reducing fuel poverty, heating bills and CO₂ emissions and consult with the Head of Finance and with officers of Kirklees Council where such a scheme is already in operation and is partly funded through prudential borrowing;</p> <p>Bob Cronk- Head of Community Services (no. 3 - improving Access to Information for older people) :-</p> <p>A progress report was presented to the Executive in December 2009 on works carried out to implement the financial inclusion strategy included mechanisms to improve information for residents including older people. The report also covered targeted work with partners including Age Concern (Norwich).</p> <p>A report on the proposed financial inclusion strategy actions for 2010-11 will be presented to the Executive on 24th March.</p> <p>Paul Swanborough- Private Sector Housing Manager (no.4 - free insulation scheme) :-</p> <p>This matter has been discussed with the Head of Finance who has advised that funding insulation measures in private housing does not fit the definition of capital expenditure in accordance with proper accounting practice required for borrowing under the prudential code. He is reviewing the position to see if there is any possibility of relaxing the definition. However, the current position is that sufficient funding could not be borrowed to support a comprehensive free insulation scheme for able-to-pay households in Norwich.</p> <p>Most priority-need households (those in receipt of means-tested benefits) are already entitled to free-insulation under the Governments CERT (Carbon Emissions Reduction Target) scheme or through Warm Front Grant. The council has a role here to identify suitable properties and to refer</p> <p>them to a suitable installer. Over the next 12 months this will be achieved through a partnership with Renewables East who will carry out home energy assessments in 10,000 privately-owned homes in Norwich (targeted at areas with high levels of poorly-insulated housing and households in</p>
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	<p>receipt of benefits.) This is expected to result in 2,000 free-insulation installations to priority-need households. Able-to-pay households will be offered discounted insulation.</p>
<p>Child Poverty</p>	<p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to consider and agree a plan to set out what the Council intends to do in Norwich – in partnership with other organisations where necessary – in order to achieve the goals as set out in the Child Poverty Action Group’s Manifesto “Ending Child Poverty.</p> <p>Bob Cronk- Head of Community Services :-</p> <p>Whilst the statutory responsibility for services for children lies with Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council plays a significant part in reducing child poverty and provides a range of services that contribute to the broader “Every Child Matters” agenda which includes child poverty issues.</p> <p>A progress report on how Council services contribute to Every Child Matters was presented to the Executive in September 2008.</p> <p>Much of the financial inclusion work includes income maximisation and working with vulnerable groups including single parents and low income families.</p> <p>Whilst not covering all aspects of the child poverty agenda this council is playing a major role on behalf of children of the city.</p>
<p>Clarity in Communication</p>	<p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to ask the relevant officers to ensure that the writers of public documents follow existing council guidelines on clear English</p> <p>Nikki Rotsos, Director of Communications & Cultural Services / Richard Balls, Comms Manager :-</p> <p>The communications, customer contact and HR teams are working together to produce communications guidance including letter writing and plain English. This will sit alongside training for staff. The guidance will be launched in April.</p>

<p>Representation on the Housing Improvement and Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Board</p>	<p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. appoint a representative/s from the Scrutiny Committee and/or the Audit Committee to the Housing Improvement Board and to the Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Board; 2. allow non-executive councillors to attend and observe these board meetings; 3. ensure that the agenda, minutes and reports of these board meetings are available to all Councillors through e-councillor and where they are not exempt nor confidential, to the public on main council website <p>Paul Spencer, Director of Transformation :-</p> <p>The terms of reference and membership of both the CIEB and the HIB were agreed with the membership at the start of the process, and subsequently agreed by the Executive.</p> <p>It is proposed that the membership of the Housing Improvement Board (HIB) will be reviewed by the independent peer review team during its work in early March 2010. The peer review will identify what progress has been made overall, what areas the housing improvement process needs to focus upon, and what governance arrangements would be most appropriate. The HIB will also be consulted about membership arrangements.</p> <p>It is proposed to consult with the CIEB membership about the future of the group, and proposals for the publication of agendas and minutes.</p> <p>Once we have CIEB, HIB and peer review team views, we can feed these back to Executive for formal consideration about whether any changes should be made..</p>
<p>Working Parties</p>	<p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to explore new ways of opening up working party meetings to the public including uploading to the council website, where possible, all agendas, non-exempt reports and minutes.</p> <p>Andy Emms, Democratic Services Manager :-</p> <p>The agendas and non-exempt reports of the Council's main committees are available on the Council's website.</p> <p>There are some other groups/ working parties etc that have no decision making powers and are not open to the public. Documents for these are not, therefore, made available on the website.</p>

**Possible closure of
Norfolk County
Council Day Care
Centres**

Council resolved to ask the executive to respond to the consultation putting forward the views that -

- (a) it is vital to maintain public sector social services (unanimous);
- (b) privatisation of social services fundamentally undermines the ability of society to care for the vulnerable (27 voting for, 1 against and 7 abstentions);
- (c) these centres provide a cost effective, accessible and high quality model of care which complements existing provision and impacts positively on the health and wellbeing of service users (unanimous);
- (d) the Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms are well placed to meet existing and potential demand for day services within the Norwich area and they should remain in use for as long as that demand exists (unanimous).

Paul Spencer, Director of Transformation :-

A response was agreed by Executive on 24 February 2010, and will be sent to Norfolk County Council by the 8 March deadline.

Appendix

The covering report on motions passed by Council details specific actions for Executive to consider – The full motions are listed below:-

Decent Work Day	<p>RESOLVED, that Council notes:</p> <p>That 7 October 2008 is the World Day for Decent Work, a Trade Union led campaign to highlight the work being done to tackle issues of Decent Work around the world. These issues include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• migration; discrimination; equality; forced labour; human trafficking; child labour; informal economy; climate issues (green jobs); health and safety; social protection; poverty and food crisis.• half of the world's workforce earns less than 2 US \$ (£1) a day . 12.3 million women and men work in slavery. 200 million children under the age of 15 work instead of going to school. 2.2 million people die due to work-related accidents and diseases every year. People in developed and developing countries work more for less money, and more and more people - overwhelmingly women - are forced to make their living without social protection or rights and in precarious jobs, often in parts of the so-called informal economy. <p>This Council believes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Decent Work' is vital to both tackling poverty and building communities;• discrimination and low wage exploitation are wrong and lead to poverty, crime and social tension. <p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to put plans and time into:</p> <p>(1). strengthening its existing commitment contained in the Corporate Plan including:-</p> <p>(a). supporting free English lessons for migrants and their families;</p>
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	<p>(b). committing itself to a 'living wage' policy;</p> <p>(c). tackling deprivation and poverty in Norwich;</p> <p>(d). supporting the victims of exploitation and discrimination by providing services which are both accessible and available to all.</p> <p>(2). ensuring that the Decent Work agenda is included in the Council's work to tackle poverty and deprivation in Norwich;</p> <p>(3). working towards a living wage policy for the whole of the City.'</p>
Local Advice Services	<p>Council notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the growing economic crisis and the impact it is having on individuals in the city; • the increasing number of people struggling with mortgage repayments and the record levels of personal debt; • the increasing demand for local debt advice demonstrated by Norwich Citizens Advice Bureau, reporting a rise of 36% in debt related cases last year and the fact that local residents may wait up to 5 weeks for an appointment with free, independent debt advisers in the city; • that planned changes in funding for advice services nationally may see the CAB service forced to bid against major national organisations to secure funding from 2011, and potentially stripped of funding. <p>Council resolved to:-</p> <p>(1). write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to:</p> <p>(a). request that the Government reviews the adequacy of the current provision of free, impartial debt advice services in the City;</p> <p>(b). seek clarification that any new government 'one stop centres' or Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACs) should not take funding away from the Norwich CAB and any new services should complement the City's existing services.</p> <p>(2). ask the Scrutiny Committee to work with relevant local public and voluntary sector bodies to undertake a review of current debt advisory service provision in Norwich.</p> <p>(3). ask the Executive to review the support that the City Council offers the CAB and similar services and consider whether this support could be extended.'</p>

Social Housing

‘This Council notes:

- the amount of social housing nationally has dwindled from 4.386 million social homes to rent in England in 1997 to just 3.936 million social homes in 2006 while the number of households on social housing waiting lists has risen almost 70% to 1.67 million;
- that, according to the National Housing Federation (NHF), one in every 16 households in the East of England are on a social housing waiting list;
- the last year has seen a steady rise in the number of people on social housing lists in Norwich;
- that many newly built flats and houses in the City are unsold or have been left empty due to the sharp economic downturn and associated problems;
- the policy of Newcastle City Council to buy houses on a new private development, which was in severe financial trouble, and make the homes available for affordable rents.

Council resolved to ask the Executive to:

- (1). explore the possibility of the Council buying up unsold properties and sites from building companies in order to replenish the social housing stock and help the property sector, using existing funding streams or asking the government to relax borrowing rules, allowing councils and social landlords to borrow against their assets to fund such a scheme;
- (2). open communication with private developers to see if localised solutions can be found to enable unused or unsold private housing to be used as social housing
- (3). use the strong partnership arrangements which Norwich City Council has developed with local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to continue to work with these RSLs to identify local solutions to enable unused or unsold private housing to be used for social housing.

Pre-Payment Meters

“This Council notes that:

- energy customers who pay for their gas and electricity using a pre-payment meter pay a premium to heat and light their homes. In some cases they can pay up to £70 more per year than customers who pay by quarterly bills and up to £300 more than customers paying by online direct debits.
- Ofgem acknowledges that most pre-payment meter customers are on the lowest incomes. It is clear that the market penalises customers who have to use these meters to budget or to pay off debt.
- Chancellor Alistair Darling has called on energy suppliers and Ofgem to come up with a fairer deal for the 5 million pre-payment meter users while the Energy Minister stated that these extra costs “seem totally disproportionate.
- the National Housing Federation (NHF) is spearheading a campaign lobbying for energy providers to remove the punitive excess that prepayment users face. As part of this initiative NHF recently carried out a YouGov poll which showed that 80% of the public want the Chancellor to stop energy companies from charging pre-payment meter customers higher premiums.
- we believe that the additional payments made by those using pre payment meters flies in the face of financial inclusion and mitigates against people who are trying to budget.
- in Solihull Housing (a three star ALMO) an affinity agreement has been established with Ebico a non profit energy supplier whose fair price structure is irrespective of income, circumstances or how the customer prefers to pay.

Council resolved to:-

(1). welcome the Executive's intention to respond to Ofgem's current consultation and strongly voices this council's opposition to the additional charges levied on prepay customers;

(2). encourage other organisations and individuals to respond to the consultation;

(3). support the National Housing Federation's campaign;

	<p>(4). request that the Leader writes to the Energy Minister urging him to end this inequality once and for all by compelling energy suppliers to equalise their pre-payment meter tariffs to the best quarterly bill tariffs (removing the poverty premium) and forcing them to severely reduce the differential pre-payment meter tariffs and direct debits;</p> <p>(5). ask the Executive to look into the options offered by the energy provider Ebico, and other non profit energy suppliers.</p>
Fuel Poverty	<p>‘This Council notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government estimates that fuel poverty currently affects 2.5 million households in the UK. • The Warm Front Energy Initiative, a key component of this government’s fuel poverty strategy, is failing as according to a February 2009 National Audit Office report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 57% of vulnerable households in fuel poverty do not claim the relevant benefits to qualify for the scheme; ○ 75% of households, who qualified under the scheme, were not necessarily in fuel poverty; ○ £34 million in grants was awarded to comparatively energy efficient households; ○ 11,020 qualified householders, who applied to the scheme in 2008-09, pulled out because they were unable to afford the top-up fees to the grant to cover the cost of upgrades. • Many older people in Norwich, most vulnerable to fuel poverty, are unable to access information about which benefits they are entitled to, according to the Council’s Independent Commission for Older People. • David Heath MP introduced a Fuel Poverty Bill to Parliament on January 21, with a second reading scheduled for March 20. This bill includes two measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A major energy efficiency programme to bring existing homes up to the current energy efficiency levels enjoyed by modern homes;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social tariffs to limit vulnerable households' exposure to high energy bills. • This Fuel Poverty Bill is backed by a wide range of organisations including Age Concern, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, and the Child Poverty Action Group. <p>Council resolved, in view of the impact of fuel poverty on the people of Norwich, to ask the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leader of the Council to write to David Heath MP in support of the proposed fuel poverty bill and to Dr. Ian Gibson MP and Charles Clarke MP to ask them to support the bill; 2. Leader of the Council to write to Energy Secretary Ed Miliband and Environment Secretary Hilary Benn asking them to re-evaluate the Warm Front Scheme in the light of the National Audit criticisms, particularly the eligibility requirements and funding arrangements; 3. Executive to consider, in relation to fuel poverty, how to implement the recommendation set out in the Independent Commission for Older People report to use its financial inclusion initiative as a means to improve access to information for older people; 4. Executive to explore ways of providing a free insulation scheme for all households in Norwich including private sector housing, as a way of reducing fuel poverty, heating bills and CO₂ emissions and consult with the Head of Finance and with officers of Kirklees Council where such a scheme is already in operation and is partly funded through prudential borrowing; 5. Executive to explore ways of providing a free insulation scheme for all households in Norwich including private sector housing, as a way of reducing fuel poverty, heating bills and CO₂ emissions and consult with the Head of Finance and with officers of Kirklees Council where such a scheme is already in operation and is partly funded through prudential borrowing; 6. Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change asking the Government to provide the necessary funding and support to enable free insulation schemes as described in point (4) to be implemented more easily across the country.
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<p>Child Poverty</p>	<p>“Council notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save the Children – an organisation better known for helping children in war-torn and famine-struck countries – recently started distributing money to families in the UK for the first time, citing the increase in malnutrition amongst children as a key reason for doing so. • Just over ten years ago, when he was Prime Minister, Tony Blair committed the UK to ending child poverty ‘within a generation’. • Although child poverty has decreased over the last ten years, it is unlikely that the Government’s interim 2010/11 target to halve child poverty levels will be met without at least an additional £3 billion annual investment (according to various independent estimates, such as from the Institute of Fiscal Studies). • Norfolk is the 5th most deprived County in England on the Government’s child poverty index, and of the 26 SOAs (Super Output Areas) in Norfolk which are – by the index of Multiple Deprivation – in the most deprived 10% in England, 10 are in Norwich. <p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to consider and agree a plan to set out what the Council intends to do in Norwich – in partnership with other organisations where necessary – in order to achieve the goals as set out in the Child Poverty Action Group’s Manifesto “Ending Child Poverty.</p>
<p>Clarity in communication</p>	<p>“Council notes that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Plain English Campaign has awarded its Crystal Mark to over 300 local authorities in the UK to reward clarity in their written communications; Norwich City Council is not one of these authorities; • most Council communications have a high standard of clear English; However; councillors are often approached by residents to complain about council publications, letters, consultations and other documents. Typical complaints are that these are difficult to read, challenging to understand or that they needlessly use jargon; • councillors are often asked to approve or note reports and briefings which contain unclear information or jargon.

	<p>Council believes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that all public information and communications should be presented clearly, so that the council's activities can be transparent and easily understood by all residents. Failure to do this can contribute to misunderstandings and increased dissatisfaction with the council, and could be counterproductive to attempts to engage the public in the work of the council. This inevitably means that materials are not accessible to people of all levels of reading ability; • that while qualification for the Crystal Mark entails a large expenditure that is unlikely to be a priority in the current financial situation, Norwich City Council can still seek to achieve the standard of language and layout that would be required. <p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to ask the relevant officers to ensure that the writers of public documents follow existing council guidelines on clear English</p>
<p>Representation on the Housing Improvement and Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Board</p>	<p>‘Council notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of the Housing Improvement and Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Boards; • whilst these boards may not be official decision making bodies, they will play a central role in advising on the formation of policy; • the Scrutiny Committee recommended (16 July) that the Executive appoint a representative from the Scrutiny Committee to serve on both the Housing Improvement and Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Boards and the Audit Committee recommended (22 June) that the Executive appoint a non-executive member from one of the minority parties who is not a member of scrutiny to each of the Housing Improvement and Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Boards • the Executive decided (22 July) not to appoint a non-Executive member or a representative of the Scrutiny Committee to these boards.

	<p>Council considers that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliberation on the housing and efficiency programmes must be open, transparent and those participating should be accountable for the outcome; • in order to fulfil their role, opposition councillors need not just to consider and analyse recommendations but they also need to understand where these recommendations came from and what other proposals were considered. <p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. appoint a representative/s from the Scrutiny Committee and/or the Audit Committee to the Housing Improvement Board and to the Corporate Improvement and Efficiency Board; 2. allow non-executive councillors to attend and observe these board meetings; 3. ensure that the agenda, minutes and reports of these board meetings are available to all Councillors through e-councillor and we are not exempt nor confidential, to the public on main council website
Working Parties	<p>'Council notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the efforts made by the Council to involve and interest local people in what the Council does and the decisions it takes; • the important discussion and decisions that take place in the working parties on issues such as waste collection, climate change, and public engagement; • that there are, for legal, financial and other reasons, occasions when council debate and decision-making has to take place privately; <p>Council believes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that openness, transparency and access to information are key to the restoration of trust in local democratic processes; • as much Council business as possible should be conducted publicly,

	<p>Council resolved to ask the Executive to explore new ways of opening up working party meetings to the public including uploading to the council website, where possible, all agendas, non-exempt reports and minutes.</p>
<p>Possible closure of Norfolk County Council Day Care Centres</p>	<p>RESOLVED that council notes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposed closure of the Silver Rooms and Essex Rooms day care centres by Norfolk County Council. • that Norfolk County Council has stated that these centres deliver excellent services to their users. • that the decision on whether to proceed with the closures has been delayed until after further consultation. <p>Council resolved to ask the executive to respond to the consultation putting forward the views that -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) it is vital to maintain public sector social services (unanimous); b) privatisation of social services fundamentally undermines the ability of society to care for the vulnerable c) (27 voting for, 1 against and 7 abstentions); d) these centres provide a cost effective, accessible and high quality model of care which complements existing provision and impacts positively on the health and wellbeing of service users (unanimous); e) the Essex Rooms and Silver Rooms are well placed to meet existing and potential demand for day services within the Norwich area and they should remain in use for as long as that demand exists (unanimous).