



## MINUTES

## COUNCIL

**7.30pm – 9.35pm**

**23 July 2013**

**Present:** Councillors Driver (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Arthur, Barker, Blunt, Bradford, Bremner, Brimblecombe, Brociek-Coulton, Button, Galvin, Gayton, Grahame, Grenville, Harris, Haynes, Henderson, Howard, Jackson, Kendrick, Little, Lubbock, Maxwell, Neale, Price, Sands (M), Sands (S), Stammers, Stephenson, Stonard, Storie, Thomas, Waters and Wright.

**Apologies:** Mr John Jennings (sheriff) and Councillors Boswell, Carlo, Gihawi, MacDonald and Manning.

### **1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Lord Mayor thanked all members of the council who had attended the Lord Mayor's street procession on 6 July. It was a very joyous occasion held in beautiful weather and he thanked the officers of the events team who for the excellent organisation. He said that over £4,500 had been raised for the civic charity.

He had attended a number of other events since the last meeting including several visits to displays with the Norwich in Bloom team. He had also visited the Belvedere Community Centre where the community representatives who managed the centre had been extremely pleased to show the Lord Mayor all of the recently improved facilities.

He said that Councillor Haynes would be getting married the following Saturday and on behalf of all council members he gave his best wishes.

Finally the Lord Mayor passed on the sad news that Jenny Lay passed away on 12 July. Jenny had been a councillor for Mancroft ward from 1996-2000 and for Crome ward from 2004-2012. She served as sheriff in 1998/99 and Lord Mayor in 2011/12. Amongst the many tributes that had been received was one from Big C which was her chosen charity when she was Lord Mayor. They said – "We are all thankful for her tireless support – she was a special friend to Big C and thanks to her fundraising there are many people whose cancer journey was supported by their work. She will be very much missed and her contribution to the city and the wider Norfolk community will not be forgotten."

The Lord Mayor then invited Councillors Lubbock, Stephenson and Arthur to say a few words about Jenny on behalf of their groups, after which there was a moments silence held in her memory.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

## **4. PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

## **5. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2013, and subject to Councillor Driver being noted as Lord Mayor and Councillor Henderson being added to those present, the minutes of the meeting on 25 June 2013 were also approved.

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

The Lord Mayor advised that 10 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members and committee chairs, of 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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|-------------------|---|
| <b>Question 1</b> | Councillor Jackson to the cabinet member for resources on support for the Friends of Train Wood.                        |
| <b>Question 2</b> | Councillor Neale to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on low omission vehicle incentives.   |
| <b>Question 3</b> | Councillor Price to the leader of the council on public events.   |
| <b>Question 4</b> | Councillor Galvin to the cabinet member for resources on the Fourways Community Centre lease extension.                 |
| <b>Question 5</b> | Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on resurfacing of Eaton crossroads. |
| <b>Question 6</b> | Councillor Thomas to the leader of the council on the impact of the spending review.                                    |
| <b>Question 7</b> | Councillor Gayton to the cabinet member for housing on the impact of the bedroom tax.                                   |
| <b>Question 8</b> | Councillor Harris to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on cycling rate improvements.        |
| <b>Question 9</b> | Councillor Maxwell to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the switch & save scheme.        |

**Question 10** Councillor Stephenson to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on parent and child car park spaces.

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

## **7. ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR RIVERSIDE WALK**

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

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to approve the inclusion of up to £260,000 in the 2013/14 capital programme allocation for construction of a section of Riverside Walk, as recommended by cabinet on 10 July 2013.

## **8. FUNDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

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

**RESOLVED**, with 31 voting in favour, none against and 3 abstentions, that –

“In June 2013, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a further ten per cent reduction in central government funding to local government, on top of the existing cuts.

In light of the continued effect of the coalition government’s cuts programme upon local residents, council **RESOLVES** to –

- 1) note that there are alternatives to this ideologically driven attack on public services; and
- 2) ask the government to reverse the ongoing reduction in grants to councils, which could be funded by other measures.”

## **9. MOTION – DECLARATION ON RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Councillor Arthur moved, and Councillor Sands (M) seconded, the motion as set out in the agenda.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that –

“Norwich City Council condemns extremism and racist behaviour in all its forms and-

**RESOLVES** to ask the leaders of the three political groups to sign the following declaration, as community leaders:

We in Norwich are proud of our diverse and multi-racial heritage, which we regard as a source of cultural, social and economic strength. We will work vigorously to combat all forms of racism in Norwich and to enshrine the

principle that individuality and universality are the foundations of justice and peace.

We declare that:

- 1) We value the contribution that all communities make to the quality of life in Norwich and recognise ethnic and cultural diversity as a source of cultural, social and economic enrichment.
- 2) We endorse the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are opposed to racism in all its forms.

We will encourage a changing culture within the public services and the wider community that recognises the unacceptability of all forms of racism and take action to combat it.

- 3) We acknowledge that progress towards a more just society may not always be smooth, but as partners we are committed to maintaining dialogue and resolving our differences.
- 4) We believe that all citizens should have the right to expect equal protection and equal treatment from all public services in our city.
- 5) We believe that our success will properly be measured not by our policies but by our actions in promoting equality for all the people of our city. We recognise the excellent work undertaken to develop our Equality Strategy and that collectively we do all we can to promote its values.
- 6) We call upon the residents of Norwich to support us in this by respecting the dignity of all people and by constant vigilance for any expression of racism or racial discrimination.”

## **10. MOTION – HOUSING STRATEGY**

Councillor Wright indicated that, after discussion with the cabinet member for resources, he would withdraw this motion with a view to bringing a reworded motion back to council in September 2013.

CHAIR

## APPENDIX A

### Question 1

#### **Councillor Jackson to Councillor Waters cabinet member for resources:**

Does the cabinet member support the campaign to keep Train Wood in public hands? If so, will the city council now undertake to support the Friends of Train Wood group with expertise and help in kind, as it puts together a business plan and tries to secure funding to protect this vital part of Norwich's green infrastructure, and what can the council offer in terms of practical support?

#### **Councillor Waters cabinet member for resources response:**

Thank you for your question. The County Council owns Trainwood and the change of administration at County Hall following the May elections has resulted in a change of policy regarding its future. I understand discussions are in progress about a community run initiative. I wish the friends of Trainwood well in those negotiations.

We do receive a number of requests from different organisations, individuals etc to provide expertise or help in kind. In these circumstances we explain that we have limited resources and that in helping the group, staff time would be required at the expense of other areas of council work which would suffer accordingly. However, we always try and direct the group to where they can find help and assistance. In this specific instance we would recommend that the Friends of Train Wood contact the local branch of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) who have considerable experience in business planning and fund raising.

**Councillor Jackson** said that the Friends of Train Wood were already in contact with TCV. As he was unclear from the response given he asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member agreed with the campaign to keep Train Wood in public hands. **Councillor Waters** said that he was on record on a number of occasions of wanting to ensure that the public could access this area and he was confident that with existing provisions in place that public access could be retained; biodiversity could be preserved and Marriott's Way continued to be available for use. He reminded members that this woodland was the responsibility of Norfolk County Council, and as he had done on previous occasions, reiterated the city council's intention to ensure that it protected the environment and biodiversity of the areas of land which it controlled and that would continue to be the council's main focus.

### Question 2

#### **Councillor Neale to Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport:**

Due to the obligation for the Government to meet its European emissions targets, they have provided an incentive for low emission cars by reducing the vehicle tax to zero, encouraging manufacturers to develop and owners to demand more environmentally friendly options. Are there areas in which Norwich City Council can

also provide incentives? For example have the cabinet considered introducing an incentive to low emission car owners who use the Council's car parks?

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

Steps to reduce vehicle emissions are welcome although in taking forward such initiatives it is very important to not lose sight of zero and low emission alternatives which are already in place such as walking, cycling and public transport and which therefore form the cornerstone of the city and county council's sustainable transport policies.

Officers have considered whether take up of low emission vehicles could be incentivised by differential tariffs at car parks. Unfortunately, however, there would be significant practical difficulties in introducing such arrangements - for example in identifying a genuine low emission vehicle and then programming ticket machines to offer differential tariffs. To overcome these would be expensive and it would remain difficult to prevent abuse of such a system. There would also be implications for car park income.

In any case it is not clear that relatively small price signals such as parking tariffs would necessarily incentivise uptake of low emission cars. In 2011 the RAC estimated that the average cost of running a new car is £6,689 p.a. excluding parking costs. Depending on usage, the additional cost of car parking is likely to run to a few extra hundreds of pounds at the very most, so even if parking was made free it would have a very limited effect on overall cost.

The limited marginal effect of such price signals is even more applicable to vehicle excise duty which is less than 2% of annual motoring costs. For this reason the well intentioned policy may have relatively little impact.

It is partly in view of this that NHAC agreed at their November 2012 meeting to withdraw free on-street parking permits for low emission vehicles - given that the permit cost for those having to pay is only some 0.4% of average annual motoring costs. The committee reasoning behind this was that a low emission car uses as much space as any other and it is the issue of on-street space availability that is of greatest significance in residential areas with high demand for parking.

The RAC's 2011 data shows that the average cost of motoring for low emission vehicles p.a. was some 4.7% less than conventional vehicles. The main reason for this is the lower fuel costs which are on average 17.5% cheaper than conventional cars. Unfortunately low emission vehicles are significantly more expensive to buy and hence the marginal saving in overall terms. If purchase costs could be reduced closer to conventional cars then combined with the incentive of lower fuel costs ownership levels would be likely to take off. Therefore Government initiatives to reduce purchase cost would seem to be a more fertile area of intervention.

**Councillor Neale** asked, as a supplementary question, why the cabinet member considered it difficult to introduce such arrangements as St Edmundsbury District Council had already done it and the city council already provided incentives to blue badge holders. **Councillor Stonard** said that the technical difficulties and the cost would not justify the marginal benefit.

### **Question 3**

#### **Councillor Price to Councillor Arthur leader of the council:**

After the success of both last year's Olympic torch and the annual Lord Mayor's Celebration, led by the hard work and dedication of the events team, can I have a guarantee that funding for free events in future is secure, and that the council is working to ensure that these events are spread throughout the year?

#### **Councillor Arthur leader of the council response:**

The city council has a long and excellent record of providing free events for the people of Norwich. The events team continue to excel themselves with the events they run and the events they develop in partnership with other organisations. Indeed we were only able to stage the impressive Olympic Torch celebrations because of our work in partnership with others and thanks to grants from local organisations.

This administration has made no secret of the fact that we see not only the cultural benefit but the economic and social benefit of bringing people together in celebration. The social benefit being for me of huge significance especially in times when many people have considerably less money to spend on entertainment and access to the arts in their widest form.

However we do not have the resources we once had and the recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was particularly harsh towards local government. The CSR set out that the overall Local Government Departmental Expenditure Limits (this is the sum of revenue support grant funding and locally retained business rates) would be reduced from £25.6billion in 2014/15 to £23.5 billion in 2015/16. This is a reduction of funding for local government of 10% in real terms and 8.2% in cash terms. There were a number of other announcements made at the same time which impact on the money local authorities will have available for example the amount of new homes bonus local authorities directly receive which will be reduced by about 35% from 2015/16 onwards as this money will now become part of a Single Local Growth Fund which Local Enterprise Partnerships can bid for.

The council had already included pessimistic projections of future government funding for local government in its medium term financial strategy (MTFS). However, the effect of these announcements and other changes such as national insurance contribution changes from 2016/17 onwards will mean that our savings targets are likely to increase. Based on the work carried out so far to review the MTFS we believe that the annual smoothed savings target will increase from £1.99million to £2.26million per year.

As you will be aware the council has already realised savings of approximately £23million over the last five years and we recently received national recognition of our approach to efficiency. However, while we will continue to work hard to generate other income and realise savings that don't significantly impact key services to our residents this will become more and more challenging and will inevitably mean that in the future we will have some very difficult choices to make.

**Councillor Price** said that other councils recognised the importance of culture and, for example, Belfast City Council had increased its funding by 27 per cent. He asked, as a supplementary question, what steps the leader of the council could make to guarantee these events continuing and safeguarding jobs. **Councillor Arthur** said that the council would continue with the sterling work it had already done in taking a third off the controllable spend budgets without affecting frontline services. She emphasised that she was “wedded” to events such as the Lord Mayor’s street procession as she recognised the joy it brought to people living in the city and the huge economic value to shops, bars and restaurants etc. However, she couldn’t and wouldn’t tell council that events would not be considered alongside all other council services when considering future projects. She emphasised that the council was very good at seeking out and spending wisely other people’s money, for example the excellent organisation of the Olympic Torch visit to Norwich.

#### Question 4

##### **Councillor Galvin to Councillor Waters cabinet member for resources:**

With the summer coming up and the West Norwich Partnership in difficulties due to funding problems, can the cabinet member offer any help in terms of extending the lease on the Fourways Community Centre (I understand this lease ends on 15 August) so that the 'Sorted' holiday programmes for children and young people that the centre runs are safeguarded this summer? Is there any other assistance in kind the council can give the Partnership?

##### **Councillor Waters cabinet member for resources response:**

Thank you for drawing this matter to my attention. The West Norwich Partnership (WNP) occupies a commercial property and the lease is on commercial terms. Officers are dealing with this matter and it has been discussed with colleagues in NPS Norwich Ltd who advise the Council on property matters. On behalf of the Council, NPS Norwich Ltd is exploring a lease extension or temporary licence and are very hopeful this can be achieved to allow the good work of WNP to be completed. Officers will also be discussing with WNP what might be possible in terms of lease/licence arrangements following this from the autumn onwards.

**Councillor Galvin** asked, as a supplementary question, if there was any other support the cabinet member thought the council could give. **Councillor Waters** said that the council was always looking for any new opportunities.

#### Question 5

##### **Councillor Lubbock to Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport:**

Last month the Eaton Crossroads was resurfaced. The surface was in an appalling state with some serious holes. Whilst local residents were pleased that it was resurfaced they were concerned at the amount of disruption that the road works caused. Journeys which usually took 10 minutes took 45 minutes, with buses and taxis being seriously delayed.



Whilst there were advanced warning signs, I ask whether the signs could have given more warning (they were put up giving a week's warning) and could they have said approximately how long the work would take? This would have helped some residents plan their trips around the works.

Also was consideration given to scheduling the work to include a Sunday or at night to minimise disruption?

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

I would like to thank Councillor Lubbock for her question and, while I was glad to read that local residents were pleased with the resurfacing, it was disappointing to read her feedback about the disruption.

People who regularly use this junction will be aware of the maintenance problems that have arisen at this junction over the past couple of years, and its condition. The high number of delivery vehicles and buses turning at this junction causes high wear on the road surface and means that temporary repairs do not last long. The recent winter caused further deterioration of the road surface to a point where the repairs commenced on 28th May became essential.

It is never easy to select a time to undertake works to a junction and in this instance Tuesday 28th May was selected as it was during the school half term holiday when traffic is lighter. It was not possible to carry out this work on a Sunday as the volume of material required was too small to open an asphalt plant for. Night working was not considered desirable at this location because of the effect of noise on nearby residents.

The intention was to achieve a full day's work by starting early, hopefully getting it complete in one day rather than two. Unfortunately the work extended into a second day which caused difficult traffic conditions for this limited period. Our contractor put in additional staff and plant resources to minimise the length of the disruption, however. Also, some of the quieter work (lining) was carried out at night in order to reduce daytime disruption.

On the second day, the traffic management team were instructed to prioritise the Church Lane arm of the junction in light of our experience of the morning peak on the first day - as long as traffic was not allowed to tail back up the Eaton Street slip road onto the A11. This reduced delays from Church Lane during the rest of the work.

Advance warning signs are normally put up one or two weeks before works such as these. Putting signs up earlier can cause confusion for some people, and it also increases the chance of the signs causing problems for people, for example, they can fall over, or get moved and affect drivers or pedestrian's passage.

We always make a judgement about whether to work through busy times, cause disruption and get the work done quicker, or work less disruptively but for longer. We have learnt some lessons from this project. Firstly, I note your comments about the signs saying how long the work will take, and that will be done in future. Secondly, in future, the use of the planer to remove the road surface during the busier morning peak period will be reviewed as this led to significant delays and clearly if this can be avoided then this option will be assessed.

## Question 6

### **Councillor Thomas to Councillor Arthur leader of the council:**

Can the Leader explain the impact of the recent Spending Review and the impact the cuts will make to this council and its ability to deliver the services residents need?

### **Councillor Arthur leader of the council response:**

At the recent Local Government Association conference there was cross party recognition that local government has had more than its fair share of cuts from national government. There was a call from the Association and its members for central government to look internally for cuts rather than to continue to constrain and pressure local authorities; the very organisations which people look to in times of hardship. Local authorities are being pressed to join forces or work together more collaboratively but there is little evidence of this happening across national government departments. What we need is for local government to have the resources to deliver the services which it knows better than national government need to be delivered locally. That is why we have been pressing forward with our bid for a City Deal in order that we can have influence and control over money which is currently managed by central government to spend as we know best meets the needs of people in Norwich.

As you will be aware we have worked hard to protect services while at the same time working internally to make efficiency savings and working with others to share and or reduce our costs. This work has resulted in realising savings of approximately £23million over the last five years and we have recently received national recognition of our approach to efficiency. However despite encouraging us in our efforts the coalition government instead seems to want to take even more from us and from the citizens of Norwich. I can do little better than repeat the figures detailed in Question 3 in which I said that the comprehensive spending review (CSR) will result in a reduction of funding for local government of 10% in real terms and 8.2% in cash terms. That at the same time as the CSR there were a number of other announcements which impact on the money local authorities will have available. One of these is the amount of new homes bonus local authorities directly receive which will be reduced by about 35% from 2015/16 onwards as this money will now become part of a Single Local Growth Fund that Local Enterprise Partnerships can bid for.

The council had already included pessimistic projections of future government funding for local government in its medium term financial strategy (MTFS). However, the effect of these announcements and other changes such as national insurance contribution changes from 2016/17 onwards will mean that the council's savings targets are likely to increase. Based on the work carried out so far to review the MTFS we believe that the annual smoothed savings target will increase from £1.99million to £2.26million per year.

We will as I said in response to Question 3 continue to work hard to generate other income and realise savings which don't significantly impact key services to our residents. Last year we established a cross party group to look at budgets and spending cuts and this group will continue to meet in the coming year to help in our

thinking. I am however clear that as an administration we want to focus what resources we still have to best effect and to help those who are most in need. We have a sound record of doing that thus far but as our position becomes more and more challenging this will inevitably mean that in the future we will have some very difficult choices to make.

### **Question 7**

#### **Councillor Gayton to Councillor Bremner cabinet member for housing:**

Could the portfolio holder tell us what the impact has been on families and individuals of the 'bedroom tax' since it was introduced in April 2013.

#### **Councillor Bremner cabinet member for housing response:**

In June I advised members of the emerging picture around the impact of the bedroom tax for our tenants. I only have detailed information relating to tenants occupying council owned housing but I understand a similar situation is being experienced by registered housing providers and other local authorities with a housing stock.

I will, therefore, take this opportunity to update the Council on this matter based on information from our own housing stock. In summary, there is growing evidence that rent arrears are increasing and households are finding it very difficult to bridge the gap created by the reduction in benefit.

We now estimate that total benefit loss for our tenants is about £1,450,000 per year. 37% of council tenants, who did not have rent arrears and have had a reduction to their housing benefit, now have some rent arrears. It is envisaged that these figures will increase as outstanding benefit assessments are dealt with.

As of the end of June 2013; 2389 (15%) council tenant households have had housing benefit reductions due to the impact of the so called 'bedroom tax'. Since the introduction of the new arrangements in April, there are 414 tenants 'newly' in arrears and of those who were already in arrears, 673 have an increase in the size of their arrears balance greater than or equal to the total benefit loss for that period.

In my view, and that of many others, these figures indicate real hardship for some of our residents. There are also some unintended consequences for social housing providers with the DWP playing a more influential role in housing policy. Most social housing providers are making significantly greater provision for long term debt and they are very anxious that the arrangements for universal credit will only add to the shortfall in income. As a consequence, there is considerable caution about the assumptions for income and it is clear that reductions in cash flow will have a direct impact on the level of funding available to support investment in the housing stock and, in particular, the confidence to support major new build programmes.

**Councillor Gayton** said that the three Mile Cross councillors were doing work to assess the effect of the bedroom tax on vulnerable people in the ward, particularly those with physical and mental issues. He asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would be willing to share the results of their work with the people responsible for this hated tax to ensure they were aware of the effect it was having. **Councillor Bremner**

thanked Councillor Gayton for the work being done and he would be pleased to help publicise this far and wide, and he was sure that other councillors would be willing to help also.

## **Question 8**

### **Councillor Harris to Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport**

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment, Development and Transport advise council on the improvements to recycling rates in Norwich since 2005/6?

### **Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport response:**

In 2005/6 Norwich City council was recycling 16.5% of household waste; the lowest rate in Norfolk. Over the years various improvements to the service have been implemented including the introduction of kerbside collections for dry recycling, glass, food waste and a subscription based garden waste collection service. We have also introduced many communal bins bringing easily accessible recycling facilities to areas of the city not previously served by kerbside collections. This has seen us make dramatic increases in the rate of recycling to just over 40% in 2011/12.

Whilst the improvement in recycling performance is very pleasing, the amount of waste sent to landfill provides an even more impressive illustration of how well Norwich has performed. In 2005/06 the city sent 702 kgs of waste per household to landfill. In 2011/12 this had reduced by nearly half to 396 kgs per household. Over this period Norwich has gone from sending the most household waste to landfill to the least. This is clearly a great credit to the way that residents have embraced the improved recycling services and suggests that a majority of residents have adopted the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' mantra. I do thank our residents for playing their part as without them it would not be possible.

It is the residual waste figures that are perhaps a more meaningful representation of progress in reducing waste to landfill and achieving the underlying objective of the recycling scheme. It should be recognised that the percentage of household waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting may well reduce as people reduce their use of some materials and as some manufacturers reduce the amount of packaging they use.

Going forward we have not rested on our laurels. There is still much to do. We need everybody to do their bit. Members will be aware from a recent Cabinet report that the city council in partnership with all other Norfolk authorities has recently awarded a contract for recycling more material from 2014. This will not only make it easier for residents to recycle more but will help the city achieve its target of recycling 50 per cent by 2015.

**Councillor Harris** asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member could explain the measures for recycling rates and how the council was measuring up against other councils. **Councillor Stonard** said that while it was important to increase recycling the most important strategic objective for sustainability was to

ensure that people threw less away in the first place. The most important measure was the amount sent to landfill per household and the council had the lowest figure amongst any of the council's in its family group. A new Norfolk wide recycling contract would begin in 2014 which would make it easier for people to recycle as there would be less need to separate items and more items would be accepted. He anticipated that the council's rates would then improve further.

#### **Question 9**

##### **Councillor Maxwell to Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport**

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment, Development and Transport advise council as to how many residents have made savings due to the two previous tranches of the Switch and Save scheme?

##### **Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport response:**

The first tranche of the scheme led to 1,768 residents registering to switch energy providers and 66% of the group were offered with a saving on their utility bill. The overall average saving offered per household was £171 a year. 19.5% went on to switch provider. This was the highest conversion rate of any other council.

In the second tranche a total of 2,710 residents signed up and 78 per cent were offered savings. The overall average saving offered was £164 a year. 13% of residents went on to switch provider. Again we had the highest rate of conversion than any other council. This meant that in total 697 people switched energy provider directly via the Big Switch and Save.

In addition to the people we know switched over to lower energy bills directly through both tranches of the scheme, it is likely that other people which engaged with the scheme also realised lower energy bills. This is because when people tell their existing energy supplier they are intending to switch provider they will often offer to match or improve on the deal they have found elsewhere if they agree to stay with them. As such, it is likely the numbers of people who benefited through being part of the first and second tranche is actually larger

It is also likely that people who heard about the scheme or engaged with it may have gone on to use price comparison websites or explore switching provider for energy and a range of other products and services to realise savings. While it is not possible to quantify this, one of the hoped for indirect benefits of running a switching scheme was to encourage people, who might not otherwise do so, to consider the benefits of switching providers to save money.

#### **Question 10**

##### **Councillor Stephenson to Councillor Stonard cabinet member for environment, development and transport:**

I've noticed that the disabled parking spaces in St Giles car park are often empty while there are no 'parent and child' spaces. As it's impossible to take a young child

in a car seat out of a car if a vehicle is in the next space in this car park, would the council consider making some of the disabled spaces into 'parent and child' spaces?

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

I would like to thank Councillor Stephenson for drawing this matter to my attention and for her constructive suggestion. I'm sure we can all agree that we should aim to do whatever we can to improve access arrangements in our car parks for disabled drivers and drivers with babies and toddlers, subject to regulations and practicalities.

In order to comply with regulations related to disabled access the council has to provide a minimum number of disabled parking spaces within its public car parks and at St Giles the provision is 11 spaces out of a total of 330. If the council were to convert some of these disabled spaces, to be shared by disabled users and drivers with babies and toddlers, or to change their use from disabled only, then it is very likely that there would be occasions when all of these spaces were occupied and disabled users would not be able to access them. In these circumstances the council would be open to challenge and potential legal action by disabled users.

It is only really feasible to provide dedicated spaces for drivers with toddlers or babies on very large car parks (those with at least 600 spaces); where there are always likely to be sufficient unused disabled spaces to be able to allocate some for shared use. The council therefore makes provision for drivers with small children or babies at its St Andrews car park, where it has 55 disabled spaces out of a total of 1084, where it has been possible to allocate half of the disabled spaces for dual use and still be able to meet the demands of disabled users. It is also the case with private sector car park operators in the city centre that this provision is met at the larger car parks (greater than 600 space sites) at Chapelfield and the Mall.