



NORWICH
City Council

MINUTES

COUNCIL

Time: 7.30pm – 9.50pm

29 January 2013

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

Apologies: John Jennings (Sheriff), and Councillor Gee

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor said that since the last meeting he had attended many christmas events and carol services including the children's party at the Norwich and Norfolk Association for the Blind and the East Coast Truckers party at Hellesdon High School. The Norwich Open Christmas at St. Andrews Hall on christmas day had been attended by approximately four hundred of the city's most vulnerable and lonely people who received christmas dinner and entertainment. He thanked the volunteers for giving up their own Christmas day.

He had attended the launch of Norwich's award as a UNESCO City of Literature, Norwich being the only city in England to be so honoured.

He looked forward to attending the formal declaration of Norwich's second university when the Norwich University College of the Arts would become Norwich University of the Arts at a ceremony to be held in the council chamber.

Later that week he would also be paying a visit to Norwich's twin city of Novi Sad in Serbia, at the invite of the city's mayor.

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 in advance of the meeting.

Mr Nigel Partridge to the cabinet member for environment and development:

"There is a growing problem with people parking cars on the verge along Dereham Road between Whistlefish Court and Larkman Lane for the purpose of selling them. I understand that the council has the option of introducing a new by-law to tackle this misuse of the verges. Will the council look at strengthening its policy and enforcement actions to stop this practise?"

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and development replied:

"Thank you for raising this concern with the council, which I also understand you have raised with officers.

The council has powers to enforce against car sales on the highway through the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act. This allows the council to take enforcement action against car sales where:

- There are two or more cars involved being sold by the same identifiable individual; and
- The vehicles are within 500m of each other.

Civil enforcement officers target this section of Dereham Road along with other roads in the city and will take action accordingly. This will include reporting unregistered or untaxed vehicles to the DVLA. However, increasingly dealers are aware of the law and take steps to avoid prosecution; e.g. registering vehicles with different keepers. This means that our enforcement activities are less and less effective.

Unfortunately the council is not in a position to introduce a by-law to address the misuse of verges. There used to be a by-law in place that made it an offence to drive over, or park on, any mown verge (where signed accordingly). This, however, proved cumbersome and expensive to enforce and very few prosecutions were undertaken. In any case the by-law no longer exists as it has been superseded by the de-criminalisation of parking enforcement in the city, whereby the council, rather than the police, are responsible for on-street parking enforcement where a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is in place.

A TRO is the legal arrangement which, for example, allows the council to provide and enforce yellow line restrictions. Within the scope of TROs is the option to prevent parking on verges, which the council has introduced on some roads in the city such as parts of Earlham Road and Wall Road.

A TRO is the preferred approach to protecting a verge compared to physical measures such as bollards which you will see on some other roads such as parts of Drayton Road and Bracondale. These are cheaper to implement and on-going

maintenance costs are minimal. However at the present time the highways budget available for all highway improvements - including all new TROs - is under pressure. For this reason Norwich Highways Agency Committee has agreed that the only new TROs to be taken forward in 2013 -14 are those which are essential as justified on highway safety grounds. This will exclude any verge parking TROs.

If the funding position improves for 2014 - 15 and beyond, it may be possible to reconsider verge parking TROs. Therefore I will ask officers to note your request for possible future consideration. Such consideration would need to take account of other highway spending priorities, as well as other verge parking TRO requests that have been received. It should also be noted that all TROs are subject to public consultation."

4. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

5. MINUTES

Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2012.

6. QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Lord Mayor advised that 15 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members and committee chairs, of which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of Appendix 1 of the council's constitution and the questions were as follows:

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| Question 1 | Councillor Boswell to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods on the Norfolk Waste Partnership. |
| Question 2 | Councillor Neale to the cabinet member for customer services on staff uniform allowances. |
| Question 3 | Councillor Carlo to the deputy leader and cabinet member for resources on future governance arrangements. |
| Question 4 | Councillor Howard to the leader of the council on including a living wage zone within City Deal. |
| Question 5 | Councillor Galvin to the deputy leader and cabinet member for resources on council tax benefit over payments. |
| Question 6 | Councillor Stammers to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods on recycling bin collection. |
| Question 7a | Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for environment and development on the switch and save – success of the first tranche. |
| Question 7b | Councillor Grenville to the cabinet member for environment |

and development on switch and save – benefits of the second tranche.

- Question 8** Councillor Gee to the cabinet member for housing on the tenant's "Leave it tidy" scheme.
- Question 9** Councillor Blunt to the leader of the councillor on City Deal transparency.
- Question 10** Councillor Grahame to the deputy leader and cabinet member for resources on housing benefits – direct payments to landlords.
- Question 11** Councillor Henderson to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods on the effects of snow on refuse collections.
- Question 12** Councillor Little to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods on fines for leaving wheelie bins on pavements.
- Question 13** Councillor Mike Sands to the cabinet member for environment and development on the Chapelfield North proposals.
- Question 14** Councillor Maxwell to the leader of the council on replacing the Sparks in the Parks event.

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

7. NOMINATIONS FOR LORD MAYOR, SHERIFF AND DEPUTY LORD MAYOR

Councillor Arthur moved, and Councillor Stephenson seconded the nominations.

Resolved, unanimously, to receive the following nominations for the 2013-14 civic year which would be formally considered at the council's annual general meeting –

Lord Mayor	– Councillor Keith Driver
Sheriff	– Graham Creelman
Deputy Lord Mayor	– Councillor James Wright

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY: MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2012-13

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

Resolved, unanimously, to –

- (1) note the treasury management strategy statement and annual investment strategy: mid year review report, 2012-13 and the treasury activity; and
- (2) approve the revised prudential indicators as detailed in the report.

9. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2013-14

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

Resolved, unanimously, to approve the –

- (1) council tax reduction scheme for 2013-14; and
- (2) the revised council tax discounts and exemptions.

10. CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BUDGET 2013-14

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

Resolved, unanimously –

- (1) to approve the calculation of the council base for the year 2013-14 as set out in the report; and
- (2) pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations, 2012 that the amount calculated by Norwich City Council as its tax base for the year 2013-14 shall be £32,473.

11. CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL'S NON-DOMESTIC RATING INCOME 2013-14

Councillor Waters moved, and Councillor Kendrick seconded, the recommendations in the report.

Resolved, unanimously –

- (1) to approve the calculation of the non - domestic rating income 2013-14 as set out in the report; and
- (2) that in accordance with the relevant non-domestic rating regulations the amount calculated by Norwich City Council as its non - domestic rating income for the year 2013-14 shall be £30,109,392.

12. JOINT CORE STRATEGY FOR BROADLAND, NORWICH AND SOUTH NORFOLK – PROPOSED SUBMISSION OF THE REMITTED PARTS FOLLOWING THE LEGAL CHALLENGE

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

Resolved, with 22 voting in favour, 14 against and 0 abstentions, having taken account of the information in the report, representations received during the publication period of the joint core strategy and the recommendations of the Greater norwich development partnership (GNDP) board, the sustainable development panel and cabinet, council considers it appropriate to submit the remitted parts of the joint core strategy to the Secretary of State unchanged from the originally submitted version and, therefore –

Resolves to -

- (1) consider the submission document to be legally compliant and sound;
- (2) submit the “joint core strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk : proposed submission document” and supporting documents to the Secretary of State under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations, 2012;
- (3) delegate authority to the deputy chief executive (operations), in consultation with the portfolio holder for the environment and development to approve, in partnership with GNDP partners, the detail of technical documents required to be submitted alongside the joint core strategy.

13. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2013-14

Councillor moved, and Councillor Arthur seconded, the recommendation in the report.

Resolved, unanimously, to approve the pay policy statement for 2013-14.

14. MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME

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

Resolved, with 33 voting in favour, 3 against and 1 abstention, to introduce with effect from 1 April 2013, the scheme of members allowance as detailed in the report, to be increased annually on 1 April, indexed linked to the pay increase awarded to staff by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

(Two hours having past since the start of the meeting, the Lord Mayor asked if the remaining items could be taken as unopposed business. With no member opposing, the following two items were taken as unopposed business.)

15. MOTION – FUEL POVERTY

“17 per cent of households in Norwich are expiring fuel poverty. Meaning ten thousand households will need to spend more than 10 per cent of their income keeping their homes warm. Reasons for this include high gas, oil and coal prices and many UK homes being amongst the most energy inefficient in Europe.

Cold homes can increase the risk of health issues such as asthma, strokes and heart attacks. This is a specially true of vulnerable members of society, including the elderly, costing the NHS nearly £1 billion each year.

Over the next 15 years the government will raise an average of £4 billion every year in carbon taxes through the European emissions trading scheme and the carbon floor price. Recycling this revenue back into households could help bring nine thousand homes in Norwich out of fuel poverty, lower energy bills, cut carbon emissions and create jobs. Council, therefore –

Resolves to –

- (1) support the energy bill revolution campaign calling for the government to recycle revenues from carbon taxes in to improving the energy efficiency of UK homes;
- (2) notify local members of parliament of its support for the campaign and urge them to sign early day motion 47 – “Reducing fuel bills through energy efficiency”; and
- (3) urge our MPs and Norwich residents to support a campaign by signing the petition at www.energybillrevolution.org “

16. MOTION – WASTE DISPOSAL

“Subject to the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk demonstrating to the satisfaction of the appropriate regulatory body that it had a technology for the recycling of black bin waste that meets all the necessary requirements for waste end of life criteria and for the payment of recycling credits, council –

Resolves to ask the sustainability development panel to consider a report on the viability of this process for the treatment of similar waste collected by the city council.”

LORD MAYOR

APPENDIX A

Question 1

Councillor Boswell to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods:

“Norwich City Council is a member of the Norfolk Waste Partnership. Currently, the Norfolk Waste Partnership (NWP) meets behind closed doors. It does not publish agenda papers or minutes. In the interests of public accountability and transparency, will the city council place the agenda papers and minutes on its website and ask the other NWP partners to allow opposition councillors and the public to attend the meetings and table public questions?”

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods’ reply:

“The Norfolk Waste Partnership brings together Norfolk County Council and Norfolk’s seven district, city and borough councils with the aim of working together on issues relating to waste and recycling. The partnership has no executive decision making responsibility and its aim is to achieve consensus and inter-authority understanding on waste management matters. It is there to foster partnership working between authorities. Any topics discussed at the partnership which need executive decisions to be made would require a separate decision to be taken by the individual authority. In our case this would normally be the cabinet.

As part of the original constitution for the partnership it was agreed through a memorandum of understanding that meetings could be open to the public and non members of the Norfolk Waste Partnership by prior invitation only. Furthermore at a meeting of the Partnership on the 6 February 2012 it was agreed that the minutes would in future be published on the “Recycle for Norfolk” website which would be co-ordinated by the host authority.”

Councillor Boswell asked, as a supplementary question, if there had been a meeting since February 2012 and how can councillors engage in these topical issues if the council won’t make details available and encourage a transparent policy for open meetings. **Councillor Driver** said that the Norfolk waste partnership had met since February 2012 although the last meeting had been cancelled due to snow. He would get back to Councillor Boswell regarding the second part of his supplementary question.

Question 2

Councillor Neale to the cabinet member for customer services:

“Could you please explain why it has been thought necessary to issue all enquiry counter staff a one off personal allowance of £150 to buy black, navy or white tops / black or navy dresses or trousers and provide to each person uniform scarves or ties. What is the total budget for these allowances, plus the cost of scarves/ties? At a time when employees are or will be made redundant to save money is this really necessary?”

Councillor Brociek-Coulton, cabinet member for customer services reply:

“Thank you for your question. We have twenty one employees who deliver a front-line service within the contact team and have received the one-off payment of £150. The uniform elements consist of a scarf or a tie and these cost £5 each. A number of other council staff are provided with set uniforms but in this case staff are adhering to a dress code. This makes the front of house team more easily recognisable to our customers.

As I am sure my councillor colleague is aware, this council has a fantastic record of making significant savings without making redundancies. Therefore it is wholly inaccurate to suggest that we would do so to fund a modest clothing allowance.”

Councillor Neale asked, as a supplementary question if the portfolio holder could clarify the total number of staff affected as he understood that this would be over 50 when including LGSS staff. **Councillor Brociek-Coulton** said if that was what you wanted to know you should have asked that in your original question. Negotiations were ongoing with LGSS regarding the possibility of its staff using uniforms. As per her answer, only 21 members of staff were currently using the uniform and said that she thought they looked fantastic.

Question 3

Councillor Carlo to the deputy leader and cabinet member for resources:

“Can the cabinet member outline the arrangements and timetable for carrying out the following resolution of full council on 19 June 2012:

‘To ask the Constitution working party to make recommendations to council on future governance arrangements from May 2013 onwards including consideration of –

- (1) The impact of a committee system and other possible governance arrangements on value for money, quality of decision making, accountability, openness and transparency.
- (2) Preparation and overseeing of a programme of transition to any new arrangements.’ “

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources’ reply:

“A report will be taken to a meeting of the constitution working party (CWP) in March to support consideration by the CWP of the issues within the motion.”

Councillor Carlo asked, as a supplementary question, how the report would be put together and what date will the meeting be held in March. **Councillor Waters** said that the report would contain the fullest information available. The meeting would be arranged at the convenience of all members and dates would be circulated.

Question 4

Councillor Howard to the leader of the council:

“Since the Green councillors’ original motion to council in 2008, we have seen a large amount of cross-party consensus over the need for a living wage, which includes the private

sector, as well as city council employees. Will the City Deal include the creation of a living wage zone for Norwich?"

Councillor Arthur leader of the council's reply:

"I am absolutely delighted that the work of a number of Labour-led local authorities, supported by the Labour Party, to ensure workers are paid a living wage, is now at the heart of the political agenda. I am also very pleased to confirm that following the decision of cabinet in October 2012, it has been confirmed that we have achieved living wage accreditation. This is a massive step forward and builds on the work which my colleague, Councillor Waters, has been undertaking since 2006.

In preparing for this, the cabinet report identified that there were many hard working people who rely on benefits for housing cost, council tax costs and tax credits. Setting aside for the moment the vital welfare support that they receive - which we know is under threat from changes being introduced by the Coalition Government through the Welfare Reform Act - these people are still not in a position to save money or fully participate in society. This can lead to increased debt, increased risk of use of illegal money lending, higher levels of stress and family breakdown.

The cabinet decision set the council on a three stage journey to achieving living wage accreditation, based on whether workers are directly or indirectly employed.

Stage one is to ensure that the employer is currently paying all directly employed employees at a wage level equal to, or exceeding, the living wage level.

Stage two is to ensure that steps are being put in place to ensure that workers employed directly by the council's contractors are paid at a level equal to, or exceeding, this hourly rate.

Stage three is to ensure that any workers employed by companies undertaking one-off contracted pieces of work (for example within council premises) are included.

The cabinet decision also recognised that an interwoven requirement of accreditation is for the council to promote and celebrate the living wage with employers across the city. The council is well placed in its civic leadership role to champion the benefits of a living wage with employers in the city, as well as using its commissioning and procurement frameworks to bring the benefits to its indirect workers.

Officers will be developing a programme to incorporate the council's work externally to promote and champion the living wage in Norwich with partners, employers and the business community.

Should the Greater Norwich City Deal application, which has now been submitted to government, progress to the next stage, then there will be a range of opportunities to drive economic growth in the Greater Norwich area. Although the application focuses on physical regeneration, it also recognises the broader social requirements and benefits that a City Deal could bring to Norwich. In this context the idea of a living wage zone is attractive and I am sure that this is the type of issue that will be considered should the Government support our application for City Deal status. "

Councillor Howard asked, as a supplementary question, how would this fit into other schemes such as the Norwich BID. **Councillor Arthur** reiterated the points in her answer that the living wage was something that had always been dear to labour councillor's hearts. The council would continue to provide a civic leadership role to help people understand how important this was but it could not force others to follow. Through representation on the BID board the council would extol the merits of the living wage but it couldn't force other partners act. However, the council would "continue to put its money where its mouth was".

Question 5

Councillor Galvin to the deputy leader and cabinet member for resources:

"I have been informed that Norwich City Council does not 'hold' recovery action on council tax benefit overpayments pending the outcome of appeals. Council tax benefit overpayments go onto the council tax account, and if payments are not negotiated, they go to liability order. If the appeal is allowed, the council tax benefit amount is refunded but any court cost accrued remain. This is not in line with national guidance. Will the city council change its position on this?"

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources' reply:

"The guidance and good practice outlined in the housing benefit (HB) and council tax benefit (CTB) overpayments guidance manual primarily applies to housing benefit overpayments where recovery is always stopped when an appeal is lodged.

Council tax excess benefit is posted to the council tax account and a new bill is issued. Customers are required to pay even if an appeal is lodged and if necessary the debt is secured with a liability order. An arrangement to spread the debt over a longer period can be set up if the customer is having difficulty making payments.

It is incorrect to say that if the appeal is allowed the council tax benefit amount is refunded, but any court cost accrued remain. If the appeal tribunal find in favour of the appellant, any monies paid and any court costs are fully refunded.

To get to the point of appeal (the customer initiates) the customer would have first asked for a statement of reasons then if not satisfied with the outcome asks for a review of the decision. If still dissatisfied then the customer would appeal. At each stage a different member of staff would look at the decision. Once an appeal is received the decision is considered and if we cannot change that decision then appeal tribunal papers are prepared and submitted.

In the last twelve months the service received fifty appeals. Of those who appealed only four went to the liability order stage.

The majority of overpayments or excess benefits decisions occur because the customer has not told us about a change in circumstances that results in a reduction to benefit entitlement."

Councillor Galvin asked, as a supplementary question, why would it not be best practice to wait until appeals were decided. **Councillor Waters** said that he believed his answer gave the necessary assurance in respect of the process of overpayment of council tax benefit and when an appeal was successful all costs would be refunded in full. There were different

regulations for different types of benefit. If Councillor Galvin has a particular point she was not clear about he would be happy to talk to her about it.

Question 6

Councillor Stammers to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods:

“Residents in flats on Northumberland Street have recently found that their large blue recycling container was not collected for weeks as it had been inadvertently put back in the wrong place due to building works. In this situation, the contractors are supposed to tell the council that they can't find the bin. However this did not happen. What is the council doing to make sure the contractors stick to their side of the bargain, and is the council able to reclaim costs for the time it takes staff to sort out situations like this?”

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods' reply:

“There have been issues with the collections of the bulk bins from Northumberland Street caused by the building works and scaffolding to the stairwells. This has given limited access to the site which has created problems when trying to put out the bins. The bin to which the member refers has now been relocated to a more accessible place. Discussions were held with the contractor with regards to ensuring the bins were regularly emptied. If members are aware of any further issues it would be appreciated if they could be reported to the officers so immediate action can be taken.

With regard to reclaiming costs, the council can claim defaults where work has not been completed to the requirements of the contract. However, in cases like this there are other issues which are not the fault of the collection contractor and the council would not necessarily issue a default.”

Question 7a

Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for environment and development:

“On 13 September 2012, the council's press release on the Big Switch and Save scheme stated that the council was aiming for a minimum of 1500 households to switch. I understand that 360 people actually switched. For the second tranche to be a success how many households should switch and what should their average saving be?”

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and development reply:

Thanks for this question which allows me to spell out that the first roll-out of the Norwich Big Switch and Save was a great success and I am pleased to announce that the second tranche of the Norwich Big Switch and Save launched last week on the 21st January and is due to run for 10 weeks.

At cabinet on 12 September 2012, we agreed to the establishment of the scheme with two tranches of collective switching; one tranche before Christmas and one in the new year. Within that report, mention was made of 1,500 residents switching over the two tranches of the scheme, although not as a performance target but in relation to the potential costs of the scheme.

You will be as pleased as I was that our first tranche attracted 1,758 households which is about 3% of the city. The energy auction, which included a number of other schemes, attracted over 25,000 people nationally. The results show that for the Norwich Big Switch and Save, 19.5% of the residents who were presented an offer made the switch saving collectively over £58,000 to households across the City. This was the best conversion rate nationally of the different schemes that were part of the auction. That is a fantastic result, don't you agree?

You will be just as pleased to hear that now the council has secured £28,000 from Department of Energy and Climate Change's "Cheaper together fund" we can promote tranche two of the Norwich Big Switch and Save even more widely than for our first tranche.

However, the question of how many households would be required to switch and how much they would need to save in order to consider the second tranche of the Big Switch and Save successful, suggests that there are only two measures of the success of this scheme, whereas there are far more results to see than that. As you may be aware from our affordable warmth strategy it is estimated that one in five households in Norwich are in fuel poverty, which equates to 10,000 homes or 17% of homes in the city. If only one person in fuel poverty is offered a saving on their fuel bills this year and doesn't have to make difficult decisions about whether to heat their home effectively, the scheme could be deemed a success.

As I said at the launch of both roll-outs of the Norwich Big Switch and Save, we had other reasons for introducing this scheme and one clear reason was to demystify the switching process for the residents of Norwich. We hoped that the switching message was getting through to Norwich residents through discussion in the newspaper, pieces on the local radio and news and it is. We cannot measure the number of people who switched without using the Norwich Big Switch and Save but who were reminded and encouraged to do so by all the publicity. We have heard evidence that companies were more active in this period with special offers to their customers, which if it saved them moving, isn't that great? Now, how do you measure that - except in the pleasure of knowing that you have saved people hundreds of pounds in energy bills!

There are better deals to be had on many services and commodities such as mobile phones, car insurance, house insurance and banks if you are prepared to shop around and switch providers. Part of the aim of this project is to show how it is possible to make savings by switching provider, whatever the product might be. Again, this is a indication of the success of the Switch and Save scheme but cannot be measured by the number of households who switch energy provider.

Another measure of our success is that we were leading the way as one of the first local authorities in the country to try to help their citizens through the introduction of this scheme. You must be proud to be part of a Council that is so forward thinking and caring. You could take this to your Green colleagues in Brighton & Hove Council and suggest to them that they get on with doing it for their citizens as I understand that they haven't started yet. We were of course the first in the Norfolk region to introduce a collective switching scheme. A number of our neighbouring district authorities have followed suit and are due to launch switching schemes of their own and our officers have assisted our neighbouring districts with the benefit of our experience.

There are those who seem to give the impression that they want the schemes to fail with comments like "lower energy prices could result in higher use of energy", that the Norwich Big Switch and Save ".. was only really available online.." and the suggestion that there may be better deals online. As you will have read earlier, we are not worried where the people of

Norwich get their better energy deals, as long as they do so. If the reason they went and looked was because of the publicity associated with the Norwich Big Switch and Save, then that is a success!

I am certain that you and your Green colleagues are really pleased with the Norwich Big Switch and Save and want the second roll-out to be an even bigger success and save the citizens of Norwich even more money.

Of the 1,768 households who registered during the first tranche, the highest savings offered were £501, with an average saving of £166 per household. I sincerely believe that with the benefit of our experience and the additional DECC funding, this tranche of the scheme will be a success across a range of different measures.”

Councillor Haynes said that of the 1700 people who signed up only 300 had taken up the offer and asked, as a supplementary question, why that was and how the council could encourage more to take it up. **Councillor Bremner** said that more people had registered to the city council’s scheme than other schemes at a similar time and it appeared that the lead up to Christmas had affected our scheme less than others. Several people who had registered also did their own investigations and changed suppliers themselves. Also, the “big six” suppliers had seen what was happening in Norwich and contacted customers direct to offer savings, which was welcome. He said that the second tranche would be publicised soon and he was pleased that Councillor Haynes agreed that this was a good idea.

Question 7b

Councillor Grenville to the cabinet member for environment and development:

“Having benefited from the first Norwich Big Switch and Save can the portfolio member for environment and development please explain the benefits of the second tranche of the Big Switch and Save?”

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and development’s reply:

I'm really glad to hear that you benefitted from the first tranche of the Norwich Big Switch and Save. I did as well and I was really pleased to choose Co-operative Energy as my supplier.

One of the benefits of the first scheme was to open the energy market to the smaller suppliers to get away from the dominance of the "big six". It worked and maybe they will be the best deal in early April when the scheme goes to auction.

Norwich City Council was the fourth local authority in the country to run a collective switching scheme and the first city nationally when we launched tranche one of the scheme in October last year. I am pleased to announce that since then, two thirds of all local authorities are currently looking to set up their own collective switching schemes, including all of our neighbouring local authorities in Norfolk. The council has been very supportive to these authorities.

We hope that the second tranche of the Norwich Big Switch and Save will be bigger and better. As you may be aware we have been successful in securing £26,000 of the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) ‘Cheaper Together’ funding. With this additional resource we intend to deploy extra resources to promote the scheme in the community and support people who want to register with the scheme.

In addition to this we are working more closely with charities, businesses, housing associations and local schools to promote the switch as widely as we can. We want to get the Switch and Save message out to as many of our residents as possible so that they can benefit from the potential savings to be had.

Finally the registration period has doubled on this second tranche and is running for approximately 10 weeks, with the auction on 9 April 2013. The extended registration period, without the distraction of Christmas in the middle, combined with the additional resources, means that we hope that tranche two is an even greater success.”

Question 8

Councillor Gee to the cabinet member for housing:

“The Leave It Tidy scheme encourages residents to leave their home in a good state so it can be re let promptly, which is a good thing. However, when a tenant dies it is their relatives who often clear and clean the home. There has been some confusion which has caused distress over what the policy is for the payment regarding this. Please can I see what the council's policy is, and ask that the city council make clear to bereaved relatives, in a sensitive way, exactly what their rights are in this situation?”

Councillor MacDonald, cabinet member for housing’s reply:

“The ‘Leave it Tidy’ scheme was re-introduced in February 2011 with former and transferring tenants being eligible for the £100 payment upon a property being left tidy upon vacation.

Where a tenant has died the payment will be made to the tenant’s estate, subject to:

- the property being free from personal property and belongings;
- a full set of keys and fobs being returned;
- no outstanding charges for rechargeable repairs or rent arrear;
- at least 28 days notice being given of tenancy termination.

The council is aware that this is a difficult time for relatives and endeavours to provide clear information and complete the necessary process with as little distress as possible. In these situations a relative usually makes contact with our customer contact centre. At this time details of the scheme will be given and an appointment booked, with the relative, to meet a housing voids officer at the property. It is at this meeting that any remaining issues can be discussed regarding the Leave it Tidy scheme.

Where eligible, payment will be made to the executor or relative by cheque following completion of tenancy termination process.

We recently received a letter of praise from bereaved parents thanking us for the sensitive way in which we helped them through the process of sorting out their deceased son’s tenancy and all the associated issues.“

Question 9

Councillor Blunt to the leader of the council:

“How will council ensure transparency, accountability and participation in any new body set up to manage the City Deal?”

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council:

“A City Deal is a negotiated agreement between central and local government and the local enterprise partnership (LEP) that allows freedoms and flexibilities at a local level (including the ability to access and influence devolved government funding streams) in return for enhanced economic activity. As members are aware the council has submitted an expression of interest to secure a City Deal for the Greater Norwich Area but this is a competitive process and there is no guarantee that this will be successful.

We have identified that the three main building blocks for economic growth in the Greater Norwich area are the development of private sector innovation and enterprise, together with investment in skills and infrastructure. However, what is not clear at this stage is exactly what could be on offer from central government to support our growth strategy.

Assuming we are successful, it is recognised that we need a robust and accountable governance structure to support decision making across these three areas. However, at this stage, it is not possible to be prescriptive about how this will be achieved because we do not know the full remit of any deal. In accepting that the form of governance will need to follow the function it is there to support, there is no doubt in my mind that locally elected members from all the constituent authorities will play a key role in decision making across the broad spectrum that a City Deal is likely to cover. In this respect the whole process will retain democratic accountability.”

Councillor Blunt asked, as a supplementary question, if the leader of the council could clarify that local elected members would be able to play a key role, including opposition members, allowing all members to influence the democratic framework. **Councillor Arthur** said that there had been a recent briefing for all councillors on the City Deal. There was a range of options available and a governance structure would be sought that ensured democratic accountability. She reminded Councillor Blunt that the electorate had given some members a greater role than others to make decisions and they would continue to do that in a open and transparent way.

Question 10

Councillor Grahame to the deputy leader and cabinet member for resources:

“Will Norwich City Council use its powers under the Sustainable Communities Act to seek government agreement that we should continue to pay housing benefit directly to landlords, (except where the tenant requests payment to themselves)? This would encourage private sector landlords to accept tenants in receipt of housing benefit, and would accord with government policy of using the market to meet local housing need. “

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources' reply:

The Sustainable Communities Act (the Act) gives the government a legal duty to assist local authorities in promoting the sustainability of local communities.

The definition of sustainability under the Act has 4 strands:

- improvement of the local economy;
- protection of the environment;
- promotion of social inclusion; and
- participation in civic and political activity.

Guidance indicates that proposals that are submitted must fall into one or more of these categories.

A basic factor is that a proposal must require some form of government action. This might be a change in primary legislation, a transfer of function between public bodies etc and which cannot currently be carried out under existing freedoms and flexibilities. As such, it represents an extension of local authorities' 'well-being' powers.

Recent changes to the Act make it less prescriptive and also require local authorities to consult and try to reach agreement about the proposal with representatives of interested local persons, before making a submission and to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Whilst Councillor Grahame's proposal is an interesting take on the potential of the Act, it is thought very unlikely that the government would amend a piece of primary and priority legislation via this approach given the very broad range of lobbying and feedback already provided to government when the bill passed through Parliament.

The impact of the Welfare Reform Act is going to have a very considerable impact on many people in the city. To take this suggestion forward would ultimately require the use of council resources which could be better focussed on continuing to develop the council's wider response to welfare reform." On this particular element of the Welfare Reform Act, I can assure Councillor Grahame that we will continue to make strenuous representations to Government on the potentially destabilising effects of direct housing benefit payments.

Councillor Grahame asked, as a supplementary question, if the deputy leader didn't think it was possible to use the Sustainability Act on this issue, how did he think the council might be able to use it. **Councillor Waters** said that he shared Councillor Grahame's concerns. He apologised that there appeared to be a couple of paragraphs missing from the original draft of his reply. He said that when the model was applied in Wakefield it revealed that the new welfare proposals meant that many more people were getting into debt. He reiterated that using the Sustainability Act for this particular legislation would be fruitless and the best way to address the problems of welfare reform was through a broad and strong campaign to encourage all to pressure government for dialogue.

Question 11

Councillor Henderson to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods:

“Recently we have had several days where waste collections have not happened due to the snow. Has the council got a plan to stop this happening again in future, and how are the council catching up on missed collections?”

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods’ reply:

“ to the nature of the , we will always experience some difficulties with waste collections. We have no control over the weather and therefore cannot stop extreme weather events happening. What we can do is to plan for recovery from such events.

We can all appreciate from our own experience how dangerous the roads have been. To ask vehicles weighing over 25 tonnes to negotiate icy roads in built up areas with parked cars is asking the impossible. In addition, think of the crews walking 10 miles a day pulling a wheelie bin on frozen pavements and the dangers presented to them.

This year the extreme cold experienced on the Tuesday night, with temperatures going down to minus 12, meant collection vehicles were inoperable next day. The hydraulics on the vehicles would not work meaning any refuse that could have been collected could not be ejected from the vehicles.

The lorries were also caught up in the grid lock of Norwich and could not move – the last vehicle got back to the depot at 8 pm – meaning no refuse could be collected on that particular afternoon.

This situation was faced by many other local authorities across the country and in those areas waste collection services were similarly disrupted.

Throughout the period the council has concentrated on attempting to collect each days refuse and recycling, with any spare capacity spent collecting the refuse and recycling from the day before and trying to get into roads not previously accessible. To help clear the volume of waste, our contractor will collect any black sacks and material for recycling that are put beside the bin over the next two weeks.

The public are also welcome to use the recycling centre run by Norfolk County Council at Swanton Road to dispose of any excess waste and recycling they may have.

Information to the public has been given through press releases, radio and television interviews and daily updates on our website telling people what to do.

Finally, I would like to place on record my appreciation for the collection staff who have worked exceptionally hard in very difficult conditions to continue to provide this important service to the residents of Norwich.”

Councillor Henderson said that similar problems had occurred in previous years and asked, as a supplementary question, why had precautions not been taken in the interim. **Councillor Driver** said that he was very surprised at the original question and at the supplementary. On the day the question was received there was an update on the home page of the council's website on the arrangements for catching up with the collections. He was surprised that

Councillor Henderson was not keeping up to date with information on the council's website. The council did have plans in place but as most tenants would recognise, it was very difficult to deal with the volume of snow that fell in the short timescale.

Question 12

Councillor Little to the cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods:

"Last November, residents in my ward were reminded in a letter of the council's power to impose a fine of £80 if wheelie bins were left on the pavement. However, in a recent public meeting, the relevant cabinet member said that no one would ever be fined while he held the portfolio. Could the council clarify its position?"

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for environment and neighbourhoods reply:

"This council has always taken the approach of education before enforcement and believes the best approach is to work with our residents to resolve issues of bins left on streets. In all cases where the council has been involved, this approach has been successful, with bins being taken off the streets before fixed penalty notices have been issued. With our approach to neighbourhood working I see no reason why this would not continue to be successful."

Councillor Little asked, as a supplementary question, if the portfolio holder could clarify fines would be considered for persistent offenders. **Councillor Driver** said that he would prefer education to be used rather than fines but yes, if there were persistent offenders, that option was available. However, hopefully no one would be fined during his time as portfolio holder.

Question 13

Councillor Mike Sands to the cabinet member for environment and development:

"Can the portfolio holder for transport explain the rationale behind the proposals at Chapel Field North and what advantages they will have to curbing the traffic problems in the area? "

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and development reply:

"The proposals for Chapel Field North are part of a package of measures that aim to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in preference to driving through the heart of our city centre. The centre is already congested and at times our busiest shopping streets are gridlocked by cars trying to take the shortest route from A to B through the middle of the city. These vehicles do nothing to contribute to the economy and vitality of the city centre, indeed they detract from it, and we must do what we can to support the city centre by removing these vehicles. This is something that is seen by developers as vital to their investment strategies for Norwich.

The package of city centre measures is part of the Norwich area transportation strategy (NATS), which in turn is part of the Joint Core Strategy for the greater Norwich area. The current scheme under consideration includes the removal of general traffic from St Stephens Street and Surrey Street, the creation of a bus gate on Rampant Horse Street, the closure of Little Bethel Street and the introduction of two-way traffic on Chapel Field North. In future years we will look to close Westlegate, make both Golden Ball Street

and Rose Lane two-way and introduce two-way working for buses in Prince of Wales Road.

As we all know, the ring road suffers from congestion in several places. One of these areas is Chapel Field Road between Grapes Hill Roundabout and St Stephens Roundabout. This section is used by all buses serving the west of the city along Dereham Road, Earlham Road and Unthank Road - routes which serve two of the city's most popular destinations for bus passengers- the Hospital and the University. In developing the package of city centre measures it was clear there was a need to help these buses avoid the congestion on the ring road. Consideration was given to making one lane of the dual carriageway in each direction a bus lane, however this would significantly reduce the capacity of the ring road and we need to do what we can to encourage private vehicles to stay on the ring road rather than diverting through the city centre. It was for this reason the proposal to allow buses to come into the city centre along Chapel Field North is being developed. The traffic modeling shows that this will save an average of two minutes on bus journey times between Grapes Hill and the bus stops in the city centre and at the times when the city is at its' busiest these savings will be significantly more.

In terms of what benefits the proposals will have for curbing the traffic problems in the area there are many. I'll focus on the main ones:

- Anyone who has crossed the road between Marks and Spencer and Debenhams, either at the formal crossing point at the traffic lights or along the street, will know that the constant stream of traffic through here does not make that easy. With the creation of the bus gate at this location, dramatically reducing the number of vehicles using this section of road, crossing will be made much easier and safer and at the traffic lights more green time can be given to pedestrians. Similarly with fewer vehicles using Theatre Street crossing here will be easier too.
- I've already touched on the benefits for bus passengers from the west of the city, but ultimately all passengers will benefit. The route along Chapel Field North introduces more bus stops in the city centre and takes some pressure off the heavily used stops in St Stephens Street. It is not just about saving time on bus journeys, the package of measures is all about making bus journeys more reliable; unreliability and unpunctuality are often cited as reasons why people choose not to use public transport.
- Little Bethel Street which for years has been choked by the number and size of vehicles using it will be transformed into a street for pedestrians and cyclists only.
- Cyclists will benefit from less traffic being in the area and new direct routes are being created through the area.
- The number vehicles using Westlegate will fall significantly.
- Lorries serving the likes of Chapelfield Mall, the Walk and the Theatre will no longer be taking convoluted routes through the heart of the city centre, they will have a direct access from the ring road.
- Coaches for the first time in Norwich's history will have an identified route that can be promoted to boost tourism.

Of course, I am well aware that the recent consultation on the proposals has caused concern among the residents of the Chapel Field North and Bethel Street area. It was for this reason that last week the Norwich Highways Agency Committee, of which I am vice-chair, voted to defer a decision on whether the scheme should go ahead until March. This will give time to further consider the concerns and issues that have been raised, before a final decision whether to proceed with the scheme is made.”

Question 14

Councillor Maxwell to leader of the council:

“Can the portfolio member for culture explain the benefits of moving the bonfire celebrations from Earlham Park to the city centre?”

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council:

“We are replacing Sparks in the Parks with potentially two firework displays - one free city centre event, which we will run, and one in Earlham Park, which we have put out to tender and will subject to a satisfactory tender be delivered by a external company.

As costs rise the council will inevitably need to raise ticket prices making the event increasingly prohibitive to growing numbers of our residents. We believe that in difficult financial times people should still be able to take part in free traditional events in their city. In making this change to our programme we are also avoiding the risk that if rains and income is down, the council tax payers of Norwich will have to pick up a bill.

We are aware of other commercial shows and the many smaller fundraising displays organised in the greater Norwich area, so we have specifically chosen to hold the city centre fireworks on a Friday to minimise impact on any Saturday events. This will give families in Norwich the chance to enjoy the free display and also have the opportunity to go along to another bonfire night event such as the one which may well be offered in Earlham Park.

Thank you to all those who have complimented our events team. You will be pleased to know that by not running Sparks, the team will have the capacity to develop and attract exciting new events to the city.

Anyone who was in Norwich during the Olympic Torch relay last year or for the Lord Mayor’s weekend will know just how popular these city centre events can be and how well our events team can deliver them. We also know that city centre events increase business for our retailers, cafes, bars and restaurants. This is something which is really important if we are to help retain jobs in the centre of Norwich. With some of their time freed up by not having such huge input into Sparks in the Park, our talented events team will be able to bring exciting new events into Norwich.

So watch this space!”

