



MINUTES

COUNCIL

7.30pm – 9.50pm

18 March 2014

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

Apologies: Councillors Harris and Stammers

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor welcomed Pamela Cary, Monitoring Officer, to her first meeting of council.

He said that since the last meeting he had attended a number of engagements including the opening of the refurbished post office at Tuckswood and a technology competition for schools at the Hewett School. He had also attended the Army Careers Day at the Forum.

He said that it was with great sadness that he had to report the death of Gordon Tilsley, a former town clerk of the Norwich Corporation and latterly the chief executive and town clerk of Norwich City Council. Gordon Tilsley had led the council through a period of great change and was particularly influential in bringing the University of East Anglia to Norwich. After a moment's silence in memory of Gordon Tilsley the Lord Mayor led council in a round of applause celebrating his life and his important contribution to the city.

At the invitation of the Lord Mayor, Councillor Arthur, leader of the council, informed members that the council had won the Local Government Association National Award of the most improved council. She said this was very good news not just for the council but for the people of Norwich. It recognised the hard work of many people including officers and councillors both past and present.

The Lord Mayor then invited group leaders to say a few words about councillors who would not be standing at the next election and for whom this was, therefore, their last council meeting. Councillor Arthur acknowledged the contribution of councillors Grenville, MacDonald, Storie and Thomas during their term of office. Councillor Boswell acknowledged the contribution of councillors Brimblecombe and Stephenson and Councillor Wright also commented on the contributions made by all those that were not standing.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Ackroyd, Grahame and Neale declared a personal prejudicial interest in item 11 – private sector housing standards.

3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Lord Mayor said that six questions had been received from members of the public.

Question 1

Chairman Wollard to the cabinet member for housing:

Could the council explain to me the impact upon Norwich families and individuals of the 'bedroom tax', especially those in the Mile Cross area and explain what steps are being taken to support those afflicted by this vicious tax?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing, replied:

We can be in no doubt that for many people in Norwich the impact of the removal of the spare room subsidy has been significant. Whilst we cannot unfortunately provide breakdowns of hardship by ward, it is clear that many individuals and families are facing increasingly tough decisions in order to make ends meet.

What I can confirm is that we have been able to make awards of Discretionary Housing Payments to households most affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy. Such payments can help make good some shortfall between rents and housing benefit or can help with one-off payments such as removal costs or rent in advance. The budget to make discretionary housing benefit payments is a limited one and will be exhausted by the end of the financial year – so I would encourage all those who are eligible to apply as soon as possible to ensure they receive the maximum benefit available.

As previously mentioned, approximately 15% of council tenant households have a deduction from their housing benefit in respect of the bedroom tax.

No evictions for only bedroom tax issues have taken place.

Housing Income officers continue to work with affected tenants, aiming to prevent arrears from accruing and avoiding legal action.

Question 2

Matthew Packer to the cabinet member for housing:

I was pleased to hear of the special event at The Forum telling us all about the achievements of the city council's 'Learning, Employment and Accommodation Project (LEAP). It demonstrated vividly the difference made to client's lives.

Can the cabinet member for housing update the council on the successes and development of LEAP, and the difference it has made in tackling homelessness in our city?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing, replied:

LEAP (The Learning, employment, accommodation project) was established in 2008 to help some of the most disadvantaged people in society (85% of clients being ex-offenders. LEAP offers an holistic programme targeted at individuals who are experiencing disadvantage and inequalities in health, housing and employment. LEAP addresses the multiple needs of clients and invests in long term solutions. It achieves this through a mix of activities, support opportunities and collaborative working with partner agencies, delivered with the help of 30 trained volunteers.

LEAP has increased capacity in the last year by 23%. 203 people have accessed the service over the last two years (Jan 2014). One in four clients has gone on to employment following the programme (an increase of 116% from last year) and 81% of clients have said they have moved forward following their first assessment.

44 people have taken themselves out of homelessness and into their own independent accommodation; creating a new beginning for the individual and freeing up bed spaces in hostels. 90% of those who move into NCC private rented accommodation sustain their tenancy.

A recent Social Return on Investment Evaluation was carried out, highlighting that for every £1 spent on LEAP, £4 value was generated (based on savings to benefits and the areas of offending and health).

In the last quarter 22 new people have joined LEAP and LEAP has helped 14 people move into their own homes. 9 people have gained employment and 21 people have taken up training, education or volunteering.

It is well worth noting that 96% of the service users rated the service as good or excellent.

This is another example where the city, working with St Martins Housing, have made a difference to homelessness and more. When you meet with the people who have been helped by LEAP you will find people who have been empowered and lifted into positive belief – it is just brilliant.

Question 3

Rupert Read to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

When the current pedestrian signs were erected in the City Centre 7 years ago, I was a City Councillor and sought assurances from the administration that the classic old green cast iron signs would be reused or recycled: this was the only condition under which I felt comfortable about the premature removal of these classic signs. The assurances that I requested were duly given. Many years later the signs are still lying dumped randomly at the edge of the Mile Cross dump (where they have recently been joined by some of the signs that replaced them!). Could the cabinet member please tell me what the plans are for these old signs, and why they have lain abandoned for so long?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport, replied:

Despite appearances, the former city centre pedestrian signage is stored at Mile Cross depot. Whilst the fingers are unlikely to be usable the posts are capable of re-use; for example to provide direction signage as part of a park upgrade - some parks already having this type of signage already in place.

It is common practice to place materials into store for future use. For example the council retains other items of street furniture or more valuable paving materials for this reason.

If it is decided that there is no longer any potential future use for an item it will either be re-cycled or sold on for re-use. Mr Read is correct in pointing out that it has been some years since the signage was removed and a decision over whether to continue to store the items will be made shortly.

Rupert Read asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member thought it was wise to store metal signs outside with no protection. **Councillor Stonard** said that he could not comment as he had not seen where the signs were stored.

Question 4

Sandra Boegelein to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

A recent survey about the Norwich Fringe Project, which looks after many of the important green spaces encircling the city, found that it is highly effective on performance and delivery, and much valued by a wide range of people. However it is under grave threat due to the continuing squeeze on public funds of its partner organisations, including the city council. In many other cities, Community Interest Companies are enabling local people to protect and have strong involvement in such areas, for instance by enabling them to apply for heritage lottery grants and other sources of funding which the city council cannot access.

What is the council going to do in the immediate future to build on these positive survey findings, and save Norwich's surrounding countryside, in an exciting and dynamic way?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport, replied:

The Norwich Fringe Project (NFP) was set up and hosted by Norwich City Council in 1990. It is a local authority, partnership funded, countryside management project: covering a 4-mile radius around Norwich. The overall aim of the project is to work with local communities to look after and manage the countryside on their doorstep, with associated biodiversity, access and health benefits.

The Project was initially funded by Norwich City Council, Broadland District Council, South Norfolk Council, Norfolk County Council and the Broads Authority. In 2012 Norfolk County Council withdrew its funding and the Broads Authority will be withdrawing its funding at the end of March 2014.

Norwich City Council and our partners in Broadland and South Norfolk recognise the valuable work the Fringe Project carries out on our behalf and the significant contributions made by local people in managing our wildlife sites. At the same time we need to recognise the recent reduction in grant income means that a decision needs to be made on a future operating model for the management of our sites. To this end work is going on behind the scenes investigating differing options available. Before any decision is made about the future of the Norwich Fringe Project, the council needs to be fully assured that the good work will continue both now and in the long term thereby ensuring the countryside on our doorsteps is managed appropriately.

Sandra Boegelein said that two meetings organised by the Fringe Project recently had been cancelled by the city council at the last minute. She asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member agreed that the city council was stifling this community initiative. **Councillor Stonard** said that the council needed to look at all available options with its partners. He understood that funding was available for the next 18 months and this was sufficient time for the partners to look at and consider the various options and he hoped that this would reassure you.

Question 5

Heather Webb to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

I am interested in what evidence there is that the late night activity zone brings more money into the city than it costs. How much money does the zone contribute to the city in areas such as business rates, council tax of employees, and how much does the zone cost, for example, in additional cleaning and policing needs?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport, replied:

Thank you for your question.

The question you ask is not easily answered because the information required to be able to answer the question fully is either not held by the council or is not held in a format that would allow it to be easily extracted to estimate income or the economic value of the late night activity zone.

Similarly, some information is held by other organisations, such as the Norfolk Constabulary for crime and disorder issues and the Norwich CCG or Norfolk Public Health for the costs for health related issues.

An example is the national non-domestic rate (NNDR) which the council collects on behalf of the county council and government. The element retained by the city council is used to fund service provision on a citywide basis and no part of it can be proportioned for particular services or areas.

In addition, there is no difference between business rates payable within the "late night activity zone" as compared to other businesses, which in each case are set by the Valuation Office and not by the council.

A further example is fees from licensing applications which cover the council's costs to provide the service and do not generate a surplus for the council.

I can confirm, however, that the cost for cleansing the entire city centre is £600,000 per annum and the cost of cleaning Prince of Wales Road is in the region of £40,000 per annum approximately.

The whole night time economy including three theatres many cinemas, restaurants and bars contribute significant amounts to the economy and provide many much needed jobs. Clearly there are particular issues relating to one part of this which relate to one area and we are addressing these to ensure that people can enjoy themselves in a safe environment and at the same time responding to the needs of the local communities who have been clear about their concerns. But there are a number of jobs in this area many of which are entry level and the Norwich night time economy overall has huge benefits for the city in boosting jobs, the economy and making it a great place for people to visit.

Heather Webb asked, as a supplementary question, if the council had any information particularly about Prince of Wales Road in respect of the contribution of the nighttime economy and the effect upon lost trade for local businesses.

Councillor Stonard said what we did know was that the nighttime economy was very important to the area with 30,000 people approximately coming in to the city every weekend. It was also important to emphasise that the city was absolutely safe. Like all cities there were issues to deal with but it was very important that we did not exaggerate any problems and highlight that Norwich was a very safe city.

Question 6

Richard Edwards to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

Half Mile Road in Mile Cross estate faces a number of problems, not least of which are old, dangerous tree branches which should be removed before we have any more high winds.

Could the council please remove these dangerous branches before one falls on a house, a car or a person?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport, replied:

All street trees are surveyed at least every four years. The trees on Half Mile Road were inspected in February 2013. At the time of inspection 38 mature lime trees were found to need work including the removal of low branches and the removal of dead wood. This was completed in late summer 2013 along with work to repair tree surrounds. In view of your concerns I have asked an officer to visit and ensure the trees are safe.

Richard Edwards asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would liaise with him if there were any trees that needed work. **Councillor Stonard** said that he was happy to speak to ward councillors and officers would advise local people as appropriate.

4. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED, unanimously, to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2014.

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 at which notice had been received in accordance with the provisions of Appendix 1 of the council's constitution, and the questions were as follows –

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|-------------------|--|
| Question 1 | Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the Bluebell Road/North Park Avenue zebra crossing. |
| Question 2 | Councillor Galvin to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on way-finding signs. |
| Question 3 | Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for resources on discretionary housing payments. |
| Question 4 | Councillor Price to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the late night economy. |
| Question 5 | Councillor Boswell to the leader of the council on community infrastructure levy funding. |

- Question 6** Councillor Carlo to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the pink pedalway scheme.
- Question 7** Councillor Jackson to the cabinet member for resources on the outcome of the motion to September 2013 council on advertising payday loan companies.
- Question 8** Councillor Button to the cabinet member for resources on food banks.
- Question 9** Councillor Sands(S) to the Leader of the Council on the iESE awards.
- Question 10** Councillor Manning to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the City Car Club.

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

7. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Manning seconded the recommendations in the annexed report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to –

- (1) adopt the revised article 17 of the constitution – audit committee (as set out in Appendix A of the report);
- (2) approve the amendment to Appendix 1, council and procedure rules to widen the definition used for allowable motions to full council as follows:-

“a motion must relate to a council function or, if not, it must affect the city or one of the council’s key partners
- (3) adopt the criteria for deciding whether a code of conduct complaint should be referred to formal investigation as set out in Appendix C of the report.

8. THE RETURNING OFFICER

Councillor Arthur moved and Councillor Waters seconded the recommendation set out in the annexed report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to appoint Russell O’Keefe, executive head of strategy, people and democracy as returning officer for the duration of the temporary management support arrangements being provided to Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

9. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

Councillor Arthur moved and Councillor Stonard seconded the recommendation in the annexed report.

RESOLVED, with 23 voting in favour, 13 against and one abstention, to approve the pooling of community infrastructure levy income (excluding the neighbourhood funding and administration elements) to deliver infrastructure across greater Norwich.

10. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2014-15

(Senior officers left the chamber for the duration of this item.)

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Maxwell seconded the recommendation in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the pay policy statement for 2014-15.

11. MOTION – PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STANDARDS

(Councillors Ackroyd, Grahame and Neale having previously disclosed a disclosable pecuniary interest in this item, left the chamber and took no part in the discussion or vote.)

Councillor Stonard moved and Councillor Bremner seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that –

“research carried out by the Building Research Establishment shows that 22% (14,398) of households in the city rent from a private landlord which is one of the highest levels in the east of England. Of these, 33% will be on low income, 21% live in fuel poverty and 20% are experiencing conditions posing a significant threat to the health and safety of the occupants (known as a category 1 hazard). These include hard to heat homes, the presence of damp and mould, trip and fall hazards and a lack of fire precautions. BRE estimates that of the 3,114 houses in multiple occupation in Norwich, 25% are a category 1 hazard.

Council **RESOLVES** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the housing strategy’s commitment to “explore options for increasing the size of the private rented sector and to substantially reduce the number of hazardous, poorly managed and sub-standard privately rented homes through enforcement”;
- (2) ask cabinet to:-
 - (a) examine the case for using a system of accreditation and licensing as a way of setting of standards and incentivising landlords to manage their properties in an acceptable manner

thereby offering the opportunity for prospective tenants to make informed choices;

- (b) continue to use enforcement paths when appropriate to act against landlords who have failed to meet acceptable standards.

12. MOTION – WELFARE REFORM : LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Councillor Sands(S) moved and Councillor Sands(M) seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to ask the cabinet member for resources to write to Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary of State of the Department of Work and Pensions, asking him to revoke the welfare reformat regulations relating to Local Housing Allowance for single claimants under 35 years of age.

13. MOTION – APPRENTICESHIPS THROUGH COUNCIL CONTRACTS

The Lord Mayor said that the following two amendments to the motion set out on the agenda had been received in advance of the meeting. Councillor Wright had indicated that he was willing to accept both of these amendments –

Amendment moved by Councillor Neale – to add “living wage paying” to resolution 2 (after “...high quality...”)

Amendment moved by Councillor Waters – to delete ...”renew...” from resolution 1 (and replace it with ...”ask cabinet to continue...”)

With no member objecting to these amendments, they became part of the substantive motion.

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

RESOLVED, :-

- (1) Unanimously, to ask cabinet to continue its commitment to the procurement strategy that requires apprenticeships.
- (2) with 17 voting in favour, 20 against and no abstentions, to ask cabinet to commission a report into the suitability of requiring a set percentage of high quality, living wage paying apprenticeships in each contract awarded, a proportion of which should be higher or advanced status, which must be advertised locally) was declared lost.

CHAIR

APPENDIX A

Question 1

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

“The construction of the Bluebell Road / North Park Avenue zebra crossing was started in November and is still not completed. This was one of only two crossings which got funding this year because it was a priority. This crossing point is very well used by students and staff attending the University of East Anglia (UEA), the Research Park and the hospital.

However, over four months later it is still not installed. The crossing has been left half finished, without any notice saying why it is incomplete and leaving those using the crossing - both pedestrians and motorists - confused as to whether to use it as a crossing. This indecision about its status could lead to accidents.

Please could the cabinet member explain why this important pedestrian and cycle crossing has not been completed after four months and what is the council intending to do in the future to stop this type of delay happening again?”

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

“The reason for this delay is that Amey - Norfolk County Council’s street lighting contractor - and UK Power Network (UKPN) - who look after the electricity mains cables and provide the power supply to street lighting equipment, unfortunately failed to achieve the timescales that were agreed.

Council officers placed an order with Amey in May 2013 to provide Belisha beacons at the proposed crossing, with advice that the crossing would be built in November. Amey have to get the power supply carried out by UK Power Networks, as no one else is allowed to work on the mains cables.

Despite requests from officers, the first programmed date for the connection of the beacons was 9 January 2014.

When the installation team, a UKPN sub contractor, attended the site however, they considered that they could not do any work without 3-way traffic lights and so did not carry the work out. When we ask for work such as these beacons to be implemented, we don’t know where the power supply will come from and it is therefore left to Amey as they are best placed to make those decisions; and hence assess any traffic management needs to enable implementation. Unfortunately, the latter appears not to have been undertaken in this case.

This situation was further exacerbated by the severe storms that affected a large area of the country after Christmas as this drew UKPN resources towards emergency work. The next date agreed with UKPN to undertake the connection was 17 February but they did not attend due to other priorities.

Officers then negotiated with Norfolk County Council street lighting to take the power supply from a lamp column, thereby avoiding the need for UKPN to be involved at all. This solution was not chosen earlier because Norfolk County Council, the street lighting authority, have had a policy for several years to power their equipment directly from mains cables, as it reduces the amount of NCC street lighting cable and therefore their own maintenance liability.

Norfolk County Council's street lighting contractors, Amey, have now connected the beacons to the lighting columns and the crossing is working properly.

Unfortunately delays between installation of crossings and the associated electrical supply connection to new crossings do sometimes happen. Electrical connection is not in the gift of the council and our direct contracted partners, but we do our very best to negotiate that new connections happen as soon as possible.

Looking ahead, council officers have suggested to the County Council that they consider again their policy position regarding connection; with greater consideration being given to direct feed from lamp columns. Officers are investigating whether provision of separate feeder pillars for UKPN to connect to would ease programming delays."

Councillor Lubbock asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would consider ensuring appropriate signing was in place during future schemes so that the public was not confused. **Councillor Stonard** said if a similar situation occurred he would expect officers to speak to ward councillors to consider the best approach.

Question 2

Councillor Galvin to ask the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

"In 2006-7 the council introduced an extensive pedestrian way-finding system in the city centre which was part funded with European Liveable Cities money. However due to the bespoke nature of the signs they are proving difficult and costly to maintain and many seem to be being stored at Swanton Road depot, alongside the older green cast iron signs they replaced.

In total, how many signs have been taken out and what is the council planning to do with them?"

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

"As Councillor Galvin rightly says, within the city centre we have an extensive network of bespoke pedestrian way finding signs that are proving to be a challenge to maintain and keep up to date.

The network consists of 34 finger post signs, and 6 totem signs. An audit has recently been carried out on these signs to assess their condition. This shows that the totem signs are in reasonable condition, aside from some very specific problems

with graffiti and out of date maps. Of the 34 signs, seven are missing all their fingers and four are missing at least one finger. The reasons for them being removed vary; where one finger is missing they may have been hit by passing vehicles, while others have problems with their fixing brackets. The reason for some signs having all finger posts missing is generally because they had to be removed due to frost damage.

Aside from the structural problems there is also the issue of updating signs and maps when names change, for example the Art College on St Georges that features prominently on the signs is now the Norwich University of the Arts.

Officers are now looking at an options appraisal of what to do next and weighing up the pros and cons of trying to make the existing system fit for purpose. It is also worthy of note that as more and more people have smart phones with map apps the need for signed wayfinding systems is diminishing. We will be developing a report on the options available to resolve the situation for consideration later in the year."

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Galvin, Councillor Stonard** said the signs had not been "dumped" they had been stored awaiting opportunities for re-use. The review would ascertain whether it was worth keeping them.

Question 3

Councillor Haynes to ask the cabinet member for resources:

"Why has the council under-spent its Discretionary Housing Payment?"

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources response:

"In answering your question, it would be helpful to remind ourselves about the size of the DHP budget. It falls well short of the £1.5 million cut from housing benefit for our tenants alone, without taking account of those tenants occupying housing belonging to registered social landlords and many other groups affected by a range of welfare changes occupying property in the private and public rented sectors.

The council hasn't under spent its Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) allocation.

The allocation is for the full financial year April 2013 to the end of March 2014 and as we are not there yet this question is premature.

The council was allocated £288k for 2013/14 and a new discretionary housing payment policy was put in place after consultation with a range of stakeholders. Those stakeholders fed back that they were delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the consultation and their comments were extremely useful in finalising the policy.

As we have a restricted budget for DHP the council has worked to allocate this budget throughout the year and has been very successful at managing this resource whilst helping those in need. The council has to follow Department for Work and Pensions guidelines when assessing applications which include choices for the council to make. For example, the council has chosen to exclude disability-related income when assessing an application, which increases the claimant's likelihood of their application being successful.

More money was made available for councils to bid for by the Department for Work and Pensions and the council made a bid for a further £35k but this was not approved until 14 February 2014.

The council is working to make sure that we fully utilise the funding available and has written to every tenant affected by the bedroom tax as well as those affected by the benefit cap to further promote the availability of DHP. The council is also working with other housing providers to ensure that their tenants are fully aware of this.

I am aware that the Green group have called for a press release. The decision was made to target directly those affected by writing to them to ensure we did not tie up resources dealing with the wide range of enquiries that a press release could have brought.

We have had an excellent response with around 700 applications so far.

I am pleased that we will be able to help people affected in such difficult times."

In response to a supplementary question from **Councillor Haynes, Councillor Waters** reiterated that the council had not underspent its discretionary housing payment allocation. The council worked hard with all those affected to ensure anyone experiencing trouble had the assistance they required. The council was willing to work with anyone who wanted to work with us.

Question 4

Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

"Can the cabinet member confirm that he has read the Stakeholders' Forum report regarding the late night economy and what steps he has taken to incorporate recommendations that will be reported to cabinet later this month?"

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

"A report will be coming to cabinet on the 26 March setting out an action plan that will help mitigate the impacts of the night time economy on residents, businesses and visitors. For the past year, I have been working with officers to develop further the council's approach to the night time economy, including working with partners, and as part of this I have attempted to understand the views of the many stakeholders involved.

To the best of my knowledge, the 'Stakeholders Forum' has met only once, on 7 November 2013. I was present and took careful notes and, at the conclusion of the meeting, I publically checked my understanding of what had been said, and the key issues that had been raised, with those residents who were present. I subsequently shared this information verbally with Councillor Price and informed him that it was amongst a range of options being taken into account in the ongoing work we were doing with partners and stakeholders to address issues around the night time economy, so he has been aware for some time of the issues that have been on our agenda and were being worked up into practical solutions.

Unfortunately, the Green Party 'Stakeholder Report' was not published until several months later. This was so long after the November meeting that I had continued to make significant further progress with plans and actions to address the issues of the night time economy.

I note in passing that the 'Stakeholder Forum' is a Green Party body and the 'Stakeholder Report' was written by local Green Councillors and has not been considered by a wider 'Stakeholders Forum' meeting; therefore at this stage I cannot regard it as an independent set of recommendations from the 'Stakeholder Forum' participants. Indeed, its contents go well beyond the discussions on 7 November.

Nonetheless, I have reviewed the Green Party document and its recommendations. I found it to contain an interesting summary of the many initiatives that have been taken around the country to address night time economy issues, which of course are common and not restricted to Norwich, as well as other interesting suggestions. However, I was disappointed that it was un-costed and appeared to have been written in relative isolation, with no direct input from important partners such as the local police and NHS and no discussion either with Council Officers or with myself as the responsible Cabinet Member. In my opinion, this is a major weakness of the report because it takes a scattergun approach, lacks clear focus, is not costed (it ducks the funding issue, merely noting that funding is a challenge for the council to address) and has not been tested with those who would need to implement its recommendations. It is unlikely therefore to result in a targeted, timely and effective response. One of the luxuries of political opposition is that one can propose almost anything one likes, irrespective of the practicalities or affordability, and safe in the knowledge that one will never be held to account for delivery.

However, I thank Councillor Price and his Green Party colleagues for their report and am pleased to confirm that it contained no ideas or initiatives for the night time economy of which we and our partners were not already aware and were either working on or had considered not appropriate or helpful to the particular circumstances of this city.

My report to cabinet focuses on the problems of this city and the practical actions we can take to address them. It is based on more than a year's work, is affordable within identified budgets and funding streams, and takes into account the views of all stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on the addressing problems raised by local residents in the night time economy zone area.

Members will shortly be able to read the actions that cabinet will be recommended to endorse when the report goes into the public domain and I would commend it to Councillor Price and hope that on behalf of his constituents he will fully support the measures it contains."

Councillor Price said that the report did reflect the views of local residents and asked as a supplementary question, why the cabinet member had discounted the suggestion in the report to consider the provision of software to assist residents to make representations in licensing applications. **Councillor Stonard** said that as someone who lived in the area he could speak with some authority on the issues. The report which claimed to be independently verified was written by three green councillors and had not been back to the stakeholders forum. The idea you mention has not been discounted. However, the council is considering a set of targeted and

costed proposals to deal with the specific problems of Norwich rather than a list of all the other things that have been done elsewhere. His report which would be presented to cabinet recommended an appropriate set of proposals which he what he had been asked to do and had delivered.

Question 5

Councillor Boswell to ask the leader of the council:

“What will the leader say to residents in 2026 when £20m of Norwich Community Infrastructure Levy money has been sucked into the Northern Distributor Road and on other road building schemes on the A47, and little, if any, has been used for schools, green infrastructure, community space, libraries and sports provision?”

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council's response:

“I assume Councillor Boswell is referring to today's cabinet report which sought approval for the constitution of the Greater Norwich Growth Board and recommends that the council later in this meeting agree to pool CIL income (excluding the neighbourhood funding and administration elements) with other local authorities to deliver infrastructure across Greater Norwich.

As is made clear in the report, the forecast £20 million of pooled CIL funds will be used to help bring forward a capital programme of projects identified in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the Local Investment Plan and Programme. The JCS is already in place and the Local Investment Plan and Programme is regularly reviewed and mutually agreed between all the Greater Norwich authorities. By pooling funds in this manner, the council will be able to bring forward investment sooner and exert greater influence on the expenditure of revenues arising in the areas of partner authorities. In this regard the city contribution is relatively modest; £20 million compared to an overall forecast CIL of over £100 million and if only the city's contribution was available the needs of the city, let alone Greater Norwich, would be vastly under-funded.

The range of projects that may be funded include but are not restricted to:

- Norwich Area Transportation Strategy, including the NDR
- Long Stratton Bypass
- Schools
- Green Infrastructure
- Community Space
- Libraries
- Sports Provision

From the above it is clear that the intention is to use the funds on a range of infrastructure schemes and to suggest that it is used only towards road building is neither helpful nor accurate.

Through my role on the Growth Board I will seek to ensure that the benefits to the City are maximised. In the case of transport infrastructure I will be pushing for projects such as bus rapid transit, new Pedalways and measures to improve the city

centre to be implemented in parallel with the NDR. That said Norwich's infrastructure needs are far wider than transport and it is equally important that adequate investment is made in schools, green infrastructure, community space, etc. Furthermore the list of possible project categories is not exhaustive and other priority areas for investment may emerge; for example investment in ultra-fast broadband to support the creative digital sector.

To guarantee that the funds are spent on the right priorities, the council, Broadland, South Norfolk district councils, Norfolk County Council and New Anglia LEP will produce a joint business plan that will include the infrastructure requirements across the three districts and will prioritise the projects to be delivered. The business plan will require formal approval by this council and will be revisited on an annual basis."

Councillor Boswell asked, as a supplementary question, if the leader of the council would pledge to bring the business plan for the Greater Norwich Growth Board to scrutiny committee each year. **Councillor Arthur** said that she didn't want to pre-empt the debate later on the agenda. However, the proposals for accountability in the draft constitution were clear with the business plans being approved by the individual councils and subject to scrutiny.

Question 6

Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

"For a second time round, a city council letter on the Pink Pedalway scheme is having to be re-delivered to streets in Nelson and Town Close wards to correct information given to residents.

The first occasion arose in November when the city council had to write to residents to correct misleading information distributed by the local Labour Party. In their letter, the officers promised to hold a ward consultation and exhibition in March. Now we learn that the project executive board on 28 February agreed to postpone the consultation until late May and to deliver a second letter to residents informing them of this fact. However, the chair did not think to inform Nelson and Town Close ward councillors, even though I emailed the city council on 20 and 28 February and 7 March to find out what was happening about plans for the consultation.

What has transpired is confusing for residents and discourteous towards ward councillors who had told residents that consultation would take place in March. Before Christmas I had asked the project board chair for places for ward councillors from the opposition parties to ensure better communication. The chair did not reply.

I am now asking for a second time whether councillors from wards traversed by Pink Pedalway schemes could be represented on the project board so that the scheme is progressed with transparency and joint endeavour."

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

"The Push the Pedalways programme is ambitious and complicated. It involves 22 projects, over £5m of public money and affects every ward in the city and some in

Broadland and South Norfolk. It is of great interest to people across the city and their political representatives. We want to provide as much information as possible so that residents, businesses and councillors can help us to make the projects a success. We have already held four public consultation events and have received lots of helpful comments about the projects around Heartsease and Mousehold Heath. We have recruited a public engagement officer to ensure that we communicate well and listen to stakeholder's views.

The project to which Councillor Carlo refers is project 8 (Park Lane - Vauxhall Street) and this project is especially complicated. The council wrote to residents telling them that we would be consulting them on design options in March. In the meantime officers received information from a traffic survey that had been commissioned. It is apparent from this that there are a variety of options that need careful consideration and presentation. This will take longer than first thought and the project board decided that it was more important to get the consultation right than rush into it. The consultation will therefore now happen in June. We do not want residents who received the original letter to think they had missed the consultation so we have written to them again to explain what is happening. The original timescale for consultation was set with the best of intentions and to have to change it is clearly regrettable. However I hope Councillor Carlo will respect the view that ensuring the content and quality of the consultation is as good as possible is of primary importance.

It is not the case that the chair did not think to inform local councillors; as part of the decision to defer the consultation we set up specific two-hour updating sessions for all councillors in the affected wards, to make sure they are fully aware of the process going forward, and Councillor Carlo will be fully aware of those arrangements so I cannot accept that criticism and the parallel allegation of discourtesy.

I acknowledge that Councillor Carlo previously suggested councillor representation on the Project Board but no specific formal request has been put to the Board and the suggestion was not followed up. Councillor Carlo is welcome to make such a request formally. However, I disagree that such representation would be appropriate or helpful because of the role and nature of the Project Board, as set out below.

The project board is a small decision making body that has a representative from each of the funding organisations. It is a working body that is overseeing the implementation of an extremely complex project, with twenty two separate sub-elements, many implementation partners, and very tight timescales. Agendas are very full and meetings are detailed, can be lengthy and require very tight chairing to keep them focussed and on track.

The Project Board was not established to be a communications or briefing body for politicians, its Terms of Reference do not include this role, and taking on such a role would be a huge distraction from its main job, on which it really needs to focus. If there are questions about Project Communications then we need to find an appropriate way to address them through the Communications Plan and related systems for the Project, and be careful not to do this in a way that would undermine the carefully constructed governance and the focus on delivery within timescales and budgets.

Furthermore, if the Project Board were expanded to include councillor representation from parties within the city council then it would be hard to justify not extending the same offer to councillors from the other councils that are partners in the project. This would make it a very unwieldy forum for making decisions in a clear and timely way.

We have established other mechanisms such as regular briefings on the whole programme to shadow portfolio holders from other parties, briefings for ward councillors on individual projects and supplying consultation material before it is published so that ward councillors can answer questions from their constituents. We are happy to supply board minutes to councillors who want to see them. We will continue to keep these approaches under review so they meet the needs of councillors enabling us to continue developing this programme as a joint endeavour for the benefit of the city and its residents.

It concerns me that there is a risk that Councillor Carlo's question of detail about just one element of communications for just one element of the much larger Push The Pedalways project could distract from the fact that it is a massive success for this City Council, is bringing in millions of pounds of investment in infrastructure that will benefit cyclists and pedestrians, and will contribute to our overall ambition to boost the local economy for the benefit of local people, and I hope the main opposition party will join me in recognising and welcoming this achievement."

Councillor Carlo asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would consider allowing an opposition councillor to attend project meetings as an observer. **Councillor Stonard** said that would be a matter for the project board to consider.

Question 7

Councillor Jackson to ask the cabinet member for resources:

"What actions have the cabinet taken since a motion in September asked the cabinet, where the law so allows, not to permit council assets or facilities to be used for advertising by 'payday loan' companies; or use external facilities where 'payday loan' companies are advertised, for council services or events?"

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources response:

"The council directly controls advertising space at car parks upon which NPS Norwich Ltd is not permitting payday loan companies to advertise.

In addition, the council leases a small number of large format advertising hoardings to other organisations, control over which is less direct. The subject of the advertisement is generally a matter for the leaseholder, although there is a clause in the lease agreement that allows the council to object to an advertisement and for it to be removed.

To help ensure that such advertisements do not appear in the first place, NPS Norwich Ltd are writing to lessee to appraise them of the councils position.

The council also has a contract with Clearchannel Ltd to provide bus shelters which are paid for through advertising. The contract enables the council to sanction

certain types of advertisements and the company has been contacted to inform them of the council's policy position."

Councillor Jackson asked, as a supplementary question, whether this would carry over into future contracts. **Councillor Waters** said yes it will.

Question 8

Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for resources:

"The Archbishop of Westminster said earlier in the month:

"people are left without any support for weeks on end, are hungry, are destitute. There must be something wrong with the administration of a system which has that effect on so many people's lives".

Will the cabinet member for resources agree with his statement and can he update council on the use of food banks in Norwich since February?"

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources response:

"I agree that any system that leaves people without any support for weeks on end, hungry and destitute is wrong. The latest statistics from the Norwich Foodbank for the month of February demonstrates the harsh reality for those affected.

The latest statistics cover the month of February which is the shortest month and with the return of children back to school it would be expected that there would be a drop in demand. Unfortunately this has not proved to be the case. Increases were recorded in Mancroft (15%), Wensum (20%) and Bowthorpe (50%). This has continued the trend of on-going increases in demand and need for the service.

The top two reasons given by clients for requiring assistance are Benefit Delays (36%) a slight increase on January and Low Income (21%). The reduction of the gap between these two reasons for people needing help reflects on the one hand the improving picture of dealing with payments of some benefits (especially Housing Benefit) and an increase in in-work poverty that is being reported around the country by among others the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Benefit delays does not distinguish between benefits administered by Norwich City Council (housing benefit) and those administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (Job seekers allowance, incapacity benefit, employment and support allowance etc). The council is currently processing new claims on average within 18 days and changes of circumstances within 13 days.

An area of concern for officers is that there is marked evidence from partners including the Mancroft Advice Project and Norfolk Community Law Service, to show that a high number of young people are being subjected to sanctions leading to withdrawal of DWP benefits. However the latest statistics do not reflect a marked increase in applications from this age group and further work may need to be done to identify help for this group."

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Button, Councillor Waters** said that there was real concern about the effect of sanctions on young people. More and more young people are being subjected to sanctions but not enough new jobs were being created. He would be submitting a freedom of information request to the local DWP office asking for details of the sanctions it had administered and when this is received he would circulate it to councillors.

Question 9

Councillor Sue Sands to ask the leader of the council:

“Can the leader update the council on the benefits of being awarded Gold Award for ‘Council of the Year’ and claiming silver in a second category at this year’s iESE Improvement and Efficiency Awards, held earlier in the month?”

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council’s response:

“These awards provide us with an opportunity to recognise just how far we have come over the past few years and to celebrate that. iESE (Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise) as you know is a social enterprise owned by local authorities. So these awards reflect how our peers view us. They understand the challenges faced by local government and it is therefore pleasing that iESE has recognised the hard work of members, officers past and present and our partners in making significant changes to the performance of Norwich City Council over the past 8 years. During this period our authority has moved from being a poor performing authority to one which is now recognised nationally as being excellent. Some examples of just how far we have come include:-

- Moving from having a £3million black hole in our budget and having qualified accounts to a position of having unqualified accounts, strong financial systems and resources to invest in homes and local initiatives
- A void turnaround time of 60 days being reduced to just 14 days
- A record in recycling changing from our being one of the worst to having one of the biggest improvements in the country
- Our benefits performance improving from over 50 days to 19 days.
- An annual recurring saving of £26million without making significant cuts to front line services.
- A customer satisfaction rate of just under 97% our highest ever and one which other authorities envy.

Being named Council of the Year is prestigious and to have the efforts of everyone involved in this transformation recognised is something which I know officers and some members value. It also signals to our partners that their collaboration with us has been recognised.

Our second award was in the “Transformation – Waste and Energy” category and highlighted our innovative work in using the resources from the decommissioning of our old ICT equipment to support the Raspberry PI initiative which will enable more children in school to understand ICT. As I have already said our record in improving recycling is impressive but this adds to that in a new and imaginative way and

signals Norwich as a place which is willing to embrace new ideas and to reuse and recycle as much as is practically possible.

As a result of the successful efforts made to change the organisation we are in now in a position to share our learning with other authorities and we are regularly being asked to tell people about the way we transformed Norwich City Council and you will aware that because part of the transformation has given us strength in depth in terms of our management structures we are now able to share our experiences in a very practical way with other authorities specifically Great Yarmouth. While I would say that these changes have come about as a result of the vision of a Labour administration and the hard work of officers and cabinet members I would also pay tribute to the scrutiny and audit committees and indeed all those councillors who have shared our vision.

Since this question was asked we have been named as the Local Government Chronicle's "Most Improved Council of the Year". This is a much sought after award and one which everyone in council should be proud recognising as it does the sustained and significant achievements of this authority. "

Councillor Sands(S) asked, as a supplementary question, how the leader of the council would ensure that these awards are publicly recognised. **Councillor Arthur** said that the awards demonstrated practical evidence of improvement. She said that all those involved in the work of the council had contributed to this. For example, at the assessments, she had emphasised the value of the contribution of the chair of audit committee. It was important to publicise this national recognition and she was particularly pleased that the EDP/EEN had praised the council on twitter. The council would consider all possible channels to publicise these awards.

Question 10

Councillor Manning to ask the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

"A resident in Lakenham ward contacted me regarding the positive experience of using the City Car Club. Can the cabinet member please update council on the success and development of the scheme?"

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

"I am pleased to advise members that the Norwich Car Club has been a real success story. It now has over 400 members (residents, businesses and other organisations) and operates a fleet of 17 cars around the city. Membership has doubled over the past two years, and the popularity of the club is such that it has 1700 Facebook 'likes', which is more per car than any other car club in the world! Norwich Car Club aims to be the first citywide 'not for profit' club in the UK

Surveys of members have demonstrated that as a direct result of joining the Car Club, 160 people have got rid of their car, and a further 80 have chosen not to buy one. This obviously has big advantages, given the limited availability of car parking in many city streets, so even residents who do not join the club but keep their own car

have benefited from its operation as there are now 240 more parking spaces available than there otherwise would have been.

Subject to investment, the Car Club is expecting to double in size every 18 months to two years and hopes to add four more vehicles this year to cope with demand and have a total 40 vehicles by the end of 2016. Both the city and the county councils have provided some funding to help with the establishment of the car club, and the city council continues to support its expansion by delivering new car club bays in the city. Both the city and county councils require larger new developments to include a car club car and will continue to support the Car Club to take advantage of any appropriate funding stream that becomes available

The real benefit of this continuing success is that Car Club members walk, cycle and use public transport more than most, which helps to make the city a more sustainable and healthy city.”