



Council

19:30 to

26 September 2023

Present: Councillors Wright (Lord Mayor), Calvert, Carrington, Catt, Champion, Driver, Fox, Fulton-McAlister, Giles, Hampton, Hoechner, Huntley, Jones, Kendrick, Kidman, Lubbock, Maguire, Osborn, Packer, Peek, Price, Prinsley, Sands (M), Sands (S), Schmierer, Stonard, and Worley

Apologies: Councillors Ackroyd, Davis, Everett, Francis, Galvin, Haynes, Oliver, Padda, Stutely Thomas (Va), Thomas (Vi) and Young.

1. Lord Mayor's Announcements

The Lord Mayor spoke in memory of the Reverend Jack Burton, a former Sheriff and Christopher Seelhoff, the son and consort of former Lord Mayor, Felicity Hartley, both of whom had sadly passed away. A minute's silence was held.

The Lord Mayor said that he had some fantastic opportunities over the summer to attend many events with highlights being the Lord Mayor's procession, Norwich Pride, attending the Eaton Park miniature railway and the commemoration of the Battle of Britain.

(A full list of events is appended to these minutes.)

The Lord Mayor gave a statement outlining the process that had been followed for the cancellation of the July council meeting and the context around this.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public questions/petitions

The Lord Mayor announced that four public questions had been received.

Public question 1

Mr Paul Jackson, on behalf of the Norwich Makers and Artists Collective to ask the cabinet member for resources the following question:

“This question is on behalf of a coalition of Norfolk makers and artists (MAC) who have come together as a collective to highlight the lack of affordable exhibition space in Norwich City Centre. The collective includes the following organisations: Norfolk Contemporary Art Society, Norfolk Contemporary Craft Society, Norwich 20 Group, Breckland Artists, Art in Norwich & Norfolk, The Norwich Print Fair, Norwich Outpost, Lonely Arts Club, and Art Pocket

We have identified the customer contact centre at Norwich City Hall as a large space suitable for regular exhibitions of work by makers and artists in the region.

Could the customer contact centre (or another suitable place) be designated the municipal space for Maker & Artist Exhibitions so that a continuous programme could be created, and the venue become a regional and national city centre destination for the visual arts.”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources’ response:

“Thank you for your question about the use of City Hall.

This is a timely query. As proud guardians of this very special building we are at the start of exploring ideas for the future use of the building.

It is important to say from the beginning that this City Council will remain at City Hall which has been the heart of city local government full since 1938. There are absolutely no plans to move from it or dispose of the building.

City Hall is an iconic, historic, and beautiful building and the people of our city are rightly proud of this for it is a public building which belongs to them, must always be preserved, protected and promoted as the seat of city power in Norwich.

Secondly, we must be clear about why we are choosing to undertake this work over the future use and adaptation of City Hall. Norwich City Hall was originally built when the city was known as a ‘City and County Borough’ with full unitary powers over itself that included the provision of education, social services but also police and fire. Previously, thousands of local government officers used the building daily.

This very wide range of services nowadays belong sometimes in the private or voluntary sector or at Norfolk County Council, and the building therefore is larger than its current use. Another enormous change which has occurred has been that which comes from the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This, hopefully once in a century, type of national emergency led to profound changes in the way in which people's working practises take place.

We as a council encourage our employees to have the availability to work in a hybrid model, sometimes working at home, and sometimes being in the office or being in the office permanently if that is what is most suitable for their needs and of course the primary needs of the service. We therefore have some underutilised space due to this and it is incumbent upon us to ensure that we get the very best possible value for the people of the city from it.

We will be bringing in experts to help us with this piece of work. The initial stage of this work will involve putting a plan in place to progress the project. This plan will include stakeholder and resident engagement to help inform proposals for the buildings future and these proposals can be considered as part of that process. The Makers and Artists Collective will be welcome to contribute to this stakeholder engagement.”

Establishing the mid-long-term plans for City Hall will take some time and it will be necessary to develop those plans ahead of considering any substantial changes to the use of the building.

In the meantime, the council looks forward to working with members of the Makers and Artists Collective at their upcoming exhibitions in the Undercroft over the remainder of 2023 and into 2024.”

(By way of a supplementary question, Mr Jackson asked whether the council would accommodate the needs of local artists as exhibition space was either prohibitively expensive or of poor quality. Councillor Kendrick said that he issues being faced and asked for these ideas to be put forward when space at city hall was reconsidered.)

Public question 2

Mr Cole Davis to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“I wish to draw the council's attention to the Prince of Wales Road during the daytime.

It is common to see rough sleeping in doorways, and beggars following passers-by. Occasionally, fresh piles of human excrement can be seen on the pavement.

Some local residents choose to drive into the centre rather than use the Prince of Wales Road, which they consider "unbearable". Who knows what it must be like to work at the shops along the street? I would also suggest to you that visitors to the city who come by train are also likely to be affected by these sordid and intimidating scenes; the city's reputation and economy are likely to be damaged.

I have come here to ask what measures you are going to take to help these people to improve Prince of Wales Road for all.”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:

“The council recognises the importance of Prince of Wales Road to the City. It provides many visitors with their first impression of the city as it is a key thoroughfare between the train station and city centre. It also remains at the heart of the city’s nighttime economy, and I agree its daytime appearance is in need of improvement.

As a result, a high level of environmental maintenance is already in place to ensure that it is as clean and welcoming as possible. This includes cleaning from 5.30 a.m. at the weekend, emptying of litter bins on multiple occasions during the day, and arranging for rapid responses to reports of hazardous waste on the street.

We fund homelessness support services in Norwich through the Pathways Norwich Partnership which is a consortium of local charities to help prevent and reduce rough sleeping. We recognise that rough sleeping is one of the most damaging forms of homelessness and work hard to reduce the numbers of people found on our streets and the effect it has on our local communities. We are starting to see a reduction to the numbers seen on our streets compared to previous years and where persons do sleep rough it happens for the shortest possible time so that these services can help rebuild their lives. Where aggressive begging does take place we strongly recommend that members of the public report these incidents to the Police so that this behaviour can be reduced.”

(In response to Mr Cole’s supplementary question, Councillor Jones said that the council worked with the Police around community safety and had established the Safer Norwich Partnership. The council also worked with agencies such as St Martin’s Housing Trust, mental health trusts and drug and alcohol services through the Pathways Project.)

Public question 3

Ms Claire Wood, on behalf of Norwich City of Sanctuary, to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“New policy government policy which came in August 2023 means that asylum seekers in hotels granted refugee status are being given just 7 days instead of 28 days to find accommodation before being evicted.

Please can Norwich City Council tell us what plans it is putting in place to support people seeking sanctuary with this problem and to avoid homelessness.

We are aware of cases of people already being made homeless and we are expecting many more cases possibly dozens or into the hundreds - to find themselves in this situation.”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety’s response:

“Our staff are part of a co-ordinated team of local statutory and voluntary services that are working with the Home Office’s contractors that manage the local asylum hotels and we are acutely aware of the issues raised.

Initial support will be given to the refugee who is seeking alternate accommodation, and should they fail to resolve the situation the client will need to present to the council, where we will carry out our duties to prevent and relieve homelessness in accordance with our statutory duties to all those facing such circumstances. To support this approach the council is in the process of recruiting a specialist housing adviser to assist refugees facing homelessness.”

(As a supplementary question, Ms Wood asked for an indication of when the specialist housing adviser would be employed. Councillor Jones replied that she could not give a timescale for this but would confirm with Ms Wood once it was known.)

Public question 4

Mr James Hawketts to ask the cabinet member for climate change the following question:

“About a year ago I asked a question to the then cabinet member for sustainable growth about the City Council’s responsibilities for public transport, broadly within the Transport for Norwich framework. In his answer, the now-leader stressed the importance of the county council on such matters as the primary provider, and I certainly got the impression that he thought the city should take no real oversight role on the day-to-day running of transport. With that in mind, I wonder if the cabinet member would give her thoughts, and recall her immediate reaction, to the recent de-facto abolition of the Transport for Norwich committee by county, and what this will mean for Norwich in her view.”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change’s response:

“Thank you for your question.

I recall that, at the November 2022 meeting of full council, you asked the cabinet member for sustainable growth to “clarify if there is a level of mis-service at which the current administration would act, or at least call for action, against the [bus] operator should they continue to fail on reliability, pricing, or decarbonisation of their fleet, given diminishing public confidence in them”.

In his response, the cabinet member made it clear that Norfolk County Council is the transport authority and holds responsibility for improving the standard of transportation services. This remains the case. As was highlighted previously, we will always seek to co-operate and influence transport decisions which affect Norwich – but we need to be clear where the power, responsibility and accountability actually lies. I do not believe the comments in

your question are a fair representation of what the cabinet member's response was or what the reality of transport arrangements in Norfolk are.

Your question refers to "City Council's responsibilities to public transport, broadly within the Transport for Norwich framework". When the draft TfN Strategy was published in 2021 by Norfolk County Council as the transport authority, Norwich City Council set out its response. We called for more ambition in promoting the policies and projects needed to drive uptake of active and sustainable transport – and criticised the excessive focus on building new roads. Although, in some places, the Strategy was strengthened on account of our feedback, it still did not meet some of our key tests so ultimately cabinet voted not to endorse the Strategy. At the same time, we made it clear that we will continue a productive working relationship with County with a view to increasing ambitions in the future.

The recent news that the public TfN Committee, which considers transport schemes relating to Norwich and drives the delivery of the TfN Strategy, is being replaced by a behind-closed-doors TfN Steering Group is hugely disappointing. Local people deserve to see how their councillors are contributing in these meetings, given the importance of getting schemes right with regards to safety, accessibility and sustainability - among other considerations. Openness and transparency in decision-making need to be strengthened, not reduced. This new, secret arrangement risks undermining public trust in projects the Steering Group delivers, and in local politics more widely.

The Steering Group will remain advisory, making recommendations to Norfolk County Council's cabinet member for highways, transport and infrastructure, which is not preferable. You may be aware that, at the last meeting of full council (June 2023), Labour's motion calling for an arrangement that would give Norwich more power and say over transport matters within city boundaries - closer to the previous joint highways agreement which Norfolk County Council unilaterally abolished in 2018 - was unanimously passed"

(In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Hampton said that the reason that the Transport for Norwich committee was not working was due to it being promised as a decision-making body but was actually an advisory committee. She could not comment on actions taken at a particular meeting as she was not present, but there were much wider issues with the committee and colleagues would continue to work constructively to overcome those obstacles.)

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023.

5. Questions to Cabinet Members

(Full details of the questions and responses were available on the council's website prior to the meeting. A revised version is attached to these minutes at Appendix A and includes a minute of any supplementary questions and responses.)

The Lord Mayor announced that 22 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members, for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of the council's constitution.

The questions are summarised as follows:

- Question 1 Councillor Fulton-McAlister to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on housing benefit.
- Question 2 Councillor Peek to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on the Norwich Community Safety Partnership
- Question 3 Councillor Huntley to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on St Peter's House.
- Question 4 Councillor Carrington to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on tennis improvements
- Question 5 Councillor Prinsley to cabinet member for climate change on Norwich Cycling
- Question 6 Councillor Packer to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on parks and open spaces improvements
- Question 7 Councillor Mike Sands to deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on the Threescore Development – tenure of housing
- Question 8 Councillor Maguire to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on Argyle Street development
- Question 9 Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for climate change on speed limits
- Question 10 Councillor Catt to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on reporting systems for repairs
- Question 11 Councillor Haynes to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on the purchase of Right to Buy properties
- Question 12 Councillor Young to the cabinet member for resources on the future of City Hall
- Question 13 Councillor Hoechner to the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development on recycling rates
- Question 14 Councillor Champion to the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on support for Planning for Planet
- Question 15 Councillor Galvin to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on condemning the Home Office

- Question 16 Councillor Francis to the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on the review of council communications
- Question 17 Councillor Osborn to the cabinet member for climate change on emissions based parking
- Question 18 Councillor Worley to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on fire safe front doors
- Question 19 Councillor Calvert to the cabinet member for climate change on the use for cycle storage
- Question 20 Councillor Price to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on the maintenance of the riverside
- Question 21 Councillor Fox to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on the maintenance of communal gardens
- Question 22 Councillor Schmierer to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on CCTV coverage
- Question 23 Councillor Ackroyd to the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on bin collections

6. Update to the capital programme

Councillor Kendrick moved and Councillor Mike Sands seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously to approve the following changes to the Capital Programme 2023/24:

- 1) an additional £20,000 be added to the 2023/24 capital programme to meet the additional costs of implementing an audio system in the Mancroft Room; and
- 2) an additional £200,000 be added to the 2023/24 and 2024/25 capital programme to support phase 2 of the Enterprise Resource Planning system.

7. Annual report of the audit committee 2022-23

Councillor Price moved and Councillor Driver seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously to receive the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022/2023.

8. Annual report of the scrutiny committee 2022-23

The Lord Mayor noted that there was an error within the report and the chair's foreword was incorrect. The correct foreword should read:

"I would like to begin by thanking all those who have been involved with the scrutiny process during the last civic year, particularly those officers and members who engaged so enthusiastically with the scrutiny process. Their collective effort has been hugely valuable to our work.

The broadcast of meetings via YouTube also continues and gives members of the public an opportunity to watch our proceedings at a time / place that suits them.

The scrutiny year began by considering the outcome of the select committee that had looked at **fly-tipping and communal bins**. Committee members serve on select committees outside of the main scrutiny meeting, and one was convened to look at **fly-tipping and communal bins**, an issue that was introduced to us by members of the public from the Canterbury Place area during the 2019 civic year. Following some delays, the committee made a number of recommendations to deal with this issue that blights communities, all of which were accepted by cabinet at their July meeting.

In October 2018 the committee conducted a significant piece of scrutiny on **County Lines**, and the October meeting presented an opportunity to engage with further discussion as to progress in dealing with this issue in the ensuing four years.

With the cost-of-living crisis impacting heavily on many city residents, the committee used the November meeting to consider **debt advice and support services**, particularly how those services provided by the council and partners can stop people falling into debt. A number of recommendations were made to cabinet that were accepted in full, with others also being ratified at budget council in February.

The January meeting considered **financing for renewable energy/energy efficiency**, looking at options to support the council to achieve its target of carbon neutrality by 2030. The recommendations that the committee made to cabinet were in turn referred to the **Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Committee**; a cabinet advisory panel with the specific brief of addressing climate issues.

Welcoming refugees and asylum seekers into Norwich and overcoming obstacles to their smooth integration was considered at the March meeting, but prior to that a survey of partner agencies had been undertaken, and members visited the Zainab café to look at their work supporting refugees and asylum seekers. Additional scrutiny on this important topic is being undertaken in the civic year 2023-24.

Throughout the year, the committee has also looked at various standing items that feed into the transformation and budget setting process, and business plans of the council's wholly owned companies, with members making recommendations to cabinet that help shape and strengthen the work of the council.

Following each meeting, recommendations from the committee were considered by the cabinet, and broadly accepted.

I commend this annual review and hope that members feel able to adopt it.”

The Lord Mayor then moved and Councillor Fulton-McAlister seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously to receive the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2022-23.

9. Motions

Motion 9(a) – Norwich Bus Fares

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

This council recognises the vital importance of affordable, reliable, and high-quality public transport to the functioning of Norwich. We therefore strongly welcome the recent IPPR research on public transport, published on 6 October 2022 under the title “To support low-income households, it's time to reduce the cost of daily bus travel”. While the report makes clear that reducing fares is not the only issue needed to increase bus patronage – interventions to improve speed, reliability and the experience of passengers are all required as well - reductions in the costs of public transport for passengers are essential for a fair transport system.

Council **RESOLVES** to

- 1) note that; -
 - a) Low-income households are the most likely to use buses, while research by the RAC Foundation shows that since 2013 the cost of bus travel has risen by a greater extent than all other forms of transport. It is the poorest households, without access to other forms of travel, that have borne the brunt of these increases driven by de-regulation and lack of long-term funding.
 - b) Any reduction in bus fares would therefore be of the greatest benefit to those least well off. Capping bus fares at no more than £1 per day would save the poorest 20% of households in England £0.8bn a year. Making all bus fares in England free would save the poorest 40% of households £1.5bn a year.
 - c) This Council notes that a policy of making bus fares in England entirely free would cost £2.3bn a year, with the greatest benefits going to the least well off. For comparison, the recent ‘fiscal event’ in September 2022 proposed £40bn worth of tax cuts, mostly to the most well off. The current

proposed Government funding for new roads is £27bn, for schemes that are likely to increase pollution and make the climate and biodiversity crises worse. For the same money, bus travel could be made free for at least ten years, helping to reduce car journeys, and making progress towards a net zero transport system.

- 2) ask that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport, the Shadow Secretary State for Transport, Norwich's two MPs and to the Leader of the county council expressing this Council's support for making public transport in Norwich free of charge; and
- 3) Use its existing partnerships and relationships with the county council and bus operators, to work to promote this objective.

(As two hours had passed since the beginning of the meeting, the following items were taken as unopposed business)

Motion 9(b) – Working a four day week

Councillor Stonard proposed the following amendment which was accepted by the proposer:

Inserting the words **“if based on evidence this would ensure the performance and value of residents’ services were improved,”** after the words **“working week at full pay”** in resolution 3).

Inserting the words **“including trade unions”** after the words **“with partners”** in resolution 3)

So that revised motion becomes:-

Several UK-based campaigns, including the campaign of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, call for flexible working arrangements to be a day-one right for all employees and that job adverts should stipulate this flexibility. Flexible working arrangements benefit different groups of people, including parents, carers, people who want to study, and people who volunteer in their community. They also support mental and physical health. Trials where employees have worked a four-day week have led to better retention which has saved expense in agency fees.

Growing evidence, including a trial of 2500 government employees in Iceland who switched to a reduced (four-day) working week for a period of 4 years suggests that productivity stays the same or improves when working hours are reduced. The Iceland trial found that the well-being of employees also increased dramatically.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) continue to provide exemplar practices regarding flexible working arrangements throughout the different levels of the organisation, including stipulating flexibility in job adverts

- 2) extend its longstanding work with partners on the living wage to support flexible working; and
- 3) explore the benefits of a reduced working week at full pay, if based on evidence this would ensure the performance and value of residents' services were improved, and initiate discussions within the council and with partners, including trade unions, about the potential of this future model.

Motion 9(c) – Motion for the ocean

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

Councillor Hampton proposed the following amendment which was accepted by the proposer:

Replacing the word “**twelve**” with the word “**eighteen**” in resolution 1a)

Inserting the words “**and biodiversity enhancements**” after the words “**floating vegetation platforms**” in resolution 1a)

Inserting the word “**River**” before the words “**Wensum Strategy**” in resolution 1a)

Replacing the words “**lead to**” with the word “**on**” in resolution 1a)

Replacing the word “**Embedding**” with the words “**Continuing to embed**” in resolution 1b)

Inserting the word “**relevant**” before the words “**strategic decisions**” in resolution 1b)

Inserting the word “**and**” between the words “**budgets**” and “**procurement**” in resolution 1b)

Replacing the words “**and decisions by establishing clearer links between this and Norwich’s**” with the words “**including by continuing to implement the**” in resolution 1b)

Inserting the words “**work to meet our**” before the words “**Climate Change**” in resolution 1b)

Replacing the words “**Within 12 months, give evidence of**” with the words “**Continuing to update on the work**” in resolution 1c)

Inserting the words “**and sectors**” after the word “**industries**” in resolution 1c)

Inserting the words “**help**” after the words “**this would**” in resolution 1c)

Replacing the words “**Revised planning guidance and swift enforcement**” with the words “**Continuing to use available planning and enforcement**” in resolution 1d)

Inserting the word **“help”** after the words **“enforcement powers that”** in resolution 1d)

Inserting the words **“and to support national planning reform which will strengthen such powers”** after the words **“waterways and oceans”** in resolution 1d)

Replace the word **“work”** with the words **“continue working”** in resolution 1d)

Replacing the words **“and with neighbouring districts to embed strong links with”** with the words **“neighbouring districts and other partners named in”** in resolution 1d)

Replacing the word **“Growing”** with the words **“Working with partners, including Norfolk County Council as the education authority to help grow”** in resolution 1e)

Removing the word **“all”** before **“pupils”** in resolution 1e)

Replacing the words **“All residents should have”** with the words **“This should include continuing to work with organisations such as Norwich Fringe Project and Norfolk Wildlife Trust to give residents”** in resolution 1e)

Replacing the words **“Creating an online portal on the Council website”** with the words **“Consider working with partners to create an online portal”** in resolution 1f)

Replacing the words **“This portal could also allow residents”** with the words **“Continue to signpost residents to the Environment Agency, as the responsible authority, if they need to”** in resolution 1f)

Replacing the word **“Apply”** with **“Support any viable applications”** in resolution 1g)

Inserting the words **“through the provisions in the Environment Act 2021”** after the words **“single-use plastics”** in resolution 2a)

Inserting the words **“such as Anglian Water”** after the words **“water companies”** in resolution 2b)

Inserting the words **“and should aim to consider factors such as levelling up, marine conservation, energy, flood and coastal erosion risk management and climate adaptation holistically, rather than as competing interests”** at the end of resolution 2e)

So that the revised motion becomes:-

Norfolk’s wildlife, habitats and ecosystems are vitally important to us and future generations, enhancing our lives, from the insects that pollinate our food crops to our residents’ health and wellbeing. The important economic benefits that all of Norfolk’s

interconnected waterways bring to local communities via recreational use and through tourism, are at risk of being lost.

Norwich City is at the heart of a significant geographical area of ecological importance, the majority of which is built up of designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and therefore has a direct impact on the sustainability of this environment, other councils downstream and on the Norfolk coast. A similar Motion for the Ocean has been adopted by other councils nationally, both coastal and inland, highlighting the interconnectivity of our waterways.

Recognising the critical importance of biodiversity, and the urgent need to address its decline, makes it imperative that we declare our commitment to conserving and restoring biodiversity within Norwich. The Government's Environment Bill has required a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Nature Recovery Network and Norwich City Council will need to play its part.

Having adopted a Biodiversity Emergency Declaration, we need to demonstrate our commitment to protecting and enhancing biodiversity within our jurisdiction and setting a precedent for outside partners and businesses. One of the key themes of the current Corporate Plan, is to deliver on the environment. This motion would enable and augment our existing Wensum Strategy by giving clear targets towards the objectives stated in the strategy vision, such as 'enhancing the natural environment, including water quality, biodiversity, and green infrastructure'.

As a Council that has adopted a Biodiversity Emergency Declaration, we must therefore pledge to incorporate collaborative environmental governance, to recognise the interconnected human and biological systems, and build collaboration between actors across multiple scales.

We recognise the harm to the coastal ecosystem caused by the dumping of sewage in our sea, effluent from rivers and that ocean recovery is a key part of our commitment to tackling climate change and ensuring our waters are a safe place for local people to enjoy.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Ask cabinet to consider:
 - a) Production of a report to Cabinet within eighteen months on the implementation of possible actions and projects that would improve local waterways, such as the 'floating vegetation platforms' and biodiversity enhancements planned in the River Wensum Strategy. This report would need to reflect the impact that decisions about water quality in Norwich City have on sea water quality and therefore on ocean recovery in Norfolk and its coastal communities.
 - b) Continuing to embed the recovery of waterways connected to Norwich City in all relevant strategic decisions, plans, budgets and procurement including by continuing to implement the Biodiversity Strategy and work to meet our Climate Change commitments.

- c) Continuing to update on the work with partners locally to deliver increased environmental sustainability in industries and sectors that have a direct impact on the waterways that radiate out from Norwich City. This would help ensure a sustainable and equitable 'blue economy' for our Norfolk neighbours, that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity, including the local tourist industry.
 - d) Continuing to use available planning and enforcement powers that help ensure new development doesn't jeopardise our waterways and oceans, and to support national planning reform which will strengthen such powers. In accordance with our Corporate Plan, we need to continue working closely with others, such as the Environment Agency, the Broads Authority, the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Anglian Water, with neighbouring districts and other partners named in The Biodiversity Strategy.
 - e) Working with partners, including Norfolk County Council as the education authority, to help grow 'ecological literacy' by ensuring pupils are given the opportunity to have educational experience of our complex network of wetlands and waterways and the impact humans have on their journey to the ocean. This should include continuing to work with organisations such as the Norwich Fringe Project and Norfolk Wildlife Trust to give residents first-hand experience of, and equitable access to, these natural habitats through physical experiences that promote their preservation.
 - f) Consider working with partners to create an online portal to update residents on water quality, enabling them to make informed decisions based on updated information, before they use local sites for water-based activities, such as swimming. Continue to signpost residents to the Environment Agency, as the responsible authority, if they need to report sites of hazardous waste; and
 - g) Support any viable applications for areas already popularly used by river swimmers to be designated bathing waters.
- 2) Write to the Government asking it to:
- a) Stop plastic pollution at source - strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics, through provisions in the Environment Act 2021, and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle.
 - b) Increasing the financial penalties on water companies, such as Anglian Water, found to be dumping sewage into our sea and setting legally binding targets for them to substantially reduce the use of combined sewage overflows (CSOs) in future.
 - c) Increase funding to the Environment Agency to carry out enforcement of these higher penalties.

- d) Ensure the burden of any new investment in infrastructure is carried by shareholders first and to prevent the senior management of water companies found to have broken the law from serving elsewhere in the industry.
- e) Appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities, utilize marine and social scientific advice to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will enable the recovery of marine ecosystems, rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state, and should aim to consider factors such as levelling up, marine conservation, energy, flood and coastal erosion risk management and climate adaptation holistically, rather than as competing interests.

Glossary

- A 'blue economy' is one which uses ocean resources sustainably, whilst improving community wellbeing and social equity.
- 'Ecological literacy' is the ability to understand the natural systems that make life on Earth possible.

Motion 9(d) – Protecting private renters

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

The power of the private rented sector in Norwich has grown significantly over the last 30 years as home ownership has declined and social housing has been reduced. About 25% of all Norwich's homes are now privately rented. Whilst private renters pay a higher proportion of their income in rent than either mortgage payers or social housing tenants, the conditions they live in are more likely to be unsafe. The English Housing Survey – Private Rented Sector 2020 found that in the private rented sector the rate of category one hazards is 13%, these are a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety, compared to 9% in owner occupied or 5% in social housing and private rented are the tenure most likely to fail the Decent Homes Standard.

Council **RESOLVES** to :

- 1) Acknowledge and thank the work of the private sector housing team in tackling absentee landlords within the city, more recently at St Peter's House this year.
- 2) Ask cabinet to;
 - a) Consider the feasibility of a stock condition survey of Houses of Multiple Occupation to provide an evidence base from which to best understand and respond to it.
 - b) Consider the evidence base recently commissioned on Houses of Multiple Occupation distribution in the city and consider planning and/or regulatory powers which can be utilized to better secure improved housing standards.

- c) Move to extending the use of regulatory and other relevant statutory powers, in particular additional and selective licensing across all private rented homes as indicated by the evidence base, that will assist in better protecting tenants, drive up standards in the sector and crack down on rogue landlords.

Motion 9(e) – Addressing the Issue of 'Box Shifting' for Fair and Effective Business Rates Collection

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

The practice of “box shifting,” a practice where landlords place boxes in vacant commercial properties for a six-week period to trigger a rates-free period, costs councils around £250 million annually (Local Government Association Survey, 2019). This cycle, often repeated, results in local councils losing over two-thirds of their empty rates incomes and that some landlords use basic objects such as a broadband box or an empty fish tank to initiate rates avoidance, which exacerbates the loss of income for councils.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Note that this practice undermines the integrity of our rates system and deprives the local community of funds that could be invested in local services and infrastructure, that current legislation inadvertently facilitates these practices, and reform is needed to ensure that rates accurately reflect property usage and occupancy.
- 2) Ask the Leader to write to government to:
 - a) Ask for the extension of the occupation period for rates exemption from six weeks to six months, following the example of the Welsh and Scottish governments, which have already introduced legislation to tackle this issue; and
 - b) Advocate for robust and regular checks on the occupancy status of commercial properties to ensure compliance with any reformed rates system.

The meeting was closed.

LORD MAYOR

Appendix A

Council

26 September 2023

Questions to cabinet members

Question 1

Councillor Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for communities and wellbeing the following question:

“A recent survey from YouGov showed over three quarters of voters wanted more social housing and that the failure to meet the need was reflected in a report last year from the House of Lords Built Environment Committee which found that thanks to a "serious shortage", many current renters who would previously have lived in affordable social homes now live in "expensive private rented accommodation", subsidised by housing benefit, whose total cost has now reached £23.4bn a year. I am aware of the very significant amount administered by this city council. Can the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion comment on whether he thinks it represents good value to the citizens of this city?”

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and wellbeing’s response:

“Housing Benefit (HB) helps those on low incomes to pay their rent. We see that typically for social tenants, the calculation of HB reflects the actual rent charged and rent increases are limited by central government to keep homes affordable. For tenants in the private rented sector the amount of housing benefit payable is capped by the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), depending on the size of the household and where the property is located.

In Norwich, the amount of Housing Benefit paid in 22/23 was c£42m with 45% paid to council tenants, 34% to RP tenants and 7% to private rented tenants. The remainder covers HB paid for temporary accommodation and supported ‘exempt’ accommodation.

The government is currently rolling out Universal Credit (UC). Under UC, six existing working age benefits – including HB – will be made into a single payment. The claimant will typically receive this payment themselves, rather than having their housing costs paid directly to their landlord.

The introduction of the right to buy has significantly reduced the social rented accommodation in Norwich as well as nationally and the reinvigoration of the scheme in 2012 has seen the number of properties being sold accelerate from c40 a year up to around 150 a year. This is national policy and is not an issue either limited to Norwich or one that Norwich can independently address.

We work with partner Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RP’s) and Homes England to maximise the opportunity to build more social housing, through the provision of land, bidding for Government funding or providing

grants from retained RTB receipts. The Council is also doing its bit to use its limited resources to build new affordable homes for the people of Norwich. Over the past decade we have seen the level of Government capital grant funding to support new social or affordable rented accommodation reduce to c40% of the cost of a new home, and with increasing build costs this makes it difficult to develop the number of new homes required in a sustainable way. This shift from capital expenditure has increased the level of revenue support, through HB, that has had to be paid to tenants. If the Government were to provide greater levels of grant support from Homes England and / or flexibility for the council to use retained RTB receipts, we are confident that this would see a shift change in the numbers of new affordable homes that could be delivered and see a reduction in the level of HB being paid.”

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Fulton-McAlister asked what the cabinet member’s thoughts were on ways that the council could limit ‘unreasonable’ use of public money. Councillor Giles replied that where it was unviable to use retained Right to Buy receipts, the council could give grants to registered providers to build.)

Question 2

Councillor Peek to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“In May I listened to the new Sheriff of Norwich, Dr Jan Sheldon, as part of her acceptance speech discuss the impact of partnership working, the Pathway’s initiative and how rough sleeping numbers had been tackled through that form of powerful multi-agency approach. Using a similar approach can the cabinet member for housing and community safety comment on the objective and anticipated benefits of creating the first Norwich Community Safety Partnership that will help contribute to maintain and improve our city as a safe place to live in, work and visit?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety’s response:

“The Norwich safety partnership board's primary objective will be to provide a specific focus on community safety issues in Norwich that can be shared with statutory partners, agencies at a local and county level. It will concentrate on what Norwich specific challenges are, providing solutions and opportunities to help make our city feel safer for everyone to live in, work and visit. The partnership will act as a collaborative space for the development of new initiatives utilising a strong evidence base, partners knowledge, data, and expertise. Collectively the partnership will show that we are stronger working together breaking down silos, by sharing our community safety challenges and opportunities making Norwich an even safer place for everyone.”

(There was no supplementary question).

Question 3

Councillor Huntley to ask deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“The issue of the poorly maintained, under-regulated and sometimes dangerous condition of privately rented accommodation in our city remains a constant source of worry to many of my constituents who live within it. The action taken, most notably at St Faith’s Lane but also more recently at St Peter’s House has been impressive. Can the cabinet member for housing and community safety comment on the progress made to ensure St Peter’s became compliant with building safety measures which includes, as part of this, any action against the owner?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety’s response:

“I am pleased to advise that the necessary works to make the building safe for occupation have been complied with and the emergency prohibition order was lifted on 4 August and residents have moved back into the building. The completion of this work and lifting of the EPO follows extensive work by both the Private Sector Housing Team and CNC Building Control who should be thanked for their tireless efforts in this case.

In relation to action being taken against the owner of the property, as this matter is part of an ongoing investigation, I am unable to discuss details at this time, suffice to say appropriate action will be taken as necessary against those responsible following the outcome of the investigation.”

(In response to the supplementary question, Councillor Jones said that private sector housing officers had a wide range of enforcement powers, and every legal avenue would be explored in order to set a standard.)

Question 4

Councillor Carrington to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:

“An article in the Guardian newspaper from 9 August entitled ‘England’s playgrounds crumble while council budgets fall’ starkly laid out the impact of 13 long years of austerity upon the capacity of local government to maintain such basic but much-loved public services. Some councils – including Sunderland, Gloucester, and Barnsley – have been forced to cut back by more than 80% since 2011. Despite this gloomy national picture, the record of this council - which never sold off its playgrounds or open spaces – has been impressive. As a keen tennis player, can the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion comment on recent further improvements to parks announced over the summer?”

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion’s response:

“The article in the *Guardian* was noted and the further publicity which surrounded it. This council has a wealth of locally and regionally important parks, open spaces, play areas, allotments and natural green spaces. We remain committed to protecting and enhancing them wherever possible. We have a great track record on investing our own resources and leveraging in funding from other sources.

Over the last 12-18 months, we have heavily invested in tennis courts across our principal parks which has seen an increase in use in them, with further improvements planned at Bowthorpe. We have also allocated £375,000 to improve the play areas in our 2 destination parks – Eaton Park and Waterloo Park. These will be completed by Spring 2024.

We are in the process of developing a new 10 year Parks and Open Spaces Regeneration Strategy which we will be engaging on in the next 3-4 months for adoption in 2024. This will highlight what our priorities are for the next decade. We already know that Heigham Park, Wensum Park, Sloughbottom Park and Mile Cross Gardens require investment and as these are historic parks, have already commenced discussions with the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

We have already commenced re-assessing all our play areas for quality and play value including accessibility, and this will shape a new Play Strategy highlighting investment needs over the next 5 years. There is a lot going on to ensure our parks and open spaces are fit for the future.”

(In response to the supplementary question, Councillor Giles said that he was delighted to attend launch events of the new tennis courts and it was fantastic to see local residents using the courts.)

Question 5

Councillor Prinsley to ask the cabinet member for climate change the following question:

“As a keen cyclist and councillor that represents a ward which benefitted from some of the investment led by this council’s Push the Pedalways scheme, I was pleased to see that Norwich was recently named the most cycle-friendly city in the UK by Saga Cycling Cities campaign. While the loss of the Norwich Joint Highways Committee and recent weakening of the Transport for Norwich Advisory Committee has further diminished the role and power of this council to illicit the practical and positive changes to advance safe cycling in our city, can the cabinet member for Climate Change comment on what she believes could be the future role of this council to positively support the Highways Authority?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change’s response:

“Norwich was recently named as the most cycle-friendly city for over-50s in the UK by Saga Cycling Campaign, with us scoring highly in categories such as bike sharing schemes and cycle routes. It is positive that we are performing well compared to other cities, but pushing for improved cycle safety remains a priority. Any one accident or, tragically, death involving cyclists is one too many. Improving safety will also be necessary to encourage more people to take up cycling as an active, sustainable form of transport, with the same Saga study showing that, nationwide, dangerous roads was the main barrier to cycling (with 57% of non-cyclists citing this reason).

We have sought to work closely with Norfolk County Council, as the transport authority, to attract funding and deliver schemes which improve cycle infrastructure and safety. However, the replacement of the Norwich Highways Agency Committee with the Transport for Norwich (TfN) Committee – which was initially set to be decision-making before Norfolk County Council reneged on this commitment – had already diminished our voice on transport issues. The recent news that the public TfN Committee will now be replaced by a behind-closed-doors TfN Steering Group is even more disappointing still. But given how many residents’ daily lives can be affected by transport matters, and the importance of this work with regards to cutting carbon emissions and creating an improved city environment, we will continue to seek to co-operate and influence transport decisions which affect Norwich – while making clear to Norfolk County Council, and the public, our dissatisfaction with current arrangements.”

(There was no supplementary question).

Question 6

Councillor Packer to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:

“I visited Heigham Park over the summer and was impressed at the number of people enjoying playing tennis on the new courts and using the play equipment too. Unfortunately, vandalism to the toilets had caused them to be temporarily closed which was sad to see. I was therefore pleased that this Labour led City Council will be investing in the park to provide new toilet facilities. Can the cabinet member comment on the benefits this will offer as part of the wider strategy to protect and invest in our parks and open spaces?”

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion’s response:

“It is always disappointing to see such mindless vandalism when it occurs and thankfully it is a rarity in most of our parks. The toilets in Heigham are dated and the programmed replacement within the next few months will be a welcome new Equality Act-compliant facility in Heigham Park and we know it will be appreciated by those who use this much loved park, whether to walk their dog or play tennis on the newly refurbished courts. This all forms part of our evolving 10 year Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.”

(There was no supplementary question).

Question 7

Councillor Mike Sands to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“As a resident and councillor for Bowthorpe Ward I am constantly proud of the bold ambitions this City Council has to build more social housing in the ward, which benefits not only the community in which I live, but all of Norwich. I was pleased to see that the third phase of the Three Score development, which started only last year, is making excellent progress and the first 25 properties on this development have been handed over to the council ready for new tenants to move in soon. Can the cabinet member for housing and community safety comment on how, when complete, the development will offer more desperately needed council and mixed tenure housing within in our city?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety’s response:

“Thank you for the question.

Like you, I have been impressed with the rate of progress being made on the third phase of the Three Score development. This work will complete the development to the north of the tree belt and will assist greatly in making the area feel like a real community.

The first 25 homes on the development are now in the process of being handed over to housing colleagues to let. They will be advertised in tranches shortly to potential tenants and I’m confident that they will all be occupied by Christmas. Providing much needed high quality and affordable accommodation to those in housing need.

Moving forward it is expected that the remaining 51 homes on the development will be handed over progressively between February and September next year.

Plans for the fourth phase of the development south of the tree belt remain in preparation but we are completing the detailed design work over the autumn allowing cabinet to make decisions on the tenure mix, phasing and delivery route early in the new year. The Three Score site will be a key part of housing pipeline for a number of years to come.”

(There was no supplementary question).

Question 8

Councillor Maguire to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“The history of Argyle Street, over many decades, has been a very challenging one and I recall both the squatting which took place in the 1970s, the re-development of the site and then the problems with subsidence which later affected it. I was therefore very pleased that the planning application to build 14 new council homes on it was passed unanimously earlier this summer. Can the cabinet member for housing and community safety comment on the benefits of the new housing and its environmental and energy efficiency features which mark this out as such a positive new proposed development?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety’s response:

“Like you I was pleased to see the Argyle Street scheme progress through planning committee with unanimous support. It’s good to see that we are able to progress schemes such following Natural England’s agreement to our scheme addressing nutrient neutrality through fitting water efficiency measures within our housing stock.

The new housing will not only provide 14 much needed new Council homes in a central location but will further contribute to the ongoing regeneration of the King Street area.

As you would expect the new homes will be built to exemplary standards delivering well in excess of policy requirements in order to minimise energy consumption and of course energy bills for the future residents.

The construction will take a fabric first approach maximising air tightness and insulation. The build envelope will include triple glazed windows and a design to optimise solar gain through provision of openings and shading. Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery will be installed and energy efficiency will be maximised through the use of Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PVs.

Externally the site has been designed to enhance biodiversity through a soft landscaping scheme including the planting of native trees and a species rich grass seed mix in open spaces and verges. Fencing used will incorporate hedgehog holes and integrated bat, bird (including swift) boxes will be provided.

We should shortly be going out to market to identify a contractor for the build and I’m greatly looking forward to handing over the keys to new residents in due course.”

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Maguire asked why the city council was able to build high specification houses which reduced costs to those living in them, and yet other local authorities did not do the same. Councillor Jones replied that Norwich City Council had chosen to do this and when it had declared a climate emergency, the social and economic impacts were considered.)

Question 9

Councillor Lubbock to ask the cabinet member for climate change the following question:

“The 20 mph road speed limit imposed on urban roads in Wales has caused quite a stir and got people talking about the pros and cons of such a limit. Please will you say what this council’s aspirations are for Norwich for those areas which do not presently have a 20 mph limit?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change’s response:

“We applaud the bold move of the Labour government in Wales to introduce 20mph limits on urban roads. In our response to the County Council’s consultation on the Local Transport Plan in December 2020 we urged them to consider the feasibility of introducing 20mph as the default speed limit across Norwich. This would reduce the number of people killed and injured in the city and give people more confidence to walk and cycle. The proportion of the city’s roads that were covered by 20mph limits was dramatically extended by our cycling ambition programme but since the County took back complete control of highways and transport there have been very few examples of new speed limits being introduced. We will continue to encourage them to expand these areas and one of our officers recently highlighted to their engineers how Mile Cross could benefit from the introduction of 20mph restrictions in association with a planned active travel scheme.”

(There was no supplementary question).

Question 10

Councillor Catt to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“A resident reported issues with their gutter in need of repair back in October 2022. Eleven months later and endless appointments missed with seemingly no effort to follow up the repair until repeated interventions by myself, this repair is still outstanding as we approach nearly a year since the original report for a simple repair job. Meanwhile, another resident has been waiting a staggering 5 years for their front door to be replaced. These issues are a common occurrence with tenants losing confidence in the council's ability to maintain and repair their properties. Can the cabinet member say whether or not alternative reporting systems have been investigated to improve the level of service being provided to tenants?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:

“Without the addresses of these particular properties it is not possible to provide a definitive answer to the cases referenced.

The newly purchased NEC housing management system is a market leader for housing providers.

At the present time a review is underway of the initial system setup of the key repairs priorities to ensure that from point of call thorough to completion of the repair, we are capturing the key stages adequately within the repairs reporting and management system.

We are also working collaboratively with NEC, NCSL and NCC representatives to improve outcomes for our residents, including exploring system updates and changes that improve the journey.

To support this a number of reporting functions to highlight areas of operational concern are in operation so that we can focus resource where it is most needed.

In parallel, colleagues are seeking best practice from other authorities and exploring alternative solutions to ensure that we are robust in our ability to deliver this key service.”

(In response to Councillor Catt's supplementary question, Councillor Jones said that there were improvements in the repairs KPIs although there was always room for improvement. The council was committed to ensuring that residents received a timely response).

Question 11

Councillor Haynes to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“All properties (freehold and leasehold) sold under Right to Buy legislation since 18 January 2005 contain a covenant which compels the owner, if the property is offered for sale within ten years of the original purchase, to offer the property back to Norwich city council. Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2023 370 such homes were offered back, and the council decided to purchase none of these. The trend in terms of homes sold is increasing and has almost doubled in five years. Is the cabinet member sure that the correct processes are in place, when zero homes offered back come back into public ownership?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing and community safety’s response:

“The Council’s priority is firstly to invest in existing stock and then to develop new stock. This approach requires the focus of the Housing Revenue Account finances to be focussed on these two strands, in particular the recycling of receipts raised through right to buy.

Inevitably, properties which have been sold under the right to buy will have been modified by their owners which may require rectification work and will usually be costly to repurchase given the average price of a semi-detached property has increased by 508% since 1995.

I can assure you that each property offered is reviewed by housing and development staff to determine if they are of use to the Council in any way, and this approach is consistent with other local authorities.

Finally, the covenant only applies in the first 10 years after the property’s initial purchase and after five years they no longer have to repay the discount.”

(As Councillor Haynes had sent apologies, there was no supplementary question).

Question 12

Councillor Young to ask the cabinet member for resources the following question:

“Following enquiries I understand that consultants have been bought in ‘to draw up options for a business case review’ of how city hall is used. A lot of city hall is underused or unused and it could be a wonderful civic centre. I would like to understand how the council is assessing public need and input as part of this planning process for how city hall will be used in the future. Please could you outline how we input residents’ ideas and suggestions from the very beginning, and what opportunity and risk mapping is being carried out?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources’ response:

“Thank you for your question about this Councillor Young. As I’m sure you’ll agree, City Hall is one of the council’s most treasured and important assets and contributes so much to the rich flavour of our wonderful city. Over the decades the grade II* listed building has served as the operational centre for important council business, a landmark building that we light up to mark important events and which we use to celebrate citywide achievements. As proud guardians of this very special building, we are carefully planning for its future. We will be bringing in experts to help us with this piece of work. The initial stage of this work will involve putting a plan in place to progress the project. At the heart of that plan will be stakeholder and resident engagement at an early stage to inform next steps. Establishing the mid-long term plans for City Hall will take some time so in the short term we will be investigating some minor alterations we can make to improve the use of the building for staff and customers. This is an extremely exciting project which has the potential to drive substantial benefits for the city.”

(As Councillor Young had sent apologies, there was no supplementary question).

Question 13

Councillor Hoechner to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development the following question:

“Recent performance indicators show that the percentage of household waste sent for recycling, reuse and composting has flatlined for several years at below 40%. Increasing this percentage is crucial for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. According to letsrecycle.com (using DEFRA data), nearly two thirds of English local authorities do better than Norwich, with many sending as much as 50% more household waste for recycling, reuse, and composting than Norwich. Can the cabinet member please explain why we do so poorly, and commit to making sure there is turnaround followed by sustained progress, starting in the next quarter?”

Councillor Stonard, the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development’s response:

“The council offers a class leading range of recycling services. Whilst the council’s recycling rates have not changed over the last few years, the amount of waste and recycling collected have reduced over the last 3 years. In this, we are similar to many councils nationally and locally, and the latest published national recycling rate for 2021 is the same as it was in 2015. Despite this, we are working hard to put the foundations in place for a new waste strategy that will deliver the council’s environmental commitments. Whilst we are disappointed that the government has delayed the introduction of new legislation to extend producer responsibility for packaging, and the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, we are committed to improving our services and recycling rates over the next 12 to 18 months. This will be done through a range of interventions from redesigned collection services to improved engagement and enforcement. We have recently engaged consultants to help us with this work, and aim to have our review completed in the coming months.”

(In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Stonard said that he was happy to make comparisons with other councils. Brighton and Hove Council showed that recycling rates fell when under Green leadership with average recycling rates around 15% lower than the national average. Norwich was at around 5% lower than the national average and would continue to look for ways to improve.)

Question 14

Councillor Champion to ask the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development the following question:

“As part of tackling river pollution, the climate emergency and supporting a good food economy, Planning for the Planet is asking councils to commit to developing and adopting local planning policy to support sustainable food and farming, as appropriate to our area. The scheme gives access to resources and advice and demonstrates that this council takes river pollution from factory farming seriously. Will the cabinet member confirm political support for this initiative?”

Councillor Stonard, the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development’s response:

“The Council will not be joining Planning for the Planet. Membership involves a commitment to certain planning policies without any local political input, public consultation, or evidence to support it. This would be profoundly undemocratic. It also would be completely wrong to pursue policies without a supporting evidence base.

The council has been and remains very active in working with other Norfolk authorities to address planning issues in relation to the environment. We have jointly developed a calculator which quantifies the additional nutrient load of new residential developments. We have jointly commissioned a report from Royal Haskoning which sets out suitable short, medium, and long-term mitigation options that could potentially be used to offset the additional nutrient load from new residential developments. We also have jointly developed proposals for a joint venture company to be established jointly with Anglian Water to address the issue of nutrient loading. The company is called Norfolk Environmental Credits and it develops and implements schemes which mitigate nutrient loading and passes the cost of such schemes onto developers. All this work had been done in partnership with other local planning authorities and in the context of existing local and national planning policies, and is evidence based.”

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Champion asked if the leader of the council would write to other Labour controlled councils asking them to unsubscribe from Planning for the Planet. Councillor Stonard replied that it was up to councils to make their own decisions but signing up to ‘off the shelf’ policies without taking them through public consultation was undemocratic.)

Question 15

Councillor Galvin to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:

“The scrutiny committee made 16 excellent recommendations in July, having worked with refugees and asylum seekers on how we can provide a welcoming environment as a city. Thanks to the organisations involved, the cabinet member and the committee, we are now taking forward some practical and much-needed actions as a council. However, one of the nine scrutiny recommendations that cabinet appear to have chosen not to take forward is to condemn home office policies in relation to refugee and asylum seekers. Presumably, an oversight. Will you please now condemn the costly, cruel, chaotic, and inhumane treatment our government is imposing on people who come to the UK?”

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion’s response:

“Thank you, Councillor Galvin. I apologise for inadvertently not using the opportunity at the last Cabinet meeting to condemn current Home Office policies in relation to asylum seekers and refugees.

The Government’s Illegal Migration Act which has removed the right to claim asylum from those entering the UK via irregular means is almost certainly in conflict with the Government’s public international law obligations under the Geneva Convention, the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), and the ECHR (European Convention on Human Rights). Suella Braverman’s rhetoric on the topic is not dissimilar from that used in 1930s Europe. The Court of Appeal have ruled the Government’s plans to process asylum seekers in Rwanda contrary to the principle of non-refoulement emanating from the ECHR, Art 3, and the matter will go to the Supreme Court in October.

While Labour wants to maximise the provision of safe and legal routes, and the tackling of humanitarian crises at source, such options will clearly not always be possible and some asylum seekers will need to use irregular means as their only option. Labour proposes to significantly increase the quantity of UKVI caseworkers to speed up the processing of asylum claims, many of which take several years to be determined, leaving asylum seekers in limbo unable to work and in unsuitable long-term accommodation.”

(As Councillor Galvin had sent apologies, there was no supplementary question).

Question 16

Councillor Francis to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development the following question:

“At the scrutiny work programme workshop, it was agreed that the scrutiny committee would look at the topic of how the council communicates with and consults with residents. When the Scrutiny committee came to formally approve its work programme however, this topic was removed from the work programme. We were assured then that the issue was being reviewed by Cabinet anyway. Can the cabinet member provide a detailed breakdown of the review into council communications being carried out by Cabinet?”

Councillor Stonard, the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development’s response:

“We are committed to always looking for new ways to engage and communicate with our residents and communities, and some of this good work has already started on the tenant engagement side of things. We will also capitalise on the success of last year’s budget consultation which saw a record number of people contribute their views – in part due to the richer engagement opportunity that Get Talking Norwich offers. We are also pleased that our forthcoming consultation on the Corporate Plan will allow us to widely engage and have conversations across the city that will help shape our future priorities.

All of this good work will continue as we accelerate and prioritise plans to strengthen how we go about having meaningful conversations on all that we do for our residents and other key stakeholders across the city.”

(As Councillor Francis had sent apologies, there was no supplementary question).

Question 17

Councillor Osborn to ask the cabinet member for climate change the following question:

“Other councils such as Lambeth are introducing emissions-based parking charges for parking permits, and councils such as Bath and North-East Somerset are doing the same for council-owned car parks. This will raise revenue that could be put into supporting sustainable and affordable transport. Will the Cabinet member explore this idea?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change’s response:

“Tariffs for on-street parking permits are determined by the county council, and basing these on vehicle emissions would be a decision for them. The city council will shortly begin work on a strategy for its own car parks, and emissions based tariffs will be considered as part of our commitment to our Air Quality Action Plan. In order to introduce this new approach, there will be a number of challenges to address. These include the current lack of meaningful guidelines on applying such tariffs, and the limits of the technology available. However, the potential benefits available to us should be investigated as well as solutions to these challenges.”

(There was no supplementary question).

Question 18

Councillor Worley to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“Leaseholders have reported broken front doors that pose a security risk as they cannot be fully closed. When this has been reported, the leaseholders have been told that the council will have to find a supplier to install new front doors – but no timescale has been given for this. Can the Cabinet Member commit to finding a supplier to install these fire-safe front doors as soon as possible, to prevent the security risk posed by doors that do not fully close?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety’s response:

“I can confirm that officers have been working to identify a suitable replacement door to be installed in our blocks of flats. I have been advised that orders have now been raised for the initial purchase and installation of fire doors and that this will commence in October.”

(In response to the supplementary question, Councillor Jones said that the programme for replacement fire doors was reaching its conclusion and she had confidence in the plan being delivered.)

Question 19

Councillor Calvert to ask the cabinet member for climate change the following question:

“Whilst the council provides garages to allow any resident to store motor vehicles securely, there is no similar option for bicycle owners. Will the council look to use land it owns to provide secure cycle storage available to any resident?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change’s response:

“Having a secure and dry place to store a bike is an important way to encourage people to adopt the healthy and affordable option of cycling. The majority of our multi-occupancy housing estates properties come with a dedicated shed for each flat. These offer a secure and private area for cycle storage. Where the council identifies a need for additional cycle storage, dedicated storage areas will be installed. We are in the process of installing a communal cycle storage facility for the West Pottergate Estate, via the Estate Aesthetics programme. This will create secure storage for West Pottergate residents who lack sufficient space in their shed or homes. If councillors have suggestions for additional storage they can let the Estate team via the online ‘Estate Improvements’ webform. I am aware that Cllr Calvert has been invited to do this. On the Planning side of our work, we oblige developers to provide sufficient cycle parking so users of new development can park their bikes in a convenient, safe and secure place”

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Calvert asked if the council would consider cycle provision for all residents and not just council tenants. Councillor Hampton replied that the council did make provision for all residents with a prioritised list in place. She invited Councillor Calvert to send through details of any additional areas for consideration.)

Question 20

Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:

“The riverside is an important element of our history and culture in Norwich. Over the last few years, the areas between Carrow and Foundry bridges have become overgrown and covered in litter and Graffiti. Thorpe Hamlet councillors have asked that Norwich City Council look after this area of the city better, but these requests have been ignored. Will the cabinet member share with me the maintenance schedule for this area, confirm if it is being followed, and make sure that this area of the city is cleaned up and remains tidy in future?”

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion’s response:

“The council recognises the historic significance of the Riverside area, and the maintenance schedule reflects this. Litter is collected from the area once a week and the grass is cut every three weeks. Shrub beds are cut back and cleared once a year in the winter. The council is responsible for removing graffiti from our own property, and this will be removed as soon as it is reported. We work with building owners where their buildings are affected by graffiti.

This maintenance programme is monitored closely, and the council is satisfied that it is being followed.”

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Price asked if the programme was being closely monitored and was satisfactory as he did not feel that area was being maintained to a good standard. He invited Councillor Giles to accompany him on a walkaround in that area. Councillor Giles replied that he would be happy to do that. Citywide services officers sampled hundreds of sites across the city each month to assess the quality of the work being carried out.)

Question 21

Councillor Fox to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“Residents in Canterbury Place have been raising enquiries about the unkempt condition of the communal gardens and footpaths in their neighbourhood for over a year. The footpaths are overgrown with weeds and the garden looks uncared for, having not had any work done on it since January, giving the area an air of neglect. At a recent planning meeting for the new development on Argyle Street Councillors were assured that the communal gardens there would receive proper maintenance and attention. If the council can budget to properly garden an Argyle Street garden, that doesn't yet exist, Norwich residents should be able to expect the same treatment. Will cabinet members ensure that all community gardens and footpaths are properly gardened and maintained going forward?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety response:

“All of the council's housing estates receive a measure of grounds maintenance dependent on the nature of the site. Canterbury Place is included within the grounds maintenance programmes, and these are works are delivered by Norwich City Services Ltd and managed and monitored by Citywide Services.
Canterbury Place is included in this programme of work.”

(In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Jones said that resource had to be balanced across the city through a programme of estate audits.)

Question 22

Councillor Schmierer to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:

“On this administration’s watch, CCTV coverage of the city has dramatically contracted in the last decade, while concerns from residents reported to me about antisocial behaviour have gone up since 2015. We could work with partners and other districts to provide more coverage. Will you outline what the plan is for more CCTV in the city, to help keep people safe?”

Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety response:

“The council are committed to providing safe streets and neighbourhoods for those that live in, work in, and visit Norwich. Working with partners and learning from elsewhere is essential.

CCTV plays an important part in achieving our community safety goals.

The 2017/18 review of the network resulted in significant investment in upgrading cameras and creating a new monitoring suite. The Council also funded equipment for Police providing additional opportunities for viewing and monitoring. Four deployable cameras were purchased providing support for specific operations in ASB hotspots.

The council is actively exploring opportunities to expand the CCTV network capacity including discussions with other districts. Expansion of the static network involves many partners and resolving technical compatibility and integration issues.

A Safer Streets Fund 5 bid has been submitted for additional deployable CCTV resource which will increase the number of cameras and provide greater flexibility in deployment.”

(In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Jones said that the deployment of the cameras was based on discussion with the police and ward councillors. All of the cameras were constantly deployed and there was a need for information to be reported so that other areas could be considered.)

Question 23

Councillor Ackroyd to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development the following question:

“Councillors regularly receive complaints about problems relating to bin collections. Is the portfolio holder satisfied that the service is achieving and maintaining a good performance level?”

Councillor Stonard, the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development’s response:

“Waste and recycling collections are provided to all of Norwich’s 68,000 households at least once a week. This means that over 100,000 collections take place every week when one takes into account residual waste, comingled recycling, garden waste, food waste and bulky uplifts.

The council closely monitors Biffa’s performance with regards to missed collections, and we are satisfied that they are performing to a high standard. Their performance is also benchmarked with similar contracts throughout the UK, confirms this.

We are always seeking continuous improvement in the performance of our contracts, and a project has started to review how we can improve the way that we manage all of the enquiries that we receive with regards to waste and recycling.”

(As Councillor Ackroyd had sent apologies, there was no supplementary question.)

Appendix B

Full Council Meeting
For meeting of 26 September 2023
Lord Mayor's Announcements

Date	Event
21 June	Civic Association AGM at City Hall
24 June	The Milecross Festival at Sloughbottom Park
24 June	St Martins Fest at Eaton Park
27 June	Visit to Ivy Court Nursing Home
28 June	Sewell Park Academy Pride March
28 June	UEA Reception at The Norfolk Showground
28 June	Coronation Reception at The Long Acre Suite at The Norfolk Showground
3 July	Norfolk Youth Summit at City Hall
3 July	Magdalen Gates School student council
4 July	Rotary Meeting at The Maids Head Hotel
6 July	100 Years of Mile Cross performance at Anglia Square
7 July	Norwich High School for Girls Prize Giving at The Halls
7 July	Town Close Prize Giving
8 July	Lord Mayors Procession
9 July	Great Norwich Duck Race at Lady Julian Bridge
11 July	NUA Graduation Ceremonies at Norwich City Football ground
13 July	Feed the Minds Book Fair at St Andrew's Church
13 July	Run Norwich Partners and Sponsors event
14 July	Norfolk and Norwich Rouen Friendship Garden Party
14 July	Norfolk County Council Chairman's Summer Reception at County Hall
15 July	KingsWood Street Party
16 July	Run Norwich
18 July	Charles Darwin Primary visit to City Hall
18 July	Lord Mayors Procession winners presentation
19 July	St Edmunds Society Presentation at The Halls
20 July	Wensum Junior School presentation
21 July	Sprowston Infant School and specialist resource base presentation
26 July	A Centenary Celebration at Strangers' Hall
28 July	The National Children's Brass Band of Great Britain at The Halls
28 July	Clementine's Camp Cabaret at Norwich Puppet Theatre
29 July	Norwich Pride Parade
11 September	Battle of Britain Opening Ceremony at City Hall
14 September	Lads Club AGM at The Hewett Academy
14 September	Royal British Legion President's Reception at The Great Hospital
15 September	County Battle of Britain Ceremony at County Hall
17 September	Norwich Historic Churches Trust – Heritage open day at St Martin at Palace Plain

Date	Event
17 September	Royal Air Forces Association Battle of Britain Event at Norwich Cathedral
18 September	Launch of Book Benches across the city
19 September	Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn at Norwich Castle
20 September	A Wilder Norfolk at The Forum
21 September	Norfolk Community Law Service Limited Annual Law Lecture at Norwich Cathedral
22 September	Norwich Samaritans Branch Renovation Relaunch Event
23 September	Rotary Clun 25 th Charter Celebration Dinner at The Assembly House
24 September	Visit My Mosque 2023 at Norwich Central Mosque and Islamic Community Centre
25 September	Strong Roots AGM at Friends Meeting House
26 September	The English Experience School of Englis