



COUNCIL

Time: 7.30pm – 9.25pm

28 January 2014

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

Apologies: Mr Graham Creelman (Sheriff) and Councillor Thomas.

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor welcomed the public attending the meeting. He then updated council on some of the civic engagements he had undertaken since the last meeting, including attending a service at St Peter Mancroft Church to commemorate the holocaust.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Button and Driver declared a pecuniary interest in Item 8.

3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Question 1

Angelena Lovecraft to the cabinet member for housing:

"How does the Council compensate tenants for harm caused by unreasonably prolonged delays to housing repairs? Such delays cause respiratory illnesses, exacerbation of pre-existing health conditions, mental distress, damage to furniture, clothing, electrical items, musical instruments and of course huge fuel bills. It can also result in a need for total redecoration at the tenant's expense. Surely this represents a breach of contract, equivalent to the tenant not paying the rent"

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing responded

"We are committed to providing high quality services to our residents. In some circumstances we accept that if we have failed to deliver our promised commitment, some form of compensation may be the appropriate way to give by way of an apology.

We have a compensation policy that covers the circumstances for which we may consider a compensation claim, and any appropriate sum of money. A leaflet explaining this policy is available on our website. Although rare, a major avoidable delay in completing a repair within the stated/agreed timescales is covered within this policy, however any payment that may be offered is dependent on the loss suffered, and the circumstances.

In addition, any damage to personal belongings can only be considered if the council is deemed liable, and the damaged items are not covered by the tenant's own home contents insurance policy under 'accidental damage'.

Clearly we undertake a number of different repairs across our housing stock and I'm very happy to meet with you in person to explore your case with officers if you wish to contact me directly."

Question 2

John Poole to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety:

"Norwich City Council introduced the city-wide Fouling of Land by Dogs Order in 2012. The council's web site states that enforcement officers have the power to issue penalty notices in cases of dog fouling, however I have been told by one of the enforcement officers that this is not true. I was informed that they have had training but have never been given tickets to issue.

I am a resident of Eaton and in the last few months I have noticed an increasing amount of dog fouling around Sunningdale, Wentworth Green and the new Wentworth Gardens Estate.

As a responsible dog owner and retired police officer, I would like to offer some of my time to act as a volunteer dog warden. I would hope that some support from the council would be possible by way of leaflets, dog waste bags, stencilling, appropriate signage etc, with a view to educating fellow dog walkers and assisting the council if necessary; for example were I to witness an offence, I would be happy to supply a statement.

To this end, I would like to ask: since the introduction of the order in 2012 can the cabinet member tell me how many fixed penalty tickets for dog fouling have been issued and by whom?"

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety's responded:

"To date the council has not issued a fixed penalty notice for dog fouling. All environmental enforcement officers, neighbourhood officers and neighbourhood wardens who have been trained and authorised to issue fixed penalty notices have the tickets to issue. I will enquire as to why this particular officer stated they had not received the tickets. It should be noted that before any ticket is issued the dog owner has to be given a chance to clear up any dog mess before a fixed penalty notice can be issued.

The council does recognise the concerns of the public with regard to dog fouling and is actively working within our communities to help reduce the number of incidents. For example, in the Arlington area of the city (the Essex Street, Newmarket Road area) local residents are proactively reporting issues in to the council and actively being our eyes and ears in their neighbourhood regarding dog fouling, littering, bins on streets, etc. Where this occurs, it can really help us to understand the scale of the issue. More detailed information allows us to identify patterns of activity and potential culprits enabling us to target our resources more effectively.

The council's approach has always been about education before enforcement with the neighbourhood officers looking to problem-solve hot spot areas in partnership with residents. To this end resident involvement is encouraged.

We are currently exploring the possibilities of holding a series of activities in Eaton Park in late March. Council officers together with local ward councillors and the Friends of Eaton Park are working together to raise awareness of responsible dog ownership, considerate use of Eaton Park by dog walkers and other users as well as how the public can report incidences of dog fouling in to the council.

I would urge members of the public to report all incidents of dog fouling to the council as this does help determine the priorities of where we focus our attention.

I do thank you for your offer of help in what is a very anti-social activity and have asked the neighbourhood manager in your area to contact you accordingly."

In reply to a supplementary question from John Poole, Councillor Kendrick reiterated that he would make enquiries as to why the officer said that he had not received tickets to issue.

Question 3

David Berwick to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

"The area of the city encompassed by Hotblack, Dereham and Waterworks Roads has been be-devilled by traffic problems over a long period of time, giving us serious cause for concern as residents. Problems include speeding, rat running, inconsiderate parking and many other instances of poor driving. Residents and councillors have been meeting as a group since the summer of 2013, to consider the options which might improve the situation. A recent consultation, (involving a senior transportation planner from the council and a police representative) considered a range of potential responses including traffic calming, one-way systems and the implementation of a 20MPH restriction. After examination of the probable costs and effectiveness of each of these, it emerged that the most likely option to immediately mitigate the current difficulties, was for motorists to be asked to drive at, or under, 20MPH in the area. Will the council conduct its own examination of this situation - with a view to implementing a strategy to improve this area for residents, (both pedestrians and other road-users alike) by giving us 20MPH limits in the above area?"

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport responded

“Back in 1999 the Norwich Highways Agency committee introduced the Nelson Street area traffic action plan. As part of that traffic calming was introduced, Nelson Street was made no entry from the Heigham Road junction and parking restrictions were implemented where there were parking problems. I am sure that without these measures the problems Mr Berwick described would be significantly worse.

The traffic action plan was reviewed after it had been in operation for a few months, and this review included collecting speed data. This showed that average speeds in the area were at or below 20mph and at the time it was decided by the Norwich Highways Agency Committee that introducing a 20mph speed limit was unnecessary as traffic already complied with that limit.

Thinking around 20mph limits has changed in the last 14 years and these days a 20mph speed limit would be considered appropriate for the area. As my fellow members know, it is the city council's policy to adopt a 20mph speed limit in all residential areas in the city. However achieving this requires a significant amount of funding which is unaffordable within existing highway budgets.

When the Tory led coalition government came to power in May 2010 they made an immediate cut of 25% to that year's integrated transport grant which is paid to the county council to fund highway improvement and safety schemes.

The effect on Norwich saw our budget reduced from £1.4 million to spend in the city to £1.05 million that year. For 2011/12 the county wide integrated transport grant was reduced from £10 million to £2 million and has remained at that level since. The share of this funding for the city was £195,000 in 2011/12; £215,000 in 2012/13 and for this year the figure is £280,000. These budgets contrast with the one million or so per annum budgets seen in the preceding decade.

This budget cut has resulted in difficult decisions being made about what the money can be spent on. To give you some idea what these figures could fund, a standalone signalled crossing is in the region of £100,000; modifying a signalled junction to provide pedestrian crossing facilities is upwards of £200,000; an area wide traffic calming scheme can be between £100,000 and £300,000 and a major cycle improvement would range from £100,000 to £500,000.

Officers and members continue to have discussions with other stakeholders, including colleagues in public health and at Norfolk Constabulary, to find ways of funding a city wide 20mph speed limit in residential areas. I will continue to keep council informed and updated.”

David Berwick asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would investigate the particular issue of double parking and cars not observing all due care when driving through this narrow channel in the 30mph zone. Councillor Stonard said that this would be a matter for the police and it should be brought to the attention of Norfolk Constabulary.

4. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 26 November 2013 and 17 December 2013.

6. QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Lord Mayor advised that 13 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members of which notice had been received in accordance with the provisions of appendix 1 of the council's constitution, and the questions were as follows –

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|--------------------|---|
| Question 1 | Councillor Henderson to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on applications for shale gas extraction. |
| Question 2 | Councillor Jackson to the cabinet member for resources on the effect on tenants of the bedroom tax. |
| Question 3 | Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for resources on a media quote about the bedroom tax. |
| Question 4 | Councillor Grahame to the cabinet member for customer services on debt collection. |
| Question 5 | Councillor Carlo to the leader of the council on the number of jobs expected to be created as a direct result of the Northern Distributor Road. |
| Question 6 | Councillor Boswell to the leader of the council on the support to be provided to Great Yarmouth Borough Council. |
| Question 7 | Councillor Stammers to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the possibility of an investigation into the King's Lynn incinerator process. |
| Question 8 | Councillor Sands (M) to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the potential affect of proposed changes to permitted development rights. |
| Question 9 | Councillor Button to the cabinet member for housing on private rent trends in the city. |
| Question 10 | Councillor Gayton to the cabinet member for resources on the use of food banks in the city. |
| Question 11 | Councillor Wright to the cabinet member for resources on council support for OPEN Christmas 2014. |
| Question 12 | Councillor Ackroyd to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the "walk to" programme. |
| Question 13 | Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for resources on council support for the Writers Centre in Norwich. |

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

7. NOMINATIONS FOR SHERIFF AND DEPUTY LORD MAYOR

Councillor Arthur moved and Councillor Boswell seconded the nominations.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to receive the following nominations for the 2014-15 civic year which would be formerly considered at the council's annual general meeting –

- (1) Sheriff – William Armstrong
- (2) Deputy Lord Mayor – Councillor Marion Maxwell

8. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2014-15

(Councillor Button and Driver, having previously declared a pecuniary interest in this item left the meeting and took no part in the discussion or vote.)

(Councillor Wright, Deputy Lord Mayor in the chair)

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Bradford seconded, the recommendations in the annexed report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to –

- (1) approve the council tax reduction scheme for 2014 - 15 i.e. continue with the council's 2013 - 14 scheme which adopted the "default regulations" [The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012] and gave 100% disregard to war pensions when calculating a claimant's income;
- (2) adopt the Department for work and pension's 2014 housing benefit figures for personal allowances; premiums; employment and support allowance work-related and support components for its council tax reduction scheme;
- (3) adopt the Department for communities and local government advised council tax reduction scheme pensioner applicant prescribed figures for non-dependant deductions and alternative council tax reduction scheme ('second adult reduction') and also apply these to working-age applicants; and,
- (4) approve continuing with the same discounts and exemptions as for 2013 - 14 i.e:
 - i) to increase the amount of council tax payable by second home owners from 90% to 95% and that the additional income generated is utilised in accordance with the existing second homes council tax agreement.

- ii) to allow a 50% discount for up to 12 months for empty dwellings undergoing major repairs (Class A).
- iii) to grant a 100% discount for vacant dwellings (Class C) for the first month and that the discount is then reduced to zero up to 6 months.
- iv) to charge 100% council tax for long term empty properties (vacant between 6 months and 24 months) and allow no discount.
- v) after two years to levy an empty homes premium of an additional 50% in council tax.

(Lord Mayor in the chair)

9. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATING INCOME (BUSINESS RATES) AND COUNCIL TAX BASE

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Maxwell seconded, the recommendations in the annexed report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to delegate authority to the chief finance officer to submit the National Non-Domestic Rate Form (NNDR1) and approve the council tax base for 2014-15 and future years.

10. MOTION – HOUSING STANDARDS

The Lord Mayor said that an amendment to his own motion had been received from Councillor Neale to add “environmental” to the resolution so that it read –

“Council resolved to ask cabinet to built new housing to the highest possible environmental standards rather than the minimum set in the current national and local planning frameworks”.

With no member objecting, this became the new substantive motion.

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

Councillor Stonard moved, and Council Bremner seconded that the motion be amended to delete “build” and insert “...explore the implications of building” and delete “...rather than the minimum set in the current national and local planning frameworks, the resolution to read –

“Council resolved to ask cabinet to explore the implications of building new housing to the highest possible environmental standards”.

With 23 members voting in favour, 14 against and no abstentions, the amendment was carried.

Councillor Neale moved, and Councillor Haynes seconded, that the motion be amended to insert after “...ask cabinet to ...” the following –

“...set up a cross party working group to ...”.

Councillor Stonard suggested that his group would be willing to support this amendment if it read "...ask the sustainable development panel to explore the implications ..." instead of "a cross party working group". Councillor Neale indicated that he would be willing to accept this change and the Lord Mayor said that although the procedure rules require amendments to be dealt with one at a time, as it was clearly the will of council, he asked members to vote on the following amendment –

"...insert after "...ask cabinet to..." ask the sustainable development panel to explore the implications of ...".

And it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to accept the amendment.

Councillor Stonard moved and Councillor Arthur seconded that the matter be now put and it was –

RESOLVED, unanimously, that the matter be now put.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to ask cabinet to ask the sustainable development panel to explore the implications of building new housing to the highest possible environmental standards.

11. MOTION – ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Lord Mayor said that Councillor Stammers had withdrawn this motion.

12. MOTION – PRINCE OF WALES ROAD

The Lord Mayor said that Councillor Stonard had submitted the following amendment in advance of the meeting –

"To amend resolution (2) by inserting a comma after Norfolk Community Partnership; deleting "and work with"; replacing the "and" after "forum" with a comma and deleting the semicolon after "participants."

Councillor Grahame had indicated that she was willing to accept this amendment and, with no other member objecting, it became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Grahame moved and Councillor Henderson seconded, the motion as set out on the agenda and amended.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that –

"Alcohol related antisocial behaviour continues to contribute to making the Prince of Wales Road area less safe and clean than many residents would want it to be. Ward councillors and many residents have noted some improvements resulting from alcohol sales ceasing at 4am and have pledged to continue working to improve this area.

In Ipswich a voluntary agreement by off licences not to sell cheap super-strength alcohol has significantly reduced drink-related antisocial behaviour.

RESOLVED to –

- (1) welcome this collaborative and voluntary approach;
- (2) ask cabinet to continue to work with the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership, the Stakeholders Forum, Healthy City participants and other interested parties to negotiate further improvements for residents in the city centre, including exploring opportunities to limit the sale of super-strength alcohol; and
- (3) ask licensing committee to consider all such evidence and the views of residents when amended Early Morning Restriction Order proposals for the management of the city's night time economy are brought before it.

CHAIR

APPENDIX A

Question 1

Councillor Henderson asked the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

“A motion in September last year was unanimously agreed by council to ‘ask the cabinet to adopt a policy of lodging objections to any applications for shale gas extraction in the area surrounding Norwich, where it could have a significant impact upon the environment, water supply and / or amenity of Norwich residents’. Could the cabinet member please update us on progress on this policy, and reassure us that it will not be affected by the government’s recent announcement of an increase in business rates from shale gas schemes to local authorities?”

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

“Since the motion was unanimously agreed by council there has been no further work on this issue undertaken by the city council. Our approach is clear, we will examine all applications received for shale gas extraction in Norwich and the surrounding area and where we think it could have a significant impact upon the environment, water supply and / or amenity of Norwich residents we will object to it.

Since the council agreement there have been no applications received related to shale gas extraction submitted anywhere near Norwich. The recent announcement by government on the issue of financial incentives to local authorities does not change our agreed policy whatsoever and is not likely to have any impact on Norwich as our understanding of the underlying geology is that it is highly unlikely to support the commercial exploitation of shale gas reserves and as such would be unlikely to attract any attempts at test drilling in the short to medium term. Clearly if this situation changes we may need to do further work on assessing any risks that may arise from shale gas extraction but for the time being I do not consider it to be a good use of council resources to do further work on the matter.”

Question 2

Councillor Jackson asked the cabinet member for resources:

“The Department for Work and Pensions recently confirmed that tenants who have been continuously claiming housing benefit from before 1 January 1996 and have lived at the same address are temporarily exempt from paying the ‘bedroom tax’. According to *Inside Housing* magazine, councils have been told by government that they should refund any deductions made since last April to these tenants.

How many tenants in Norwich are affected? What is the council doing to identify tenants affected by this exemption and arrange a refund?”

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources' response:

"Spare room subsidy deductions ("bedroom tax") are currently being made in respect of 2239 council tenants and 316 registered provider tenants (registered social landlords / housing associations). Following instruction from the Department of Work and Pensions the council is taking a proactive approach to resolve this issue. We are tackling this issue in two ways, using the data we already hold and asking tenants to come forward if they think they qualify.

The council has already identified 513 council tenants paying the deduction who have tenancies that started prior to 1 January 1996. However, we have not yet identified how many of these have continuously been in receipt of housing benefit during that time which is the second requirement to meet the exemption.

From its housing management system the housing service can provide benefit records dating back to 1996 to enable the LGSS benefits team to make a determination as to whether tenants meet the continuous tenancy and entitlement requirements to enable the bedroom tax deduction to cease and any appropriate refunds to be made. This work is now taking place. Any planned income recovery work on pre 1996 tenancy cases will take appropriate regard of this impending change.

The council is contacting the landlords of the 316 tenants of registered social landlords/ housing association affected and asking for details of those whose tenancies started before 1996. The on line and archived benefit records for these tenants will then be interrogated to establish whether tenants meet the continuous tenancy and entitlement requirements to enable the bedroom tax deduction to cease and any appropriate refunds to be made.

The final number of refunds due and how these refunds will be made will be determined over the coming weeks.

The council has also written to all tenants affected by the "bedroom tax" in our properties and asked them to contact us if they think they qualify.

I am pleased to say that when this work is complete the tenants affected will have no bedroom tax deduction. However, I am saddened that this will only last until the government carries out its stated aim of amending the legislation to remove this exemption"

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Jackson, Councillor Waters** said that the council had identified all the categories which were eligible for a refund but he was concerned that the government had indicated that it was seeking to close "loopholes".

Question 3

Councillor Haynes asked the cabinet member for resources:

"The cabinet member for resources was quoted by the Norwich Evening News on 27 November as saying "Nobody will be evicted because of the bedroom tax, and nobody has been evicted because of the welfare changes". Could the cabinet

member please clarify whether he said the words as reported, and if so what he meant?"

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources' response:

"Councillor Haynes, as you were at the council meeting where we debated this Issue, you will recall that I made three very clear points:

- (1) That all councils have an obligation in law to collect all debts owed to it under the 'Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.
- (2) That we encourage tenants who are in financial difficulty to make contact with us as soon as possible and that if they engage with the council to come to an arrangement to deal with debts owed then eviction is not an option.
- (3) A Labour Government would immediately repeal the 'Bedroom Tax' on coming to power in 2015.

Finally I can confirm that to date no tenant in Norwich has been evicted solely due to the non payment of bedroom tax deductions.

Let me now provide you with some more detail -

There are spare room subsidy deductions (Bedroom tax) currently being made in respect of 2239 council tenants. 834 (37%) of these tenants are in arrears greater than one months payable charge. This compares with a figure of 22% across the stock generally. The vast majority of these tenancies are being supported to sustain their tenancies without recourse to legal action. Furthermore this profile may change as corrective action is taken to apply the pre 1996 exemption on subsidy deductions.

In the case of any arrears owed whereby the council needs to make a decision as to whether to apply for the warrant of eviction - this is an action of last resort and in the majority of these cases the tenant has failed to engage with the council to agree suitable arrangements to sustain their tenancy. The instigation of legal proceedings will often be a key factor in the tenant instigating contact with the council.

Another example of the way we seek to help tenants is by pre-court mediation sessions. At present there are approximately 15 cases involving lesser amounts of arrears where normal policy would suggest initial possession proceedings should be commenced. However these cases are currently being referred to our pre-court mediation sessions operated in partnership with Norfolk Community Law Service (NCLS) and Court service.

There are a number of important checks in our processes and for those cases where legal proceedings are progressed we will, as always, have a senior officer review the case as well as, in this instance, the appropriate portfolio holders (members of cabinet) before such action is taken. A warrant for eviction is extremely rarely carried out on the first application. To help avoid this we will continue to encourage tenants who are in financial difficulty to make contact with us and other advice agencies and, if they engage with the council then we will support them to make an application to suspend eviction."

Councillor Haynes asked, as a supplementary question, whether the quote which she had been informed was verbatim was accurate and if the cabinet member could clarify that no one would be evicted. **Councillor Waters** said that he was sure the press would identify the key message in his reply and from the debate at the November 2013 council meeting and he reiterated the points (1) to (3) in his answer above. He repeated that no tenant has been evicted solely due to the non-payment of bedroom tax deductions. However, Councillor Haynes was well aware that the council cannot give an assurance that it would never use the ultimate sanction. It cannot be seen to give the impression that there is a “free pass” as this could create problems for the tenant themselves in the future. His answer above was entirely consistent with the points made at the council meeting in November 2013.

Question 4

Councillor Grahame asked the cabinet member for customer services:

“Housing and homelessness charity Shelter states that one in ten East of England households is struggling with this month's housing overhead costs. Householders in difficulty have a right to expect supportive approaches to making their claims and payments, yet some have experienced misunderstandings that could be resolved, and instead they have felt the council to be heavy-handed and punitive and distrustful. This erodes good will, adds to the stigma of low incomes, and wastes officer and residents' time.

Will the cabinet member pledge that the council will work with residents to arrange payments due, to take a respectful, negotiating approach where the resident is willing, and to involve debt collection and fraud teams as a last resort only?”

Councillor Mike Sands, cabinet member for customer services' response:

“The council would always take a respectful approach to discussing any matters with a resident including financial matters relating to benefit and rent payments.

All of us understand the challenges that some households are facing in meeting their financial commitments.

Members may recall that cabinet approved a new debt collection policy in December 2012 and this was further updated in September 2013. This policy makes clear that the council has a duty to collect debts owed to the council but will take a firm but fair approach.

The policy encourages people who have difficulty in paying to contact the council to reach an agreed way forward as soon as possible.

Council staff will always seek to work collaboratively with the resident to make realistic arrangements to clear outstanding amounts by regular payments, in preference to taking legal action for recovery.

The council also has a duty to prevent and detect fraud. In the small number of financial transaction cases where fraud is suspected the council will undertake an investigation. These investigations will cover a range of cases from a simple mistake through to deliberate dishonesty. The fraud investigators are skilled at investigating these cases and have strict procedures that they must follow. ”

Councillor Grahame said that many people had fluctuating income and it caused serious problems and delays if claims had to be “open and shut” regularly. She asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would consider keeping claims open in such circumstances to prevent delays in claims. **Councillor Sands** said that people in such circumstances should be encouraged to engage with the council as early as possible. He would discuss with the officers if it was possible for amicable arrangements to be made in such circumstances.

Question 5

Councillor Carlo asked the leader of the council:

“The city council says that the City Deal now applies across Greater Norwich, with a job creation focus at the Norwich Research Park (NRP), the city centre and at the airport. The city council also says that the northern distributor road (NDR) will directly support the city deal. Can you give the number of jobs which will be created at the NRP, the city centre and airport as a direct result of the NDR and the figures for Gross Value Added for the NRP, city centre and airport as a direct result of the NDR one year and fifteen years after opening?”

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council’s response:

“The NDR is part of a package of measures and improvements designed to facilitate growth by opening up land for development, easing pressure on existing infrastructure, removing barriers to growth and stimulating emerging sectors. Job and gross value added growth in the City Deal cannot be solely attributed to any single element or measure within this package which also includes additional business support and actions to make local skills delivery more responsive to employer needs and emerging opportunity within key growth sectors.

Although it is not possible to disaggregate city deal growth and attribute it to individual elements within the overall package of activity; Norfolk County Council commissioned Mott MacDonald to produce the *Norwich northern distributor road development pool bid economic appraisal report* in 2011.

This report looked solely at the wider economic benefits of the NDR which were calculated using the DfT’s WITA software (version 1.1), which is the recommended tool for wider economic impacts.

The report states that the total economic benefit of the NDR for Norwich is estimated at £72,946,178 (calculated at 2002 prices for the period to 2032).”

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Carlo** which questioned the evidence that the NDR would provide benefits to Norwich, including the city centre, **Councillor Arthur** said that the council’s priorities including the City Deal and working with the Local Enterprise Partnership would continue to deliver benefits for the city and she believed that the NDR, as part of the joint core strategy, would contribute significantly to the enhancement of the city.

Question 6

Councillor Boswell asked the leader of the council:

“Whilst it is exemplary of this council to provide support to another local authority at a difficult time by providing a part-time chief executive, will the leader please detail how the loss of our chief executive for two days a week is being managed in terms of delegation and responsibilities to other officers, and show how can this council be sure that our chief executive and her chief officer team are not being overloaded?”

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council’s response:

“The arrangement with Great Yarmouth Borough Council is a temporary one to provide support to another council in some very unusual circumstances and will last for between 3 to 6 months. Our chief executive will continue to be at Norwich for three days a week. For the other two days our deputy chief executive supported by the rest of the council’s corporate leadership team will be able to provide any necessary cover. The council has a very strong and experienced corporate leadership team and this is only a short term arrangement. We also have strong and experienced Heads of Service. In short with have strength and depth in our senior teams.

With regards to formal delegations and responsibilities there is no need for any changes to these as the council’s current arrangements ensure that all the necessary responsibilities can be met and decisions made during the absence of the chief executive or other chief officers. For example, our chief executive is not here tonight as she is currently on annual leave but her responsibilities are still being covered in her absence.

The arrangement with Great Yarmouth will not affect the day to day running of this council or put unnecessary pressures on our senior team for this temporary period. Had this been the case we would not have agreed to it . Certainly when I discussed the matter with the then Leaders of the opposition parties they too were convinced that the arrangements offered an opportunity for shared learning and potentially personal development opportunities for officers here.”

Question 7

Councillor Stammers asked the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

“Last week, there was extensive media coverage of an alternative waste disposal method (to incineration) being proposed for Kings Lynn. The council there have signed a contract and the company has £100m funding. As this council's position is opposition to incineration anywhere in Norfolk and for the use of alternative methods such as anaerobic digestion (as used in this alternative), will the cabinet member instruct officers to investigate the Kings Lynn process in depth and bring a report to the Sustainable Development Panel on its potential use for Norwich as soon as possible?”

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

"Members will recall that in response to a motion to council in January last year it was resolved to ask the sustainability development panel to consider a report on the viability of this process for the treatment of similar waste collected by the city council. This was on the premise that the process would meet all the necessary requirements for waste end of life criteria and for the payment of recycling credits. Unfortunately neither has been proved. Until such time as it is proved, the treatment has to be considered as a waste disposal function and therefore comes under the remit of Norfolk County Council. However I have asked officers to monitor the new contractual arrangements in Kings Lynn and West Norfolk so see if any progress is made on these two fundamental requirements."

Councillor Stammers said that there was information from King's Lynn that the requirements for waste end of life criteria had been met and she asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would therefore reconsider. **Councillor Stonard** said that if Councillor Stammers had information he was happy to look at it.

Question 8

Councillor Mike Sands asked the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

"Can the cabinet member for environment, development and transport update council on any assessments which have been made of the potential effect of the government's proposed change to permitted development rights on the number of:

- a) betting shops; and,
- b) fixed odds betting terminals on high streets?"

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

"This is an issue of significant concern and one I have raised with the Planning Minister, Nick Boles.

The government consulted on introducing further flexibilities for change of use last autumn. The consultation did not actually contain any proposals directly affecting betting shops, but it did propose to allow the change from shops to banks and building societies without the need for planning permission. As banks and buildings societies currently fall within the same planning use class as betting shops in our response to the consultation we highlighted the risk that this could lead to effectively easing the controls on further betting shops in the high street which was not the apparent intention of the legislation.

We went on to suggest that if the government were minded to introduce the greater flexibilities proposed this rather strengthened the case to further amend the planning use classes order to recognise that betting shops be removed from their current use class and be regarded as falling outside the normal use class system. This would

mean that planning permission would be required for all new betting shops irrespective of what the premises had previously been used for and see they being treated in a similar manner to amusement arcades which they are increasingly resembling due to the presence of the gaming machines to which you refer.

You may be interested to note that we are not alone in suggesting that betting shops should be treated in this manner. There is considerable concern from a number of local councils about both the impact of betting shops on the high street and impact of the ready availability of high stakes gambling machines on vulnerable people and their families. Even Don Foster, the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, has gone of record supporting that betting shops should be removed from their current use class and reclassified as we suggest.

With regard to the fixed odds betting terminals the current situation is that betting premises operators have an entitlement to 4 gaming machines of various categories on their premises. One of the categories allowed is fixed odds betting terminals which have a maximum stake of £100 (in multiples of £10) and a maximum prize of £500. So the sums of money that can be lost in such machines are considerable.

As you are aware betting shops are licensed. Any person wishing to run a betting shop has to obtain an operating licence and one or more personal management licences from the gambling commission, plus a premises licence from the local licensing authority for the area in which the premises is situated. But in considering premises licence application the authority can only have regard to a specified and rather limited range of considerations, and in making decisions we are generally prevented from considering matters such as:

- the expected demand for the facilities;
- whether or not the applicant's proposal is likely to be acceptable in planning terms; or
- the cumulative impact of licensed premises.

So in summary I share your concerns over the potential impacts of betting shops and wait to see what changes the government will introduce following its consultation last autumn."

Question 9

Councillor Button asked the cabinet member for housing:

"Several residents living in my ward have contacted me concerning their worries at the rising level of private rents. Can the cabinet member for housing comment on any assessment that has been made on private rent trends in the city?"

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing's response:

"The Strategic Housing team assessed local rents when compiling the evidence base for the council's housing strategy which was adopted by cabinet last year. That evidence base will be regularly reviewed.

Restrictions on the availability of mortgage finance have led to a significant national increase in the number of households which rent in the private sector and there is an associated rise in average rents due to a lack of supply of accommodation.

Between 2009 and 2012 there were significant increases in private rents for two and three bedroom properties in Norwich as shown in the following table. The rents on 1-bed properties, however, fell.

Average monthly private sector rents 2009-2012

Property Type	2009 /£	2011 / £	2012 /£	% change since 2009
1-bed	557	496	486	-14.6
2-bed	582	638	649	11.3
3-bed	646	746	757	17.2

Source: Sampling exercise using www.rightmove.co.uk (2009, Apr 2011 and July 2012)

The principle reason for the increase is likely to be growing demand from the group of households, described as 'trapped renters'. They form over half (55%) of the private rental market nationally. This group would like to buy but cannot afford to. The reduction in rents for 1-bed homes may be that particularly this group are not seeking small properties, combined with an increased supply of new 1-bed apartments.

In terms of affordability, the average (mean) private sector rent for a two bedroom property in Norwich represents 28 per cent of gross average earnings (£27,556) for full-time workers. On a three-bedroom property, the rent accounts for 33 per cent, well above the recommended proportion of 25% gross annual earnings.

A snapshot of rents in April 2013 shows that the private rented market in Norwich remains largely unaffordable to people who are wholly reliant on Local Housing Allowance, which is the level of housing benefit for people living in the private sector.

Monthly Rents in Norwich (April 2012)

Property Type	No of properties in sample	Rent (mean)/£	Local Housing Allowance /£
Room	86	350	253.50
1 bed	132	489	394.98
2 bed	232	659	495.00
3 bed	171	709	574.99
4 bed	105	962	794.99

Source: www.home.co.uk

In summary, private sector rents in Norwich, as elsewhere, are affected by the market forces of supply and demand and will rise and fall for a wide range of reasons. They are, however, difficult to afford for the average household. The council does not have the ability to affect that significantly beyond what it already achieves in helping to meet demand for affordable homes.

Nationally the cost of renting is up – since 2010 it has increased by more than twice as much as wages. On average, rents currently take up half of an English person's disposable income and it is forecast to go even higher!

By 2020, private rents are expected to soar by an average of nearly 40%”

Question 10

Councillor Gayton asked the cabinet member for resources:

“Could the cabinet member for resources update council on the use of foodbanks since the Christmas break?”

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources’ response:

“The city council has recently received the information from the Norwich Foodbank on the numbers of food vouchers it has issued up to the end of December 2013. The figures show a continuing increase and growth in the need for the Foodbank by families in the city.

When the figures are compared against those for December 2012, there has been a 26.5% increase in the number of people assisted by the Foodbank for this December than December 2012. Over half of the vouchers issued in the City were issued to residents in just 4 wards, these being Wensum, Bowthorpe, Mancroft and Catton Grove.

In December 2013 low income (generally relating to people in low paid work) and benefit arrangements, were the two highest reasons given by residents requesting help.

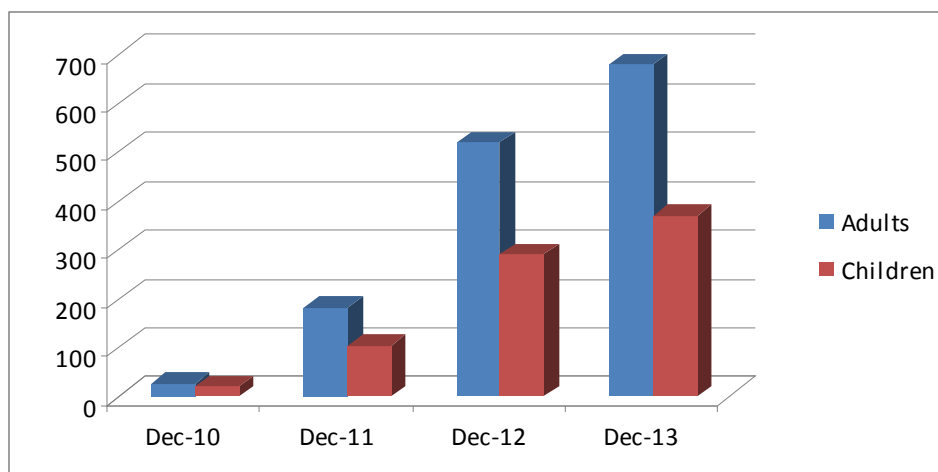
It has been noted that numbers of vouchers issued peak in the summer and over Christmas which is thought to be due to families losing access to free school meals during these times.

When it is considered that during Christmas and holiday periods, families will be trying to provide a happy experience for their children, this can result in severe budgeting difficulties with families at risk of turning to loan sharks or door step lenders for monies. Overall it is a very depressing picture.”

December Figures for Food bank over the last 3 years

Number of people helped

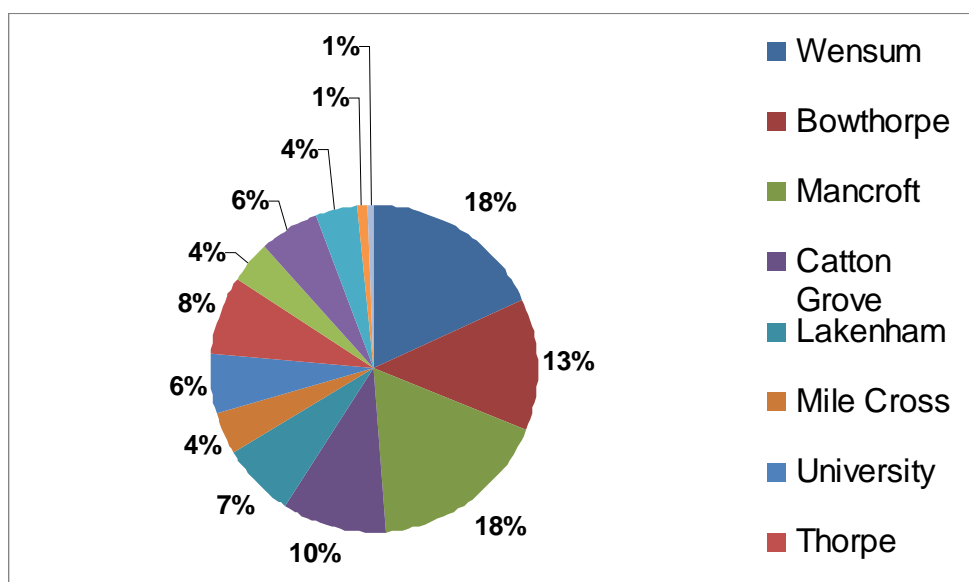
	Adults	Children	Total
Dec-10	27	21	48
Dec-11	183	103	286
Dec-12	520	290	810
Dec-13	679	370	1049



Number of Vouchers redeemed per ward

Ward 2013

Wensum	56
Bowthorpe	40
Mancroft	55
Catton	
Grove	32
Lakenham	22
Mile Cross	13
University	18
Thorpe	
Hamlet	24
Sewell	13
Town Close	18
Crome	13
Eaton	3
Nelson	2



Councillor Gayton said that the figures showed that there was increasing hardship as a result of the cuts in benefits and asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet would continue to assist foodbank volunteers. **Councillor Waters** said that the council was in regular contact with the foodbank which did admirable work. However, this was a “sticking plaster” to the problem, not a solution.

Question 11

Councillor Wright asked the cabinet member for resources:

“Up until now the city council has been able to provide the Norwich Open Christmas event with free use of St. Andrew’s and Blackfriars Halls in order that they can provide their valuable service on Christmas Day. However, concerns have been raised that they will have to pay for Christmas 2014. Can the cabinet member please commit to ensuring that this will not be the case?”

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources' response:

"The council has supported OPEN Christmas for many years and will continue to do so. We look forward to receiving their grant application."

Question 12

Councillor Ackroyd asked the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

"Following the government's award to the city of £228,000 for its 'Walk To' programme; can the cabinet member explain where, when and how the money will be spent?"

Councillor Stonard, environment, development and transport's response:

"In submitting the bid, the sports development team worked closely with colleagues from both Public Health and Norwich Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to identify key partners that could help deliver the outcomes of the project, which were:

- more people walking to improve health and mental wellbeing and
- reduced emissions, traffic noise and congestion.

The following four key partners were identified:

Living Streets – They will coordinate the project through a project manager based full time in City Hall. The Living Streets project coordinator will ensure synergy between the various elements of the project, apply Living Streets experience (community street audits, safer neighbourhoods etc) and make sure Norwich benefits from relevant national initiatives. A delivery budget of £25k will be retained by the council to capitalise on such opportunities and small amount may be made available to commission research into specific elements of the project, although we do have an agreement in place with Norwich CCG to utilise some of the research they carry out through the UEA.

When: Feb 2014 - June 2015

Where: City wide

How many people engaged: 10,000

Budget: £96k

Active Norfolk - They will design and lead a programme of health walks across the city utilising parks and open spaces within communities

When: walks starting March 2014 - March 2015 - plan to have local champions and volunteers trained to ensure the sustainability of the walks post funding.

Where: City wide, in particular targeting the least active. Community focussed walks, utilising parks and open spaces.

How many people engaged: 500

Budget: £37,500

Liftshare – They will work with local business to encourage modal shift among employees. Personal Travel Plans will be issued to staff to make them aware of walking and cycling options for travel to work

When: Engagement to start Feb 2014

Where: targeting large employers where workforce predominantly lives locally (ie could walk to work) and where job roles are largely sedentary

How many people engaged: 2,400

Budget: £10k

Intelligent Health – They will run a 10 week Beat the Street project primarily in Crome ward. Interactive walking challenge whereby school children log their walk or cycle to school by swiping a smart card against one of 35 tracking units attached to lampposts within the community. Schools compete to see who walks the furthest with books and tokens as prizes. This is a short term intervention aimed at stimulating behaviour change and attitudes towards walking

When: May/June 2014

Where: Crome ward predominantly. Schools, community centres, GP surgeries, libraries

How many people engaged: 15,000

Budget: £60k"

Councillor Akroyd asked, as a supplementary question, whether there was an opportunity to bid for funding for a specific project. **Councillor Stonard** said that he understood that the bid had been made for a specific purpose but he would investigate.

Question 13

Councillor Lubbock asked the cabinet member for resources:

"The Norwich Writers' Centre have submitted a planning application for Gladstone House, Upper St Giles, a Grade II listed building. The proposal to build a 100 seat auditorium in the rear garden and make changes to the internal features of the building to facilitate it becoming a national centre for writing.

Whilst the merits of having a national centre are obviously a bonus for the cultural identity of Norwich, there seem to be concerns on the changes these proposals will have on this building and its setting and the costs of such changes.

I believe financial support for the Writers' Centre in Norwich comes mainly from the city and county councils. It is the use to which these grants are being put that concerns the tax payers of the city and county.

Please can you say what financial support is given by this council in the current year and the next financial year and whether there is any accountability for how this money is spent?"

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources' response:

"I cannot comment on a planning application but I can comment on this matter from a cultural perspective.

Norwich is proud to be England's first and only UNESCO World City of Literature; one of just six cities in the world who hold this accolade. The Writers' Centre bid for this title on behalf of, and, in partnership with, the city and I for one am immensely proud that Norwich is now held in such high cultural regard across the world. I look forward to the benefits this will bring, not just in terms of literature but in terms of literacy.

The council has a proud history of providing buildings in which cultural activity can take place; The Theatre Royal and Cinema City being previous examples, where our leasing of a building to an organisation has resulted in levering in substantial external funding which has been used for improvement and development. This way the building remains in the city's ownership but benefit from public access and partnership use.

The development of the new Writers' Centre is no different, the council is providing a lease on a peppercorn rent and the Writers' Centre will lever in millions of pounds of external funding from the Arts Council, trusts and foundations and charitable and personal donations to deliver this flagship project for Norwich.

On a factual note I think you will find that the largest proportion of funding for the Writer's Centre comes from the Arts Council and from other grant giving bodies. I cannot speak for the county council or county tax payers as that it a matter for their councillors and taxpayers.

This council has a partnership relationship with the Writers' Centre. It received partnership funding of £38,000 in this financial year and they will receive the same amount in the next financial year. They are accountable for how this money spent, as are all our partnerships, and work to mutually agreed objectives. One of which is to act as the lead organisation on behalf of the city in terms of our UNESCO status - a vital piece of work.

I think Councillor Lubbock may find the bid for UNESCO an interesting read in preparation for her year as Lord Mayor, if she hasn't already seen it, I have one here which I am happy to give to her. And I am sure in her civic year she will be asked to work alongside the Writers' Centre and myself in promoting our UNESCO status as widely as possible."