



**COUNCIL**

**7.30pm – 10.35 pm**

**29 September 2015**

Present: Councillor Arthur (Lord Mayor), Beryl Blower (Sheriff), Councillors Ackroyd, Blunt, Bogelein, Boswell, Bradford, Bremner, Brociek-Coulton, Button, Carlo, Coleshill, Driver, Grahame, Harris, Haynes, Henderson, Howard, Jones, Kendrick, Lubbock, Maxwell, Neale, Packer, Peek, Price, Raby, Ryan, Sands(M), Sands(S), Stonard, Thomas (VA), Thomas (VI), Waters and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Herries, Jackson, Manning, Schmierer and Woollard

**1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Lord Mayor said that since the last meeting she had attended a poignant service in the war graves section of Earlham cemetery to commemorate VJ Day and met some of the men and women who continue to serve to protect our peace at the launch of Battle of Britain Week.

She had been invited to the opening of the new student accommodation on Queens Road and together with the Sheriff, helped to open a new centre for 16-25 year olds with multiple disabilities at Norwich City College.

She had opened a new Jessops store and a refurbished Quick Fit centre and attended the re-opening of the post office on Earlham Road.

She had opened three events at the Forum – a festival of life; a festival of health and a particularly colourful and engaging multi-cultural festival which powerfully demonstrated the change in demographic in our city and the huge contribution that people from different cultures make to city life.

She had attended two events at Bowthorpe; at a fun day she had met the organisers of the NEESA project, a not-for-profit voluntary community group for women and children and also attended a football match between Norfolk and Suffolk Fire Services. They were raising money for the charity called 'It's on the Ball' which raises awareness and a better understanding of testicular cancer and offers practical help to those who have been diagnosed with it.

The noisiest event she had attended was when, together with the sheriff, saw the convoy of over 80 trucks driven by the East Coast Truckers, all of whom had given their time for free, taking children and young people with disabilities for a day out at Pleasurewood Hills.

Finally, the Lord Mayor acknowledged some awards which the city and the city council had received. Norwich in Bloom had received a number of awards including Gold award and the council's events team had won the Norfolk Arts award for its hard work in delivering a number of outstanding events including the Radio 1 big weekend. As there was a full agenda for this meeting she suggested that we hear more about these awards at the next full council meeting.

## **2. LONG SERVICE AWARDS**

Councillor Driver, portfolio holder for neighbourhoods and community safety, commented on the contribution to the work of the council by former employee, Sue Thomas.

Councillor Bremner, portfolio holder for environment and sustainable development commented on the contribution to the work for the council of former employee Sandra Hornagold.

The Lord Mayor then presented Sue Thomas and Sandra Hornagold with long service awards.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

**Julian Bell asked the leader of the council:**

"The Norwich Claimants Union had several meetings with Alan Waters to discuss setting up a Norwich based community shop.

From the community-shop.co.uk website it appears that existing community shops (Barnsley) are being run with the access policy outlined below:

'We want to help people on the cusp of food poverty, who are working hard to improve their lives.

We offer good food at great prices, which eases pressure on family budgets. And our members sign up to tailored, professional development programmes, to kick-start positive change in their lives.'

Will it be the case that a Norwich based community shop would be run on these lines requiring that people accessing this service show that they are making 'positive changes in their lives' and are signed up to a 'professional

development programme' – indeed, is the community shop project still going ahead?"

**Councillor Waters, leader of the council responded:**

“Norwich City Council recently adopted a new corporate plan for the period 2015-2020. This contains a priority a *fair city* with the objective *for Norwich to be a fair city where people are not socially, financially or digitally excluded and inequalities are reduced as much as possible.*

To support this objective, the council intends to work with residents and partners to deliver the following key actions over the next five years:

- To reduce financial and social inequalities
- To advocate for a living wage
- To encourage digital inclusion so local people can take advantage of digital opportunities
- To reduce fuel poverty through a programme of affordable warmth activities

The intention is to widen the council’s current approach to financial inclusion with a number of new and continuing actions that should, directly or indirectly, contribute towards reducing inequality and supporting the wider prosperity and wellbeing of the city’s residents.

One option being explored is the Community Shop model that currently operates successfully in Barnsley and Lambeth. The community Shop model operates on a membership basis and provides access to low cost food to its members as part of a wider personal development plan for people who are experiencing tough times, but motivated to do better.

The Community Shop is not about crisis support so is different to food banks and food charities, nor is it purely for shopping on a tight budget.

The remit is to help people on the edge of food poverty, who are working or wish to work hard to improve their lives.

This aligns with the focus of the reducing inequality plan and the council is currently looking at what would be the best model for Norwich and how that can best be achieved.”

**Jen Parkhouse asked the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:**

“If the Council were to consider making a financial contribution to the County Council's long running and major road building project namely the Northern Distributor Road, would a full consultation be undertaken so that against a backdrop of austerity and cuts, the people of Norwich would be given an opportunity to express their views, regardless of from which budget or funding source the monies emanated?”

**Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development responded:**

“Thank you for the question which I assume was sent in before the papers for this meeting were published and it becoming clear that the Council is considering entering into a borrowing agreement to allow a proportion of future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) revenues to be committed used to repay some of the capital cost of delivering the Northern Distributor Road.

Other than via the borrowing agreement to be discussed later let me be absolutely clear that the City Council is not considering making any sort of contribution to the costs of the NDR. The agreement proposed will have no impact on the revenue budget of the City Council whatsoever or its ability to deliver services to the people of Norwich.

It should be recognised that the City Council’s support for the NDR as part of the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy is long standing. It was as long ago as 25 November 2008 that the Council resolved to support a motion which, among other things confirmed “its commitment to the Norwich Area Transport Strategy (NATS) and support for the Northern Distributor Road that is a key part of the NATS strategy. The NDR is an essential part of creating access to locations suitable for sustainable expansion and providing an opportunity to deal with many of the traffic problems faced by city residents.”

Since then the Council has formally adopted the Joint Core Strategy, entered into a City Deal, formed the Greater Norwich Growth Board, introduced CIL and agreed to pool a large of part of it in order to assist with delivery of the infrastructure required to deliver growth identified in the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP). Throughout this process it has been clear that the implementation of NATS including the NDR is fundamental to the delivery of our overarching growth strategy, which includes ambitious targets for housing (including many affordable homes) and jobs.

Throughout this period there have been many separate occasions for people to have their say on the strategy and the NDR.

More recently in July this year Council approved the latest annual business plan for Norwich concerning CIL expenditure from the pooled Infrastructure Investment Fund. The approved plan noted that approval had been granted by the Secretary of State and construction of the NDR was programmed to commence in 2015. It noted that although the NDR would have no call on the pooled fund in 2016-17 but there would be a requirement for future years. It also included agreement in principle to use pooled CIL funding in future years to ensure the delivery of NATS measures, including particularly the NDR.

The time for further consultation about whether to use CIL to fund the NDR has passed. The debate has now moved on to how this should happen. This is the debate we will be having later.”

Jen Parkhouse expressed concern that some people would judge the success of the NDR by the amount of commercial business that would be persuaded to infill between housing developments and existing villages and asked, as a

supplementary question, if the portfolio holder was concerned that consulting people on the NDR and therefore investing in the demise of the city centre would be like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas? Councillor Bremner said that the people of Norwich were very pleased with the success of the city in these harsh times. Compared to other similar cities Norwich had very few empty shops and high employment. The positive action the council had taken in respect of highways, including removing through traffic from the city, had contributed to the success. I therefore disagree with you completely and believe that the people of Norwich disagree with you.”

**James Davis asked the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:**

“The recent accident at the Junction of Fifers Ln, Holt Rd, and Cromer Road (9 Sep 2015) shows that an accident in this location can cost thousands of Work hours, while on the average day it can take over 30 mins to drive just 300m.

What rationale does the Council have for agreeing to the building of a roundabout connecting to an un-used section of the Norwich Airport rather than making improvements to the road access the Airport industrial estate and bus links to it?”

**Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development responded:**

“The junction of Fifers Lane, Holt Road and Cromer Road is not within the council’s administrative area. However the council is aware of congestion that occurs and the difficulties that arise should an incident occur. The junction is a key part of the road network providing access to both industrial and residential areas, including the airport industrial estate. The desirability of improving access to the industrial estate is appreciated and the council is keen to work with the county council to consider the feasibility of achieving this.

The roundabout referred to by Mr Davis connecting to the northern part of the airport is a proposed junction on the Northern Distributor Route (NDR) in Broadland, which as well as providing access also assists the alignment of the NDR around the boundary to the airport. Whilst the land it connects to, is not developed at present, planning consent has been obtained to develop it for air related development which such a roundabout would serve.

I acknowledge the benefits in improving access to the airport industrial estate. However there is therefore also good reason for the county council to provide the roundabout junction on the NDR as well.”

James Davis asked, as a supplementary question, what the cost of the roundabout would be and whether the portfolio holder agreed that it should be scrapped.

Councillor Bremner said that this was a matter for Norfolk County Council and he should refer his questions to it.

## **5. PETITION**

The Lord Mayor said that the council had received one petition from Peter Watson.

Peter Watson said that 2,224 people of all political persuasions had signed his petition which was a human response to a human tragedy. The petition asked Norwich City Council to –

“Offer to find homes for at least 50 refugee families in the city and protect the city’s fine reputation of providing a safe haven for those fleeing persecution.”

Councillor Waters, leader of the council, welcomed the petition. He said that the city had a proud tradition of supporting people fleeing from awful situations. He said that the council would be debating the motion on Syrian refugees later in the agenda and if that motion was passed he hoped that Peter Watson would be happy with the council’s continued commitment to help shelter and protect refugees in Norwich.

## **6. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2015.

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

The Lord Mayor said that 12 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members of which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of appendix 1 of the council’s constitution.

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|-------------------|--|
| <b>QUESTION 1</b> | Councillor Boswell to the leader of the council on devolution.   |
| <b>QUESTION 2</b> | Councillor Neale to the portfolio holder for environment and sustainable development on the pink pedalway.     |
| <b>QUESTION 3</b> | Councillor Haynes to the portfolio holder for environment and sustainable development on COP 21.               |
| <b>QUESTION 4</b> | Councillor Grahame to the leader of the council on Mayors for Peace.   |
| <b>QUESTION 5</b> | Councillor Carlo to the portfolio holder for resources and income generation on community infrastructure levy. |

- QUESTION 6** Councillor Price to the portfolio holder for environment and sustainable development on the Generation Park proposal.
- QUESTION 7** Councillor Brociek-Coulton to the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development on the General Park proposal.
- QUESTION 8** Councillor Sands(M) to the portfolio holder for fairness and equality on the government's emergency budget.
- QUESTION 9** Councillor Bremner to the portfolio holder for fairness and equality on the switch and save scheme.
- QUESTION 10** Councillor Button to the portfolio holder for housing and wellbeing on right to buy.
- QUESTION 11** Councillor Ryan to the portfolio holder for fairness and equality on the living wage.
- QUESTION 12** Councillor Maxwell to the portfolio holder for housing and wellbeing on the handy van scheme.

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

## **8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT FULL YEAR REVIEW 2014-15**

Councillor Stonard moved and Councillor Maxwell seconded the recommendations contained in the annexed report.

**RESOLVED** to note the treasury activity for the year to 31 March 2015.

## **9. BORROWING AUTHORISATION AGREEMENT TO USE FUTURE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY REVENUES TO SUPPORT DELIVERY OF STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE INCLUDING THE NORWICH NORTHERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD**

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Bremner seconded the recommendations contained in the annexed report.

**RESOLVED**, with 21 voting in favour, 10 against and one abstention, to make the necessary provision for repayment of borrowing associated with the delivery of the Norwich Northern Distributor Road project, using community infrastructure levy revenues, as detailed in the report.

## **10. MOTION – SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

Councillor Waters moved and Councillors Howard and Wright jointly seconded, the motion as set out in the agenda.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to –

- (1) reaffirm the council's long held commitment to help shelter and protect refugees in Norwich;
- (2) communicate a message of thanks to those Norwich residents who have responded to the crisis by offering and giving help and support to refugees;
- (3) support citizen initiatives to help all refugees resettlement and integration in local communities;
- (4) ask cabinet to continue to –
  - (a) work closely with the county council as the 'lead agency' and with other public, voluntary and private sector bodies;
  - (b) participate in schemes to house refugees and work with the UK Border Agency to support people of all nationalities granted refugee in Norwich;
- (5) call on the government – in recognition of the need for long term assistance – to fund support from national resources (without use of the international aid budget) for at least five years with a review after that time;
- (6) call on both Norwich MPs and the MEPs for the eastern region to support the suggested funding proposal;
- (7) ask group leaders to write to the Prime Minister asking him to recognise and respond positively to the refugee crisis in Europe.

## **11. MOTION – INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION**

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

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that –

'The electoral commission's findings in its report into the transition to individual electoral registration (IER) and in particular the finding that 1.9 million of the current entries on the electoral register are only being retained under the transitional arrangements from the previous household registration system, represents 4 percent of all registered entries. The electoral commission has previously estimated that the number of people not currently registered at their current address is around 7.5 million across the UK. The government chose to end the transitional arrangements and fully implement IER 12 months early. The electoral commission has warned that there is "a risk that a considerable number of eligible voters could be removed from the registers before the significant set of polls scheduled for May 2016 if the transition to IER is brought forward".



Council, **RESOLVES** to :-

- (1) continue to take every possible step to ensure that as many local residents as possible are registered to vote;
- (2) write to the government to –
  - (a) express concerns that proposals for the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER) remain poorly thought out and implemented, running the risk that voters could be disenfranchised as part of this process;
  - (b) ask that the end of the transitional IER arrangements remain at December 2016 as originally stated in law and not be brought forward to December 2015.'

## **12. MOTION – AIR POLLUTION**

Councillor Carlo moved and Councillor Boswell seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Bremner moved, and Councillor Harris seconded the following amendment –

“To amend resolution c) by :-

replacing “ .....Euro 6 standard/ultra low .....” with “.....Euro 5 emissions compliance.....”.

and replacing “ .....5 years.....” with “ ....3 years....”.

inserting after “ ....3 years....” – “...; use best practical means to achieve as close as possible Euro 6 compliance.....”.

so that the revised resolution C (becomes :-

c) work with transport partners and bus operators to achieve Euro 5 emissions compliance for all buses within the next 3 years; use best practical means to achieve as close as possible Euro 6 compliance and to amend the Norwich Air Quality Action Plan accordingly”.

With 21 voting in favour, 10 against and no abstentions the amendment was carried and became part of the substantive motion.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that –

“Air pollution from road traffic is a serious public health issue. Public Health England estimate that in Norwich in 2010 5.5% of all deaths of people over 25 were associated with fine particulates from diesel vehicles. There may be

additional local deaths attributable to nitrogen dioxide which have not been quantified.

In April, the Supreme Court ordered the government to produce a plan for cutting unlawful levels of air pollution. DEFRA has published consultation plans for tackling nitrogen dioxide, but responsibility for action largely falls on local authorities.

The draft Norwich Air Quality Action Plan (August 2015) covers the air quality management area in the city centre. The proposals need to go further, but action is also required to improve air quality across Greater Norwich.

Council therefore **RESOLVES** to ask cabinet to:-

- a) respond to the government's consultation and request stronger national action and also additional resources for local authorities for achieving healthy air quality;
- b) work with transport and health providers to develop strategies and programmes for delivery with the aim of achieving healthy air quality in Greater Norwich;
- c) work with transport partners and bus operators to achieve Euro 5 emissions compliance for all buses within the next 3 years; use best practical means to achieve as close as possible Euro 6 compliance and to amend the Norwich Air Quality Action Plan accordingly."

### 13. TWINNING

Councillor Lubbock moved and Councillor Ackroyd seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously,:-

"Norwich has strong twinning links with Koblenz, Rouen, Novi Sad and El Viejo showing it to be an outward looking city which seeks to find friendship and understanding with other nations.

This council support for its twinning links has included a grant to the twinning committee (currently £2,060 per annum); officer support though the twinning officer and use of the civic budget, the latter of which has been greatly reduced in recent years.

Council **RESOLVES**, in order to continue to honour these important twinning links at a civic level and to support the work of the twinning associations, to give consideration to increasing the amount given in grant to the twinning committee when the 2016 – 17 budgets are decided in February, 2016."

LORD MAYOR

## Question 1

### **Councillor Boswell asked the leader of the council:**

“Will the Leader provide a statement on the latest situation with respect to the Devolution Deal being discussed across the Norfolk and Suffolk area and how it will affect the existing political structures in the Greater Norwich area.”

### **Councillor Waters, leader of the council’s response:**

“As Councillor Boswell knows, I, as leader of the city council, along with all of the other Norfolk leaders submitted an expression of interest to the government on 4 September 2015. Since then there have been a number of discussions with the leaders of Suffolk councils. It is still very early days and we have not at the time of writing, had any feedback from the government about which of our proposals might find favour with the government and which are likely to be ruled out of play.

In the areas where a devolution deal has been accepted and depending upon the nature of the deal agreed, councils have come together on an equal basis to form a combined authority. The combined authority has powers and resources vested in it by the government and it in turn devolves powers and resources to sub entities which could for example be a joint committee of a smaller number of councils.

The nature of the governance which would eventually be proposed would need to be appropriate to the area of service involved. For example, if skills money was devolved to the combined authority, it would be appropriate and desirable to devolve that to an area like greater Norwich so that the skills approaches would be tailored to the needs of businesses and individuals in the Greater Norwich area.

As I suggested earlier, it is very early days and feedback is needed from the government before more work is done on the details of a deal which would include the appropriate governance arrangements. Council would of course have every opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the components of any proposed detailed bid.

An elected Mayor is unlikely to be acceptable to this or any of the other councils in Norfolk.”

**Councillor Boswell** said that the previous day at the Policy and resources committee at Norfolk County Council the leader of the county council had said that a criticism that could validly be made was that the process had been rushed and that there had been no opportunity for members to be consulted on any expression of interest in devolution. He asked, as a supplementary question, when members would get the opportunity to discuss this at a council meeting? **Councillor Waters** agreed that the timetable set by government had been extraordinarily fast. He was happy to circulate the framework of an agreement to be put to ministers. The process had opened up a conversation of things which might be possible and a number of strands of work were being developed to ascertain what “was in it for the council”. He emphasised that no commitment had been made.

## Question 2

### **Councillor Neale asked the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:**

“Could the cabinet member responsible for the Pink Pedalways project please explain why the funding assessment for the Avenues section was at least £200k short of what was required for this section?”

The original scheme, between Bluebell Road and Colman Road, had dedicated cycle lanes segregated from the full width road for motorised traffic with priority for cyclist at road junctions. The original scheme would have encouraged cyclist to use the route with speed and safety and bring us one small step closer to what is fairly standard western European cycling provision.

The scheme going forward is so diluted to a pale image of what was proposed it will be unlikely to meet the much heralded benefits envisaged.”

### **Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development’s response:**

“The Pink Pedalway is only part of a fantastic series of positive improvements to the City’s and Greater Norwich’s Highways. There were improvements before this but the Pink Pedalway was Norwich at its best, always trying to get Government and other money in, to help the economy, help cyclist, help pedestrians, and even help vehicles, by improving safety, and the environment.

The original submission to the Department for Transport funding anticipated that we would require £850k to improve safety at the Colman Road / The Avenues junction, improve the cycling facilities along The Avenues between Bluebell Road and Recreation Road and enhance the verges on The Avenues between Bluebell Road and Colman Road. The budget figure in the funding application was an estimate, and was made before there had been any design work or public consultation on the scheme. This is often the case when challenge funding opportunities arise with very little time to put together an application.

At the time the bid was put together officers anticipated that improvements for cyclists on the section of The Avenues between Bluebell Road and Colman Road could be achieved by introducing a road closure, which would have meant that there would be no need to provide dedicated facilities for cyclists as traffic would be dramatically reduced. However it was clear from the public consultation that a road closure was unacceptable to local people, especially there were long periods during the day, and during the year, when there was little traffic. Furthermore, by this time First had introduced a frequent bus service along The Avenues.

For these reasons an option that catered for traffic had to be adopted, hence the hybrid cycle lane was proposed. This was put forward in good faith, however, it was only when numerous trial holes were dug and the detailed construction plans were drawn up that the true scale of the mitigation works required to prevent tree root damage and the consequent damage to tree health was fully appreciated and that costs started to escalate to some £200,000 above budget.

Given this potential for affecting the trees, together with the escalating costs, it was decided that the tracks should be omitted. Furthermore, the proximity of the path to tree roots and difficulties in achieving a sufficient depth of construction would have resulted in the hybrid paths becoming an expensive maintenance liability due to damage caused by vehicle over-running and the tree roots.

Although we are all disappointed that it has not been possible to build the hybrid tracks I have to disagree that the scheme that is being implemented is a pale image of what was originally approved. The Colman Road junction – the worst site for cycle accidents in the city – has been made safer and more convenient for cyclists and pedestrians by providing a new pedestrian crossing, enlarged waiting boxes for cyclists and early start signals for cyclists. These signals are some of the first of their type in the country and we are considered as pioneers for introducing them.

The on carriageway cycle lanes on the main section of the Avenues are combined with raised tables and coloured markings at side routes. They give more visual priority for cyclists and pedestrians by slowing vehicles approaching The Avenues on the side roads. Previously a number of cyclists had been hit by cars emerging from George Borrow Road.

I am also delighted that after many years we have effective traffic calming on The Avenues with the introduction of the new sinusoidal speed humps, which are very effectively in slowing vehicles down.

Saying all that, I do acknowledge that we must learn lessons from The Avenues and the rest of Push the Pedalways; not least as the window available to spend such funds is so short given the level of expenditure involved. I am confident that as we move on to implementing the blue and yellow pedalways we shall be far more robust in ensuring that anything we consult on is affordable and deliverable so that we do not disappoint people by raising their expectations too high”.

**Councillor Neale** asked, as a supplementary question, that if officers had been advised that the work could be done at a reasonable cost, would there be a claim made against those who had issued such advice. **Councillor Bremner** said it was sad that one issue was being highlighted rather than highlighting the positive changes throughout the city from this fantastic scheme. He was saddened at the apparent lack of support for cycling across the city as a whole. Yes, problems had arisen in one part of the scheme. However, he said that we should all be positive about the good things about the scheme as a whole.

### Question 3

**Councillor Haynes asked the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:**

“At the full council meeting in June we received a public question on the issue of climate change and the upcoming international climate negotiations. We also unanimously passed a motion, which calls on the council to use its means of communication to create awareness for the COP21 (the climate negotiations in December). We are now at the end of September, the date of the climate negotiations is only two months away, the latest CITIZEN has gone out to households and so far, to my knowledge, there has been no mentioning of the

COP21, let alone any serious attempt to create awareness. Even the council homepage has not been updated. Could the cabinet member for the environment please clarify, why the agreed actions have not been taken?"

**Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:**

"Our small environmental team is delivering the agreed costed work programme as set out in the Environmental strategy. This includes:

- Cosy City;
- Big Switch;
- Solar Together;
- Winter Wellbeing;

and a number of other tasks over the next few months. Most are practical carbon reduction activities. The council will also run another One Planet Norwich Event on the 12/13 March 2016.

All of these are of major importance to the people of the City, and I hope you agree, and would not want to stop these activities and the work on practical carbon reduction in the Council.

Because of these priorities it has not been possible to consider other requests for resources"

In reply to supplementary questions and comments by **Councillor Haynes**, **Councillor Bremner** thanked **Councillor Haynes** for bringing forward the urgency and said he would investigate ways to increase awareness.

#### **Question 4**

**Councillor Grahame asked the leader of the council:**

"Now that both the national leaders (Jeremy Corbyn and Natalie Bennett) of the two largest party groups in this chamber are opposed to the renewal of Trident, and the City is at least nominally a member of the Mayors for Peace initiative, will the Council formally endorse the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision?"

**Councillor Waters, leader of the council's response:**

"As Councillor Grahame will know, our Lord Mayors, throughout their term in office, are politically neutral.

What I can assure you of is that my colleagues, as part of a national Labour party debate, and I will be making our individual contributions on this important issue."

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Grahame**, **Councillor Waters** said that it was for the conference committee of the Labour party to decide when the party held any debate on the future of Trident.

## Question 5

### **Councillor Carlo asked the leader of the council.**

“If Norwich City Council had £10 million from the Community Infrastructure Levy to spend on community infrastructure in the City of Norwich, on what projects and measures would it spend the money?”

### **Councillor Waters, leader of the council’s response:**

“Your question is rather curiously framed as a hypothetical proposition. The council is already spending significant amounts of CIL income. I welcome your question because it provides me with an opportunity to summarise the benefits, over the past decade, which have flowed from the work undertaken by the Greater Norwich Growth Board and how CIL monies are invested.

The Greater Norwich area has a well-established and ambitious partnership, nearly 10 years old with a strong track record of joint working including the development and implementation of the Community Infrastructure levy (CiL). It is only one of 2 areas across the country to have agreed to pool CiL receipts across authorities. Greater Norwich has been identified as a main focus for growth in the East of England and the Greater Norwich Growth Board was established to oversee the delivery of the Greater Norwich City Deal which was agreed in December 2013. The city deal aims to accelerate growth in the area and provide the following outcomes:-

- 3,000 high value jobs by 2020 at the Norwich Research Park.
- 13,000 additional jobs across the Greater Norwich area by 2013 on top of joint core strategy targets
- Step change in housing delivery to 3,000 per annum by 2019
- 3,000 additional homes by 2026 in the North East growth triangle
- £100m additional private sector investment in business growth and
- £2.3bn additional private sector investment in housing

This programme is supported by strategic infrastructure investment of £440m to unlock housing growth and deliver the targets of 37,000 homes and 27,000 jobs by 2026. Delivery of the programme is supported by pooled CIL fund. The NDR is one of the priority infrastructure schemes that the Greater Norwich Authorities have agreed in delivering the growth in jobs and housing that has been identified in the City Deal

The infrastructure required to deliver growth to 2026 in greater Norwich is set out in the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP). This includes a range of projects in the City including green infrastructure, education, community facilities, and transportation including bus rapid transit, cycling and walking.

The CIL regulations require that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income is spent on infrastructure as defined by the Town and Country Planning Acts. In Norwich there are agreed processes for determining how CIL funding is spent.

In February 2014, the council approved the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) agreement and constitution. It also agreed to pool its CIL income (not including the neighbourhood element or the proportion retained to cover its administrative costs) across greater Norwich in an Infrastructure Investment Fund (IIF).

The spending of the IIF is currently agreed through a two stage process:

- the city council and other districts in greater Norwich each produce an annual business plan setting out projects (derived from the GNIP) on which funding from the IIF is required for the following financial year. The city's business plan is approved by cabinet and council;
- the 3 business plans are combined into an annual growth programme for greater Norwich which is approved by GNGB and subsequently the council's cabinet and council.

The current priorities, which are recommended for approval in the 2016-7-growth programme in the city, include contributions towards:

- public realm improvements in Golden Ball Street/ Westlegate
- the Heathgate element of the pink pedalway
- the completion of the pedestrian/ cycle link to complete the linkage from the city centre to the Deal Ground
- the Colney river crossing

The spending of the neighbourhood element of CIL that is retained by the city council is agreed through a process of engagement with local communities that was approved by the council in March 2014 and revised in July 2015. The projects on which funding is to be spent are also approved by the council. In 2015-6 funding was earmarked for projects including traffic calming at Britannia Road, improvements to the natural area at George Fox Way and provision of new street trees."

## **Question 6**

### **Councillor Price asked the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:**

"With the complexity and huge impact the Generation Park biomass burner will have on the future of the city, will the cabinet member support a call to the SoS for the planning application to be called in for a public enquiry to ensure that the right decision is made?"

## **Question 7**

### **Councillor Brociek-Coulton asked the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:**

"With regards to Generation Park, it was recently suggested by Green Party councillors that the city council "do not have the necessary expertise to decide on a



project of this complexity” and would prefer to defer such a decision to a planning inspector. Can the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development give his views on the importance of this local authority, through democratically elected members, deciding upon development and growth within Norwich?”

**Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development’s response to both questions 6 and 7:**

“As both questions from Councillors Price and Brociek-Coulton relate to the Generation Park proposals I will provide a single answer. However, before I do so I should stress that as there is a planning application currently being considered by both this authority and the Broads Authority, it is important the Council retains an open mind on the application at this stage and nothing I will say can indicate whether the application is likely to be approved or refused.

With regard to who should determine the application, it is a choice between the members of Norwich’s and the BA’s planning committees or the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Although the application is very significant in scale it is below the thresholds for national significance which would require its determination by the Secretary of State. As such it falls for the local planning authorities to determine unless the Secretary of State calls it in.

This is what local democracy is all about. Just because it is a large and complex application doesn’t mean this responsibility should be shirked.

It is preferable that planning decisions affecting the people of Norwich are made by those who are democratically accountable to the people of Norwich. This will tend to maximise the weight that is given to views of local people through the consultation processes.

The Secretary of State can always “call-in” the application for determination. This is a judgement for him if he thinks the issues are of national importance. However, if the application is called in it will be determined via a public inquiry process rather than the relevant committees.

There are a number of key differences between Public Inquiry procedures and those associated with planning committees. It is far more difficult for the public to appear before public inquiries as they need to prepare proofs of evidence and subject themselves to cross examination. Because of this factor I am not convinced that the public inquiry process is any better than the standard planning process in terms of taking into account the views of local people. I think we should be making it as easy as possible for local people to have their say on the matters that affect them.

Finally, on the issue of expertise in order to deal with the issues, it is important to realise what the planning process is there to do. It is there to determine whether the proposed use is appropriate in the light of the development plan and other material planning considerations. Although material planning considerations can be broad ranging it is not the role of planning to set the precise levels of emissions that will be acceptable from facilities (it will require a permit from the Environment Agency before operation), set national energy policy or determine the merits of one technology over

another. When it comes to expertise, extensive and detailed supporting material is required to be prepared to support the application, and this is subject to extensive consultation and checking. Where we do not possess the necessary expertise in-house to assess the material submitted we can and will commission expert advice to assist officers in dealing with the application.”

**Councillor Price** said that the size of the proposed new power station meant the planning application was just under the threshold for a secretary of state call-in which would allow the public a greater opportunity to contribute to the proposal. He asked, as a supplementary question, if any expert advice provided to officers would be made available to councillors. **Councillor Bremner** said he would investigate and report back to **Councillor Price**.

## Question 8

**Councillor Sands (M) to asked the cabinet member for fairness and equality:**

“Since the emergency budget in July, can the cabinet member for fairness and equality comment on its likely anticipated effects upon residents in Norwich?”

**Councillor Thomas (Va), cabinet member for fairness and equality’s response:**

“Since the emergency budget on 9 July, there has been increasing commentary on the overall impacts of the proposed changes to the welfare system.

The changes are many and varied and will impact on some of the poorest people in the country. The following is a summary of some of the main changes where residents will have money withdrawn that is currently paid to them. However, there are many others that will have an impact over time where for example new claimants will see a reduction in benefits or tax credits.

There will be a freeze on most working-age benefits, including tax credits and the Local Housing Allowance for 4 years from 2016-17.

From April 2016, the level of earnings at which a household’s tax credits and Universal Credit award starts to be withdrawn will be reduced from £6,420 to £3,850.

Support provided to families through tax credits will be limited to 2 children - any children born after April 2017 will not be eligible for further support

From April 2017, automatic entitlement to housing support for new claims in Universal Credit from 18-21 year olds who are out of work will be removed (exemptions will include vulnerable young people, those who may not be able to return home to live with their parents, and those who have been in work for 6 months prior to making a claim).

The cap on the total amount of benefits an out of work family can receive will be lowered from £26,000 to £20,000 outside of London.

Social housing tenants with household incomes of £30,000 and above outside of London will be required to “Pay to Stay”, by paying a market or near market rent for their accommodation.

A new *National Living Wage* (NLW) will be introduced for workers aged 25 and above, by introducing a new premium on top of the national minimum wage.

From April 2016, the new NLW will be set at £7.20 (a rise of 70p relative to the current NMW rate), and 50p above the NMW increase coming into effect in October 2015.

In this context of the council’s approach to reduce the significant social financial and economic inequalities in the city, the impacts of the emergency budget are therefore best understood from how much money is being taken from some of the poorest people’s pockets in Norwich.

Whilst the main headline was the announcement of a “national living wage” it is more accurately an increase in the national minimum wage and this will be by far offset from the significant changes to tax credits.

The changes that will vary from household to household and at this stage it is not totally clear what the full impacts will be. The complexity comes for those households whose income comes from a mixture of earnings and tax credits.

However, the following is some examples of families who will lose money from the changes:

### **Numbers affected**

- **11,000 families** were claiming tax credits in 2013-14 in Norwich, of which **7,400 were in work**.
- Approximately the third lowest-paid part-time resident workers (estimated to be 6,000 people) and lowest paid 10-20% of full time workers (estimated to be 3,500-7000 people) in Norwich earn less than £7.20/hour. It is not possible to say how many of those are over 25 and therefore will benefit from increase in National Minimum Wage (NMW).
- Approximately 100 households who are affected by the current benefit cap may be further affected by the new cap. An additional 500-700 households may come into scope for the new benefit cap, depending on their exact circumstances.
- Freezing of working-age benefits will affect all working age benefit claimants, which stood at **10,000 in May 2015**, as well as approximately **15,000 families claiming Child Benefit** (some of whom will be amongst the 10,000 working-age benefit claimants).
- The freeze of applicable amounts for HB and LHA for 4 years will impact on some of the around 18,000 claimants of those benefits in Norwich. Exact numbers are difficult to model. The estimated 2,700 tenants in private rented accommodation are more likely to be affected.

- The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimate that working-age benefits freeze means an average loss for families who are affected of £260 per year (or £280 per year for those in work).
- Those who are working and claiming tax credits will lose an average of just over £1,000 per year due to changes to work allowances (which equates to £7.4m in Norwich).
- Increase in national minimum wage will not compensate for tax credit changes (for example someone over 25 on current minimum wage could be a partner of someone earning a large salary and still benefit from increase in NMW) – again check as some childless households on low incomes may benefit.
- Anyone already affected by the benefit cap will potentially lose a further £6,000 per year (at least up to the level of their HB), and those newly affected will lose varying amounts.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has indicated in its annual report published in July 2015, that nearly two-thirds of British children in poverty live in working families, which challenges the view that work is an automatic route out of poverty.

The IFS also indicates that:

- child poverty and inequality are set to rise as a consequence of the planned tax and benefit cuts
- recent declines in income inequality will be reversed,
- current static child poverty rates will begin to increase

The IFS research also states that:

- the planned rise in the minimum wage will be counter-balanced by cuts to benefits and tax credits, pushing up absolute poverty figures
- the top 1% of earners increased their share of household income from 5.7% in 1990 to 8.4% in 2007-08 and 8.3% in 2013-14
- Disabled people, lone parents and social housing renters all appeared to be hit by rising material deprivation, meaning that they were more likely than others to struggle with the cost of basic goods and services.

The changes from the already implemented welfare reform changes have taken considerable money out of the Norwich economy. By summer 2013 it is estimated that this figure was £11,000,000. Whilst it is too early to indicate what the impacts will be from the emergency budget, it is clear that more money will be lost from the economy.

In summary, the increasing levels of employment have masked increasing problems of in-work poverty something that has been a recurring issue in Norwich. Whilst the planned increase in the minimum wage will help, many low-income working families will still find themselves worse off due to tax-credit changes.”

## Question 9

### **Councillor Bremner asked the cabinet member for fairness and equality:**

“Householders and businesses are once again getting the chance to save money on their energy bills this winter with the city council’s sixth tranche of Norwich Big Switch and Save. Can the cabinet member for fairness and equality comment on the impact and achievements Switch and Save has made since being first introduced?”

### **Councillor Thomas (Va), cabinet member for fairness and equality’s response:**

“Thank you for your timely question. With winter approaching our citizens will be thinking about energy bills and considering their affordability. Thankfully we are helping our citizens reduce their fuel bills via the switch and save.

We are currently running the sixth round of our successful collective energy switching scheme. Through the power of collective purchasing we work to secure the lowest energy prices for our registrants, therefore helping to reduce the cost of energy and offset rising energy prices. The previous round of Big Switch and Save has delivered average savings of £221 a year per household. This was a better saving than those available on online comparison websites.

In the last five tranches overall 9879 people registered for the Switch and Save. Norwich has repeatedly had the highest national conversion rates, with 1250 switchers in total. Overall the average saving per household is £180. This means Norwich residents have saved a total of £225,036.

If all residents took up the offered savings a total of at least £1,778,220 would be saved on energy bills by Norwich residents.

Norwich City Council has engaged with fuel poor households to ensure that they are aware of the Switch and Save. In tranche three we asked the residents questions to identify whether they belonged to an affordable warmth group. The results showed that two thirds of registrants belonged to one of these groups.

In addition to this, the small fee we receive from the Switch and Save goes back into affordable warmth work. This has been invaluable for vulnerable residents, as it has provided urgent heating need for them in the winter.”

## Question 10

### **Councillor Button asked the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:**

“Figures announced by Department for Communities and Local Government show that more than 400 Norwich City Council homes have been sold under the Right to Buy scheme since 2012-13, with few new properties being built to replace them. Can the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing give her comments on the impact of

such losses and the failure of the previous Coalition government, and the current one, to support social housing in the city?"

**Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:**

"To understand the issue there is a great deal of background information which is useful.

From 2012 councils were given the opportunity to use Right to buy (RTB) receipts to help finance replacement homes provided they were spent within three years of receipt. RTB receipts can only be used to fund up to 30% of expenditure on new dwellings, but not in conjunction with other receipts or grants totalling above 30% of expenditure. The remaining 70% was expected to be funded through borrowing within the Housing Revenue Account.

With local authority rents on average around 40% less than market rents, this implies that, provided the average discount to Right to Buy purchasers does not exceed roughly 40%, a council's Housing Revenue Account should not be adversely affected by the sale of dwellings.

If discounts are above this amount, however, receipts will be insufficient to fully compensate for the future loss of rent income from the sold dwellings, leaving the remaining tenants to bear an increasing share of costs.

Many councils have reported difficulties in achieving one-for-one replacement of homes sold under the reinvigorated Right to Buy. The reasons are clear:

- There will always be a lag between selling properties, pooling receipts and then designing and implementing replacement homes, the restriction of spending receipts within 3 years can therefore prove a challenge for councils;
- With the average discount on recent Right to Buy sales exceeding 50%, the net receipt is usually insufficient, once administration costs and the outstanding debt on the property have been paid, to meet 30% of the costs of a replacement home, particularly in areas where the market value of council dwellings is less than the cost of building new ones;
- Even where councils can fund 30% of the cost of a replacement, they may have difficulties borrowing the remaining 70% within the debt caps imposed as part of the self-financing settlement.

RTB receipts not utilised within three years have to be repaid to Government with interest. In order to retain any receipts within Norwich, the October meeting of cabinet will be considering a report to allow the council to grant fund local Registered Providers in addition to supporting our own new build programme.

Whilst the delivery of 17 replacement homes has been modest to date the Council will take handover of an additional 14 social rented dwellings in 2016 at the Brazen Gate site. It has recently secured planning permission, and will move shortly to delivery over the next few years, for the following schemes as well:

- 172 new homes on Three Score of which 48 will be for social rent;

- 10 social rented flats on Hansard Close; and
- 2 social rented family houses at Riley Close.

In addition there is an application awaiting consideration by planning committee in October for 105 dwellings at Goldsmith Street which, if approved, would move swiftly to delivery. The council secured an uplift in our HRA borrowing cap of £6.8m through the government's Local Growth Fund to support delivery of this site, although this means we are unable to use RTB replacement receipts on this element.

Following the emergency budget the government's priorities for social housing are to reduce the budget deficit and to encourage home ownership. To this end four policy 'reforms' are planned in the next couple of years which will further have an impact on the council's ability to provide replacement homes:

**1% rent reduction** for all social tenants from 2016/17 for four years, despite only agreeing a ten year settlement of rent increasing of the Consumer Prices Index plus 1% in 2015/16. The effect of this is a significant cut in income to the thirty year Housing Revenue Account business plan which will have repercussions for the maintenance and improvement of tenant's homes as well as the council's new build ambitions.

**Pay to stay.** It is proposed that all council tenant households earning over £30,000 per year will have to pay an affordable rent as opposed to a social housing rent. Nationally on average this will be an additional £35 to £40 per week with the additional rent pooled by central Government.

**Sale of high value voids.** The government is proposing that all local authorities with housing stock should support the cost of extending the right to buy to housing association tenants by selling high value voids. The detail is still being worked through but the final legislation will undoubtedly result in stock and income loss for all authorities as well as reduced capital for our own new build programme.

**Fixed term tenancies.** Proposals are expected in the housing bill due in autumn to end lifetime secure tenancies for all **new** tenants. Tenants will be offered a fixed term tenancy, possibly 5 years, at the end of which a review will be carried by the council to assess the need for the accommodation tenants currently occupy. It is thought the review will cover current income / behaviour and suitability of the property for the household (i.e. is it under/over occupied.)

The Conservatives claim that they have a good record on building affordable housing, but I have to disagree. Nationally it is said that social homebuilding is at its lowest for over two decades and they have failed to replace homes one for one through the Right to Buy, only replacing one for every nine sold.

The Conservatives said they would "get Britain building". However, David Cameron has led the government that built the fewest homes in peacetime history since the 1920s when David Lloyd George was Prime Minister.

This is quite simply not acceptable."

## Question 11

### **Councillor Ryan asked the cabinet member for fairness and equality:**

“Norwich Living Wage week will shortly begin once again. Can the Cabinet Member for Fairness and Equality comment on the support and assistance provided by the council to the successful Norwich Living Wage Group and the opportunities for members of the public and other organisations to become involved in the activities being organised?”

### **Councillor Thomas (Va), cabinet member for fairness and equality’s response:**

“The Living Wage is a wage that pays enough for workers to have the opportunities and choices necessary to properly participate in society. It is higher than the national minimum wage. The current UK Living Wage is £7.85 per hour (outside of London) whereas the national minimum wage for those over 21 is £6.50. The Living Wage rate for 2015 will be announced on Monday 2 November.

Receiving the Living Wage does not mean living a life of luxury. It means earning enough to make sure people can feed their children the recommended five-a-day of fresh fruit and vegetables. It means being able to afford to pay for a TV licence and other bills. And it means earning enough to be able to put aside a little money for a rainy day.

Living Wage Norwich was formed in 2014 to campaign to help make Norwich a city where everyone in work receives a Living Wage and to promote the benefits of a living wage. The group draws its supporters from all sectors including employers, trade unions and churches.

Last year the city council organised and led a successful programme of events around the city for living wage Week. This involved close co-operation with Norwich Living wage group, employers and trade unions.

In order to support its work the city council provided a community grant to help the group establish and cover its costs.

A similar programme of events will be held in Living Wage week in November, and discussions are progressing with Living Wage Norwich and other organisations to develop a programme of events that will highlight the value and benefits of a living wage.”

## Question 12

### **Councillor Maxwell asked the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:**

“Can the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing update council on the successes and achievements delivered by the HandyVan scheme, launched in January?”



**Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:**

“Late last year the city council secured funding through Norfolk County Council’s strong and wellbeing fund to deliver a handyperson service for the over 65s. The scheme is designed to deliver small repairs and ‘odd jobs’ around the home for older or vulnerable people who may find it difficult to carry out these jobs for themselves. Cotman Housing Association was selected through a tender process to deliver the handyperson service and the service started in January of this year.

Since the service started the Handyvan has completed 222 jobs at people’s homes, 179 of which were grant funded for people in receipt of council tax reduction. 43 jobs were for people paying for the service generating £852 worth of income which is recycled back into the scheme.

On average people can expect the Handyvan to be at their homes in less than 2 weeks of initial contact. Works are categorized and prioritised with things that most affect someone’s living conditions or safety being dealt with the quickest.

Seventy satisfaction questionnaires have been returned to date and the feedback has been exceptionally positive:

- All respondents have said that the works were carried out to a good standard;
- 85% of respondents found the service to be “excellent” and 11% found the service to be “good”;
- 97% of users would use the service again and also 97% would recommend the service; and
- The vast majority of respondents feel happier, more secure and can move around more easily in their homes. They have stated they can now manage their day to day tasks and also they now know where to go if they need help.”