



Council

19:35 to 23:05

14 March 2023

Present: Councillors Maguire (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Bogelein, Brociek-Coulton, Carlo, Catt, Davis, Driver, Fulton-McAlister (E), Fulton-McAlister (M), Galvin, Giles, Grahame, Hampton, Harris, Haynes, Huntley, Jones, Kendrick, Kidman, Lubbock, Oliver, Osborn, Padda, Peek, Price, Sands (M), Sands (S), Stonard, Stutely, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi), Waters, Wright and Young

Apologies: Councillors Button, Champion, Everett and Schmierer.

1. Lord Mayor's Announcements

The Lord Mayor announced that he had attended the University of Sanctuary event at the UEA, and a fundraiser at the Traffic Club, which was one of only two such clubs in the world.

He thanked those that had attended the civic charity fundraising event the previous week.

The Lord Mayor invited group spokespersons to thank the outgoing Chief Executive, Stephen Evans, for his contributions to the work of the council.

2. Retiring members

The Lord Mayor said that he understood that Councillors Bogelein, Button, Carlo, Grahame, Harris, Erin Fulton-McAlister and Waters had indicated that they would be standing down from the council after the May elections. He invited group spokespersons to acknowledging the contributions of the outgoing councillors after which he presented the outgoing councillors present at the meeting with a badge in recognition of their service to the city council.

3. Declarations of interests

Councillors Stonard and Stutely declared a conflict of interest in item xx below as Directors of NRL and would leave the room for the debate and vote on that item.

Councillor Stonard declared a pecuniary interest in motion xx – Walk in Centre – as a director of One Norwich Practices and would leave the room for the debate and vote on that item.

4. Public questions/petitions

The Lord Mayor announced that one public question and one petition had been received.

Public question

Mr Michael Howard asked the leader of the council the following question:

“Like many people sitting in this room my family and I have benefitted significantly from the services and support offered by the Walk in Centre based on Rouen Road. This service offers an easy, simple opportunity for people to access primary care without an often-lengthy wait for a doctor’s appointment and is particularly important for some marginalised groups within the city.

I was therefore horrified to learn that the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board has begun a consultation on proposals for general medical services provision in Norwich when the current contract for the Walk-in Centre, the GP practice on Rouen Road and the Vulnerable Adults Service expires on 31 March 2024.

This could result in its closure. Will the leader comment on whether this City Council will support the campaign launched by local MP Clive Lewis to keep the existing walk-in centre?”

Councillor Waters, the leader of the council gave the following response:

“Thank you very much for your timely and urgent question, Mr Howard. Motion 13(h) in the name of Councillors Jones and Giles on tonight’s council agenda makes an overwhelming and compelling case for keeping the Norwich Walk-in Centre open. So, I can assure you the City Council is fully behind the campaign launched by Clive Lewis, MP for Norwich South - supported by Alice MacDonald the prospective Labour Party Parliamentary candidate for Norwich North.

The plain fact is that the closure of the Walk-in Centre wouldn’t be cost effective, would add to the existing extreme pressures on A & E and deny many patients timely treatment.

I’m pleased to say that the campaign to save the Walk in Centre and the Vulnerable Adults Service is building strong momentum and if sustained, I believe, can save these vital facilities.”

By way of Mr Howard’s supplementary question relating to wider issues in the NHS, Councillor Waters expressed his concerns that the government had its own plans to undermine the NHS as a great public service and privatise it.

Mr Sean Gough presented the following petition:

“We, the under-signed, call on Norfolk County Council to give higher priority and more resources to replacing missing street trees and planting additional trees on highways land in Norwich, especially streets and grass verges. We also call on Norwich City Council to work closely with Norfolk County Council

to help develop a city-wide strategy for increasing tree planting. Greater levels of tree planting and replacement of lost street trees in Norwich are vital for a healthy future.”

Councillor Giles, cabinet member for community wellbeing gave the following response:

“The council has around 316,500 trees on our land in the city. Our trees have an asset value of approximately £184m, based on their economic, social, and environmental benefits, such as

- Carbon capture
- Filtration of airborne pollutants
- Flood alleviation
- Temperature reduction
- Increased Biodiversity

The council is finalising its draft Tree Strategy, which will ensure that we continue to maximise the value of trees in the city. Partnership working with the County Council will be essential to achieving the aims of the strategy, and we will continue to work with them to maximise the benefits that trees in the city can deliver.

We will apply through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Local Authorities Treescapes Fund to secure the necessary funding to achieve the aims of our strategy. This will sit alongside developer contributions in the form of Biodiversity Net Gain contributions, CIL and GIRAMS payments, as well as our fantastic HRA Estate Aesthetics Programme.

Our Environmental Strategy team have been working in conjunction with the Greenhouse Trust to get residents and community groups involved in 7000+, an ambitious project to plant 7000 trees in Norwich by 2030.”

5. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2023.

6. Questions to Cabinet Members

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

The Lord Mayor announced that 25 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members, for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of the council’s constitution.

The questions are summarised as follows:

- Question 1 Councillor Galvin to the leader of the council on the University of East Anglia.
- Question 2 Councillor Catt to the leader of the council on flying the Trans flag.
- Question 3 Councillor Schmierer to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on public green spaces in new developments.
- Question 4 Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion on notifying residents of repairs.
- Question 5 Councillor Grahame to the leader of the council on readiness for nuclear incident.
- Question 6 Councillor Carlo to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on tree canopy coverage.
- Question 7 Councillor Osborn to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on street light maintenance.
- Question 8 Councillor Price to the leader of the council on membership of company boards.
- Question 9 Councillor Young to the cabinet member for resources on the scrutiny committee work programme.
- Question 10 Councillor Bogelein to the cabinet member for resources on an internal audit of NCSL and NRL.
- Question 11 Councillor Fulton-McAlister (M) to the leader of the council on the Minimum Service Level Bill.
- Question 12 Councillor Peek to the cabinet member for environmental services on the Love Norwich campaign.
- Question 13 Councillor Thomas (Vi) to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on Wensum Park environmental improvements.
- Question 14 Councillor Kidman to the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion on fuel poverty action.
- Question 15 Councillor Everett to the cabinet member for resources on the council's procurement strategy.
- Question 16 Councillor Driver to the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods on the council's Community Safety Strategy.
- Question 17 Councillor Thomas (Va) to the cabinet member for environmental services on the Ketts Hill development.
- Question 18 Councillor Brociek-Coulton to the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods on alleyways.

Question 19 Councillor Huntley to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on a Compulsory Purchase Order for Lime Kiln Mews.

Question 20 Councillor Sands (M) to the cabinet member for resources on Voter ID.

Question 21 Councillor Fulton-McAlister (E) to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on the Retail Monitor.

Question 22 Councillor Sands (S) to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on Hay Hill.

Question 23 Councillor Padda to the deputy leader and the cabinet member for social housing on rough sleeping provision.

(A second question had been received from Councillor Catt (Question 24) and Councillor Carlo (Question 25) and included in the list of questions set out in Appendix A to these minutes. As the time taken by questions had exceeded thirty minutes, these second questions were not taken at the meeting.)

7. Nominations for Lord Mayor and Sheriff

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Harris seconded the nominations for Councillor James Wright as Lord Mayor for the upcoming civic year and Dr Jan Sheldon as Sheriff for the upcoming civic year.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to note the nominations for Lord Mayor and Sheriff for the upcoming civic year.

8. Appointment of Interim Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously that:

- 1) As of 1 April 2023, Louise Rawsthorne is appointed as Interim Chief Executive and Interim Head of Paid Service
- 2) With immediate effect, Louise Rawsthorne is appointed as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer
- 3) With immediate effect, the executive scheme of delegation is amended in line with the change in responsibilities as outlined in paragraph 6; and
- 4) Council notes the arrangements in place for the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, and that an extraordinary meeting of Council will be convened in due course to confirm the appointment.

9. Pay Policy Statement 2023-24

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Harris seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the Council's pay policy statement for 2023-24

10. Constitutional Amendments Terms of Reference for the Licensing and Regulatory Committees and Sub Committees

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously to

- 1) Establish the Regulatory Committee;
- 2) Agrees to the terms of reference for the Regulatory Committee, and to amend the terms of reference for the Licensing Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee and Regulatory Sub-Committee as attached at Appendices A-D of this report
- 3) That the Constitutional changes shall have effect from the date of 23 May 2023, being the Council's Annual General Meeting;
- 4) The principle that the membership of the Regulatory and Licensing Committees should be the same Councillors, and that the Chair and Vice-Chair of both Committees should be the same; and
- 5) Amend Council Procedure Rule paragraph 82 to state that "Amendments to motions set out in the council agenda shall only be considered if they have been delivered in writing to Democratic Services and the proposer of the motion by 5pm on the day before the meeting."

(As two hours had passed since the beginning of the meeting, the Lord Mayor asked if the remaining items could be taken as unopposed business. Councillor Hampton opposed motion 13(a) and Councillor Giles opposed motion 13(g) so these would be debated).

(Councillor Stonard moved and Councillor Jones seconded a motion without notice to withdraw motions 13 (e) - National Housing Crisis and 13(f) – Norwich Bus Fares. It was **RESOLVED** with a majority voting in favour to withdraw motions 13(e) and 13(f) from the meeting.)

11. Adjustment to the HRA capital programme

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

RESOLVED, to approve the following adjustments to the HRA capital programme:

- 1) An increase to the HRA capital programme of £3.916m in 2022/23, £3.282m in 2023/24 and £0.963m in 2024/25 to provide the necessary funding to acquire 24 dwellings;
- 2) An increase to the HRA capital programme of £0.090m in 2022/23 and £0.210m in 2023/24 to undertake major works to properties to provide accommodation for Ukrainian and Afghan refugees

12. Adjustment to the general fund capital budget – The Halls

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

RESOLVED, to increase the general fund capital programme by £1.848m (£0.450m in 2023/24 and £1.398m in 2024/25) to enable pressing major repair and upgrade works to The Halls.

13. Motions

Motion 13(b) - The Local Electricity Bill

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

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

Insert the words “**continue to**” at the start of resolution 2a)

Insert the words “**continue to work with partners to**” at the start of resolution 2c)

Replacing resolution 2d) with the following “**continue to work with partners, as opportunities arise, to ensure that Norwich has the skills and infrastructure needed to rapidly upscale the transition to a zero carbon economy, e.g. supporting and encouraging local retrofit skills to improve the energy efficiency of Norwich’s homes.**”

Replace the word “**announce**” with the word “**reaffirm**” in resolution 2e)

Replacing resolution 2f) with the following “**incorporate into the proposed Environmental Programme work to scope potential opportunities for development of local renewable energy in Norwich and how the council can engage with communities to encourage community ownership of energy; and**”

Replacing resolution 2g) with the following “**incorporate into the proposed Environmental Programme work to scope finance models for local solar**

and extend this to other forms of local renewable energy including hydropower.”

So that the revised motion became:-

“The Local Electricity Bill is a private members’ bill with cross-party support that was introduced unopposed in June 2020. If this Bill was passed in Parliament it would give the energy regulator, Ofgem, a duty to create a Right to Local Supply. This would enable local community energy groups to achieve their vision of supplying generated energy back to the local area, help us as a council to meet our carbon reduction aspirations for the city and also bring multiple benefits to the local community. It is supported by many stakeholders, local authorities, and town councils and currently has the backing of 317 MPs.

Council acknowledges the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;

1) Council notes:

- a) There needs to be a fundamental change in how we generate and consume energy in all aspects of our lives. Both electricity generation and distribution are undergoing rapid evolution, in both shape and scale.
- b) The distribution grid must now cope with power flows in both directions. In scale, electrification of heat and transport will require a quadrupling of electricity capacity. Local, community-based energy schemes can make a significant contribution to addressing both issues and encourage a sense of local empowerment to tackle climate change.
- c) Community schemes encourage local generation and storage to match local demand thus relieving pressure on the grid. Local schemes would be given new impetus and be able to contribute more renewable energy if local people could buy their electricity directly from local suppliers. But the disproportionate cost of meeting regulatory approvals makes it impossible to be a local energy supplier at a local scale and so, under the current system, this local energy gets sold back to the central grid.
- d) In June 2019, council unanimously passed a motion committing to “Ask the cabinet member for sustainable and safe city environment to present a report detailing how Norwich City Council might develop new models of finance to support the local solar industry whilst also helping residents and businesses to benefit from renewable energy via the use of power purchase agreements (PPAs) and innovative behind-the-meter services.” The report requested never came to cabinet or to any committees.

2) Council agrees to ask cabinet to:

- a) Continue to work with partners to encourage investment in the electricity grid to increase capacity and improve capacity for two-way flows
- b) investigate potential partnership with Community Energy Pathways to support the development of local community-owned renewable energy

- c) continue to work with partners to explore ways to increase options for energy efficiency and renewable energy retrofitting measures in conservation areas
- d) continue to work with partners, as opportunities arise, to ensure that Norwich has the skills and infrastructure needed to rapidly upscale the transition to a zero carbon economy, e.g. supporting and encouraging local retrofit skills to improve the energy efficiency of Norwich's homes.
- e) publicly reaffirm its support for the Local Electricity Bill (LEB)
- f) incorporate into the proposed Environmental Programme work to scope potential opportunities for development of local renewable energy in Norwich and how the council can engage with communities to encourage community ownership of energy; and
- g) incorporate into the proposed Environmental Programme work to scope finance models for local solar and extend this to other forms of local renewable energy including hydropower."

Motion 13(c) – Minimum Unit pricing

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

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

Replacing resolution 1) with the following: **"Write to the Secretary of State calling on them to consider the evidence from the widely regarded successful implementation of MUP in Scotland and Wales to inform its introduction in England and adequately fund substance misuse services at a level to properly address the factors that cause and sustain alcohol misuse, for all that require them."**

Replacing resolution 2) with the following **"Ask the licencing committee to consider ways in which off premises licenced shops could be discouraged from selling discounted alcohol, particularly high alcohol volume products, when the licencing policy is next updated."**

So that the revised motions became:-

"The number of alcohol-related deaths has hit an all-time high, rising by 30.2% in the East of England over the past five years. Experts have blamed the rise on the pandemic, claiming that people who were already drinking at higher levels before the pandemic were the most likely to have increased their alcohol consumption during this period.

In 2020/21 Norwich had the highest proportion of alcohol-related hospital admissions in the region.

Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) sets a minimum price, per UK unit, below which alcohol cannot be sold.

The Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) Scotland Act 2012 paved the way for the introduction of MUP. A minimum unit price of 50p per unit has been in place since 1 May 2018. Research has showed it has had a lasting impact in both Wales and Scotland, having reduced consumption in some of the heaviest drinking.

Council therefore calls on cabinet to:

- 1) Write to the Secretary of State calling on them to consider the evidence from the widely regarded successful implementation of MUP in Scotland and Wales to inform its introduction in England and adequately fund substance misuse services at a level to properly address the factors that cause and sustain alcohol misuse, for all that require them.
- 2) Ask the licencing committee to consider ways in which off premises licenced shops could be discouraged from selling discounted alcohol, particularly high alcohol volume products, when the licencing policy is next updated.
- 3) Continue to work with partners to support those who are struggling with alcohol dependency; and
- 4) Include reference to the impact that high levels of alcohol consumption can have on the public health profile of the city in the next corporate plan.”

Motion 13(d) – Energy for All Campaign

(This item was taken as unopposed business)

The failure of Conservative-led governments to invest in renewables, retrofit homes and regulate the energy market has caused the current energy and cost of living crises. At the same time, the climate crisis is the biggest existential threat to our society with urgent action needed. There are numerous synergies between tackling the cost of living, energy, and climate crises; these must be addressed simultaneously to achieve true social, economic, and environmental justice.

- 1) Council notes that:
 - a) Residents in Norwich and across the country are being hit hard by the cost of living crisis, with too many falling into fuel poverty.
 - b) The Government’s Energy Price Guarantee is socially unjust and fails to lay the path to an energy secure future.
 - c) Norwich City Council’s Sustainable Warmth Strategy sets out this council’s approach to supporting residents who are experiencing fuel poverty, in a just and sustainable manner. It states our aim of ultimately eradicating fuel poverty in Norwich within the timescale of the 2040 City Vision.
 - d) But national, systemic change is needed to guarantee energy security and the eradication of fuel poverty in the long term.

- e) The Energy Equity Commission Bill, and Fuel Poverty Action's corresponding Energy For All campaign, calls for the energy price cap system to be replaced with a free universal basic energy allowance, alongside a national retrofitting strategy. Everyone would receive a basic free amount of energy: enough to cover essentials like heating, eating, lighting and connectivity.
- f) If enacted, this policy would largely eradicate fuel poverty in Norwich and the UK.

2) Council **RESOLVES** to:

- a) Write to Fuel Poverty Action affirming our support for the Energy Equity Commission Bill and Energy For All campaign.
- b) Ask the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, copying in Norwich's two MPs, to alert them to this motion and request that they lend their support to the Energy Equity Commission Bill.
- c) Continue to support residents experiencing fuel poverty, deliver retrofit measures, promote clean energy and work towards a net zero city by delivery of our Environmental Strategy, Sustainable Warmth Strategy and other related policies.

(Councillors took a short break between 21:40 and 21:50 at which point the meeting reconvened. Councillors Fulton-McAlister (E) and Fulton-McAlister (M) left the meeting at this point).

Motion 13(a) - Contacting the Council

Councillor Bogelein proposed and Councillor Lubbock seconded the motion.

Councillor Hampton proposed and Councillor Waters seconded a motion without notice to adjourn the debate until the council's cabinet and scrutiny committee had considered a report on the topic.

With 21 members voting in favour and 11 against it was:

RESOLVED to adjourn the debate until a future meeting, following consideration of the topic at a scrutiny committee meeting and a cabinet meeting.

(Councillor Harris left the meeting at this point).

Motion 13(g) - Plant based food

Councillor Catt proposed and Councillor Osborn seconded the motion.

Councillor Oliver proposed the following amendment:

Adding the words “Continue to” to the beginning of resolution 1)

Replacing the word “ensuring” with the words “transitioning to ensure” in resolution 1)

Replacing the words “be plant-based” with the words “include appropriate plant-based food” in resolution 1)

Adding the word “appropriately” after the word “showcase” in resolution 2)

Adding the words “included and” before the word “available” in resolution 3)

Adding the words “and appropriately” after the words “where reasonably” in resolution 3)

Adding the words “and reasonable” after the words “when possible” in resolution 4)

Replacing the words “listed prominently on menus, above non plant-based options” with the word “available” in resolution 4)

Adding the words “while respecting individuals’ freedom and their right to choose what they eat” at the end of resolution 4)

Adding the word “to continue” before the words “to promote” in resolution 7)

Adding the words “and appropriate” before the words “community gardens” in resolution 7)

Adding the words “as part of the biodiversity strategy. Use the developing decontamination of land strategy” after the words “community gardens” in resolution 7)

Replacing the word “quickly” with the words “appropriately assessed and” in resolution 7)

Inserting the words “appropriately and respectfully” before the words “give people information” in resolution 8)

Adding the words “while respecting individuals’ right to choose” after the words “plant-based diet” in resolution 8)

Councillor Catt indicated that he was not willing to accept the amendment and it was debated in the usual way.

With 23 voting in favour and 19 against, the amendment was passed and became part of the substantive motion.

(As three hours had passed since the beginning of the meeting, the Lord Mayor took a vote on continuing with the meeting. Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to continue with the meeting).

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously:-

“It is increasingly recognised that meat and dairy production is a significant contributor to climate breakdown, with the livestock sector accounting for at least 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions, as well as being a major contributor to global deforestation. The catastrophic effects of climate breakdown mean climate and risk experts predict a world with systemic cascading risks related to food insecurity including food shortages, societal tensions, hunger and malnutrition, unrest and conflict (according to a Chatham house report from 2021), which furthermore predicts a 50% chance of synchronous crop failure in the decade of the 2040s. Producing a kilo of beef creates, on average, 12 times more CO₂ than a kilo of tofu or other soya based proteins. Meanwhile, producing a litre of dairy milk uses, on average, at least four times as much land as producing a litre of plant milk. Growing numbers of people are adopting plant-based diets, which do not include meat or dairy.

As well as a smaller carbon footprint, eating more plant-based foods also reduces the land footprint of our diets and would improve UK food security and self-sufficiency, thereby making our diets more local. As a country, we currently import much more food than we export. In 2021 we had a trade deficit for all dairy products of £1.04 billion and a trade deficit for just beef, pork and lamb of £1.7 billion. Only 55% of the world's crop calories feed people directly with 36% going to feed livestock; only a fraction of the calories in feed given to livestock make their way into the meat and milk that we consume which is a huge food waste issue on top of making our food production much more carbon intensive. While some people criticise people who follow a plant-based diet for eating imported soy, the vast majority of soy - 77% - goes to feeding livestock, which research has shown is an inefficient use of resources. East Anglia has predominantly arable farming and there are many local predominantly plant-based food businesses we could support.

Henry Dimbleby, in the Government-commissioned National Food Strategy concluded that a 30% reduction in meat consumption is necessary for future food security. The National Food Strategy also states that obesity alone accounts for 8% of annual health spend in the UK, or £18bn. Savings to the NHS will come from healthier, plant-based diets. Sustain estimates that meat over-consumption costs the NHS directly £1.2 billion, and is responsible for 45,000 deaths annually. Over 40% of Britons are trying to reduce their meat consumption and 14% already follow a flexitarian diet, but plant-based food options are not consistently available at all events or food venues. Other countries have taken a stance; for example, in Portugal it is a legal requirement for all public catering – including local authority facilities – to provide plant-based food options, and other local authorities such as Oxfordshire County Council and Cambridge City Council have decided to promote plant-based food via serving a fully plant-based menu at Council meetings and events, where cost-effective. Locally, the University of Cambridge Catering Service reduced food-related greenhouse gas emissions by a third via replacing beef and lamb with plant-based products.

In September 2021, Norwich City Council formally adopted the Glasgow Declaration on Food and Climate which committed the council to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with food. Norwich City Council can build on its achievements to date and lead by example to promote and normalise consumption of plant-based

food, recognising that plant-based meals are frequently nutritious and low-cost food options. This is in line with its vision for Norwich City to be net-zero carbon by 2045.

Council therefore **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Continue to follow the lead of other councils around the country in transitioning to ensure that food and drink provided at all meetings and events hosted by the city council, including those hosted by the Mayoralty, include appropriate plant-based food, and where possible, is provided by a local caterer paying the Real Living Wage and sourcing sustainable local ingredients.
- 2) After exploring a wide variety of catering options (including consideration of social enterprises), use Norwich City Council civic events to promote and showcase appropriately environmentally friendly plant-based food and drink options, alongside displayed information about the climate and health benefits and relative cost of different protein/food sources and informing people about how to achieve a balanced plant-based diet.
- 3) When events occur on City Council open spaces, and where catering is provided, ensure that environmentally friendly plant-based options are included and available (i.e., minimum from at least one caterer), secured through the use of terms and conditions of hire (where reasonably and appropriately possible).
- 4) Secure through a contract specification when re-tendering for suppliers that environmentally friendly, locally sourced plant-based food and drink options are to be available at providers on City Council open spaces (where reasonably possible). Similarly, when possible and reasonable, via future contract specification when re-tendering for suppliers for council-run cafes, kiosks or leisure centres, specify that vegetable/legume rich plant-based options are available, while respecting individuals' freedom and their right to choose what they eat.
- 5) Continue to use council communications channels to promote sustainable (and affordable) food and drink practices throughout the city, including details of the climate and health benefits of plant-based food and drinks and educating people on the best ways to achieve a balanced plant-based diet, while also appropriately highlighting the crisis of ever-increasing food poverty in this city and the support available to respond to it.
- 6) Write to Norfolk County Council requesting that they assess the carbon impact of meat and dairy industries on the county and ask what steps are being taken to reduce this in line with the target to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- 7) Work with community groups across the city to continue to promote the establishment of new and appropriate community gardens as part of the biodiversity strategy. Use the developing decontamination of land strategy, especially on sites that have been previously derelict or contaminated, so that these sites can be appropriately assessed and brought back into beneficial

use to meet the wider demands posed by the social, economic, and environmental crisis, including that of supporting the growth of cheap and accessible plant-based food and drinks for all our communities.

- 8) Continue to recognise Norwich as a city with businesses leading the way in the provision of plant-based foods and drinks. Continue to engage with Norwich BID and the Norwich Market Traders' Association to investigate the opportunities to promote the benefits of plant-based foods, appropriately and respectfully give people information about the best ways to achieve a balanced plant-based diet, while respecting individuals' right to choose, and improve the availability of plant-based options at Norwich businesses; and
- 9) Write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs supporting UK endorsement of the Plant Based Treaty and invite all Party Group Leaders to sign the letter.

The meeting was closed.

LORD MAYOR

Appendix A

Council

14 March 2023

Questions to cabinet members

Question 1

Councillor Galvin to ask the leader of the council the following question:

“Thank you for working with me to write to the UEA Vice Chancellor to convey the council's grave concerns at the university's financial situation; that loss of staff expertise and the removal of key subject areas would fundamentally undermine its role as a cultural hub and would create an additional barrier for the community to access knowledge and learning beyond school age; and that as more and more pupils go on to study at university while living at home, we are concerned about how people here will access higher education and a range of subjects. Job cuts would also have a profound effect on local businesses: fewer employees and fewer students would damage the local economy. What other steps do you think we can take as a council to push for alternatives to compulsory redundancies which would damage the university and the region?”

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

“Thank you, Councillor Galvin for your question. The letter signed by all group leaders at city hall was sent to Chair of the University Council, Dr Sally Howes, outlining the concerns which you have summarised in your question. The University is for the moment, without a Vice Chancellor. The letter was circulated to all members of UEA council and also sent to all unions represented on campus. I have had face to face meetings with the union branch secretary as well as direct discussions with Dr Howes.

There is a strong consensus that the university needs to find a way through the very difficult financial situation it currently faces, so it can continue to be a university of choice for students by providing a wide range of courses as well as continuing to play a vital role in the life of the city and of the region.

The city council has a very strong relationship with the UEA built on extensive partnership working. We have offered to the UEA leadership insights from our own experience of successfully tackling a decade or more of deep cuts in central government funding, to protect vital services to city residents. That offer has been warmly received.”

(Councillor Galvin confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.)

Question 2

Councillor Catt to ask the leader of the council the following question:

“After the tragic murder of Brianna Ghey, a vigil was held outside City Hall for people to pay their respects and stand in solidarity with the trans community

as her death was another tragic sign of their plight and the cruel culture war that is spreading through our country with many people forgetting about the huge impact this has had on one of the most vulnerable communities in the country to the point that many now feel very unsafe here. Having passed a motion last year supporting the transgender community and agreeing to fly the trans flag on certain days, would the council consider temporarily flying the trans flag in honour of Brianna Ghey and in solidarity with the wider trans community who are grieving, and supporting this with appropriate comms?”

Councillor Waters, the leader’s response:

“Norwich has a long history as a welcoming and inclusive city for all. The recent vigil after the tragic death of Brianna Ghey shows that the people of our city stand in solidarity with the trans community.

As a council we will continue to honour our firm and visible commitment to supporting our trans community here in Norwich. We will do this by using City Hall, a landmark building, to promote two important events in the calendar. The first will be on 31 March when we will fly the transgender Pride flag to show our support for International Day of Trans Visibility. The second will be on 20 November when we will fly the transgender flag to support the Trans Day of Remembrance – an annual global event honouring the memory of transgender people whose lives have been lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. This will give people the opportunity to remember not only Brianna Ghey, but all those who have been killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice.

I would add that we have flown the the LGBT Rainbow Flag throughout Pride every year. From this year’s Pride we will be flying the Progress Pride flag, to demonstrate our broad support for the entire LGBT community and have done so for over ten years.

Everyone is welcome in Norwich, and we will continue to work as a council, and with our partners, to ensure this is the case.”

(Councillor Catt, by way of a supplementary question, asked for confirmation that the answer was “No”. Councillor Waters confirmed that was correct and referred to the motion that recognised the importance of the trans community in the city. The steps of City Hall had long been considered the place for remembrance and to show solidarity on a range of issues. People had come together there in recognition and solidarity over the tragic loss of Brianna Ghey, a trans woman. He thanked Councillor Catt for all the work he had done in support.)

Question 3

Councillor Schmierer to ask cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:

“Despite a large increase in the number of people living in the city centre since 2001, no new green public open space has been created here since

Castle Green in the 1990s. As a result, there is increasing pressure on the small number of green public open spaces in the city centre, in particular on Chapelfield Park. The Greater Norwich Local Plan states that a minimum of 2 hectares of green infrastructure per 1,000 population will be provided for the informal recreational needs of residents as an alternative to visiting protected sites. Natural England's new standard for local authorities for accessible green space is at least 3 hectares per 1,000 population. Will the council ensure that developers of major city centre sites, notably Anglia Square, make a significant contribution to providing new publicly accessible green space in the city centre area?"

Councillor Stonard, the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth's response:

"Planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan that is in force at the time. Whilst the GNLP is moving towards adoption, it is not the development plan at the moment, so applications are determined in accordance with the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the 2014 Local Plan (LP), unless material planning considerations dictate otherwise. JCS1 and JCS11 are the relevant JCS policies; DM8 is the LP policy used by the council. These policies encourage the provision of both formal and informal open space but don't refer to a specific quantum of provision. When we consider applications for major development under the current policies, we work with partner organisations including Natural England to ensure that the provision is adequate in terms of both quality and quantity. How this applies to specific planning applications is a matter for Planning Applications Committee."

(There was no supplementary question, as Councillor Schmierer was not present at the meeting.)

Question 4

Councillor Haynes to ask the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion the following question:

"What system is in place for ensuring that residents are made aware of all work that will be taking place on their property and all visits from council officers or contractors? I am aware of numerous cases where residents are awaiting repairs or appointments with officers but receive no communication from the council telling them when this will be taking place. This has led to further delays where residents were not available. Sometimes, in the case of communal / external areas, contractors have entered a property without the consent of residents which can be a disrespectful and distressing experience for some who are already feeling let down by the council's inadequate systems for dealing with housing repairs."

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion's response:

“We have asked NCSL Operations director and Lead consultant to comment on this, as the majority of repairs sit with them, their comments are:

“NCSL carry out work by an appointments-based system, most of these appointments are made with the NCC contact centre with the resident at the first point of contact when the repair is being reported. If there are changes to appointments this is done by contact with the resident via telephone or email if available. For communal repairs appointments are made with any contact number that is available within the order. NCSL would never enter an individual occupied property without the residents’ permission, for communal areas our staff will carry out works are directed on the order on occasions there will be no contact number. All NCSL staff wear branded uniforms and vehicles and carry their ID cards.”

(As a supplementary question, Councillor Haynes asked for an indication on the number of repairs that could not be completed by contractors due to lack of access. Councillor Hampton said that she did not have an answer immediately to hand because these repairs covered an intersection of portfolios but would find out and notify her.)

Question 5

Councillor Grahame to ask the leader of the council the following question:

“The council has a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to assess risks of emergencies and plan accordingly. The council has not received guidance on the actions that the authority should take in the event of a nuclear accident or incident involving nuclear weapons, since the upgrading of weapons’ storage facilities at RAF Lakenheath was observed. Will the responsible cabinet member seek such guidance in the next two weeks and report back the findings on a cross-party basis as soon as possible to all councillors?”

Councillor Waters, the leader’s response:

“The Council works collaboratively with partners in the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) to ensure that the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act are met. The Government’s Resilience Adviser has stated that there is no increased threat level, and no updated guidance has been issued with regard to a nuclear incident. Nuclear sites and the UK civil nuclear sector are heavily regulated by laws and regulation. The preparation of emergency plans is a legislative requirement and there are defined emergency planning zones around civil nuclear sites, with information provided to the public who are within those zones. There is further information available in the public domain and I will get this sent to you. The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) requires the NRF to identify local risks that may impact the County. Partners within the NRF have access to the updated National Security Risk Assessment (NRSA), which supersedes the National Risk Register 2020. An updated public document is expected to be published this year. Risks are regularly reviewed, and work is ongoing to update the NRSA to assess the impacts for Norfolk. I am satisfied that sufficient work is going on to address this issue but should the situation materially change we will of course review the situation again with the NRF.”

(Councillor Grahame said that a number of nuclear blunders revealed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) over the years, including a plane carrying a nuclear weapon crashing in 2020 where the pilot was killed, and asked the Leader whether cabinet would press the MoD to inform the Norfolk Resilience Forum and the council's emergency planning officer if nuclear weapons return to Lakenheath. Councillor Waters said that he would make that request but considered that despite many safety features in place there were events where the planned carrying of nuclear weapons could go wrong. He considered that the only solution to avoid disastrous consequences was for there to be no nuclear weapons at all.)

Question 6

Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for community wellbeing the following question:

"Forest Research (FR) has assessed the baseline tree canopy coverage for English towns and cities. In 2016 Norwich was assessed as having 18.6% coverage (+ or – 1.74). In 2020, FR analysed Norwich's tree canopy coverage at electoral ward level. Nine wards have coverage lower than FR's recommended 20% minimum provision. Four wards are very low: Mancroft (10.7%), Sewell (11%), Catton Grove (12%), Nelson (13.5%). FR advises councils to set a minimum target of 20% canopy coverage within 10 to 20 years. For towns and cities with at least 20% cover, FR recommends at least a 5% target increase. It is essential to make tree planting a strategic priority for achieving net zero. Will the council set a 20% tree canopy coverage target by 2030, with a 15% target for the lowest wards, plus a 25% stretch target for Norwich by 2035, and make the city-wide targets a KPI in the Corporate Plan?"

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing's response:

"Tree Canopy survey work has also been undertaken by the Natural Norfolk Team at Norfolk County Council as part of both the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Biodiversity Development Plan.

Their approach uses a different methodology to Forest Research and is based on LIDAR surveys of vegetation over 3m in height across the city. LIDAR is a detection system which works on the principle of radar but uses light from a laser and is considered to be accurate. The survey results using this methodology suggest that tree canopy cover in Norwich is 25.1%.

As part of our ambitious Biodiversity Strategy, and specifically in the redrafting of the Tree Strategy, a survey methodology and a new ambitious target will be proposed for average canopy cover in Norwich to 2040. We recognise that the distribution of canopy cover is considerably less in some wards than others and so planting schemes will be proposed to improve canopy cover in wards which fall below the average. A tree canopy cover measure is included in the current reporting metrics for our Biodiversity Development Plan."

(In reply to Councillor Carlo's supplementary question, Councillor Giles said that the methodology used by the Natural Norfolk Team was set out in his response. He would speak to the arboricultural officer about whether the specific Forest Research methodology had been considered by our Arboricultural Team and would come back to her with a written response.)

Question 7

Councillor Osborn to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing the following question:

"Since October 2022, multiple residents and I have repeatedly reported faulty streetlights at Haslips Close. After nearly five months, the lights are still not fixed. I have now been informed that the council believed the contract for maintenance lay with RG Carter, when in fact it had reverted to the city council. I would expect that the council would have oversight of maintenance contracts and who is responsible for what. Please can the cabinet member provide details of how oversight is maintained?"

Councillor Harris, the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing's response:

"Thank you for bringing this to my attention. The adoption of highways, including streetlights, on this development was due to be completed through dedication, rather than requiring a section 38 agreement. This was because Highways was managed at the time by the city council but unfortunately, the county council has subsequently ended the arrangement and taken control back in house. It appears that the dedication wasn't completed prior to this change and therefore county have not taken these streetlights into their maintenance programme. Officers are now liaising with colleagues in county to take progress this adoption for future maintenance. In the meantime, officers have raised orders to ensure the lights are working and are liaising with the power provider to ensure correct responsibility for the streetlights is noted for now and in the future".

(Councillor Osborn commented that he did not consider that the response given answered his question and asked who had oversight of contract maintenance. Councillor Harris said that as a county councillor, Councillor Osborn would appreciate that street lighting had transferred to the county council with the Highways Agreement. There would be issues with any new development and she suggested that he had a conversation with the project manager. Some residents would have issues with Passivhaus because it was new technology and they needed to learn how to use the systems.)

Question 8

Councillor Price to ask the leader of the council the following question:

"Following the release of the LGA Corporate Challenge peer review feedback report, a number of key recommendations have been proposed. One key recommendation supports Green councillors' views that further consideration

of the governance arrangements of both NRL and NCSL is needed, to bring them in line with recommended best practice. This best practice suggests that members of this council should not sit on the company board, but that instead, supervision should be exercised through a shareholder panel. Does the cabinet member now share this view, and will they prioritise this recommendation as a part of the internal audit plan 23/24?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"The recent LGA Peer Review paints a very positive picture of the city council, particularly in relation to our governance, financial management and relationship with our partners. As discussed at cabinet last week, we will consider all the points set out in the peer review including recommendations in relation to governance."

(In reply to Councillor Price's question asking for his opinion on whether councillors should be on the boards of the wholly owned companies with best practice or not, Councillor Waters commented that having members on the boards provided an oversight. The cabinet would be considering the recommendations from the peer review, and it would no doubt be discussed at audit committee. He added that his own views on this were not dissimilar to Councillor Price's.)

Question 9

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

"The recent peer review report notes: 'There is a desire from some members for scrutiny to focus more on operational work areas. This view was also shared by officers who proactively want more scrutiny of their projects. Peers understand the scrutiny forward plan is developed through voting for subject and topic areas. Changing how the scrutiny forward plan is developed would need to be reviewed to influence a more joined up approach with officers.' Green councillors have long advocated focussing scrutiny on the council's operations, rather than wider issues that lie outside the council's control. Recent discussion of county lines produced no recommendations, whereas the outvoted topic of the new anti-social behaviour strategy would have yielded helpful insight. How will the peer's recommendation be taken forward, with scrutiny focussing on the delivery of services by the council, as it should with a strong leader model?"

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources' response:

"The recent LGA Peer Review paints a very positive picture of the city council, particularly in relation to our governance, financial management and relationship with our partners. As discussed at cabinet last week, we will consider all the points set out in the peer review including recommendations in relation to scrutiny and actions from the peer review will be built into our refreshed Corporate Plan. I'm sure the chair of scrutiny will also have a view on how the committee's work plan is developed."

(Councillor Young confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.)

Question 10

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

“As part of the 2021/22 internal audit plan, a review of the systems and controls in place within the NCSL contract was undertaken to confirm that they are operating adequately, effectively and efficiently. This included contract management arrangements. The audit received a Limited Assurance opinion over the controls operating within this area. Following the publishing of the LGA corporate peer review report, where it makes specific reference to the NCSL contract, and that there are “three managers within the council that undertake aspects of the client role which is leading to an inconsistent approach to contract management”, and recommends that this is “resolved urgently”, does the cabinet member agree with me that we must undertake another internal audit review of NCSL, which is focused on the governance arrangements and contract management for NCSL and our other wholly owned company NRL?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources’ response:

“The Environmental Services audit you refer to concluded in 2022 and the report was considered by the audit committee in November 2022; although it was a limited assurance conclusion the report highlighted as good practice that “Contract Management Board meetings took place monthly in accordance with the contract”. There were no high priority recommendations although a medium priority recommendation was “To provide the Environmental Services team responsible for the day-to-day operation of the contract with refresher contract management training” – the report went on to note that this recommendation had been completed by the time the report was issued. As you know the LGA Peer review has only just been published and we will of course take forward as appropriate any actions that flow from it accordingly.”

(In reply to Councillor Bogelein’s supplementary question, Councillor Kendrick said that the recommendations and actions of the peer review would be considered in the near future and members would have an opportunity to comment. He was not able to provide a timetable or details of this at the moment.)

Question 11

Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister to ask the leader of the council the following question:

“Late last month I observed the Lord Mayor and Leader help the Unison City Branch launch their Love Unions week which promotes the benefits of trade unionism. For many years this council has developed an agenda which has sought to lead on both insourcing services and develop a constructive relationship with city trade unions around areas of mutual agreement. I was

therefore struck by the potential impact of the governments Minimum Service Level Bill and the impact upon workers' rights. Can the Leader comment on his thoughts around this and whether this could join others in condemning it?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"Thank you very much for your timely question. Condemnation of the government's minimum service levels bill (which I share) has been extensive. It has rightly been described by the Labour and trade union movement as "draconian" and a "vindictive assault" on basic freedoms. The legislation is being rushed through Parliament.

The TUC has strongly criticised the government over the lack of scrutiny the legislation has received. The union body has submitted a freedom of information request to uncover why the government published the bill without a required impact assessment – a decision that was called out by the regulatory policy committee, the independent watchdog that scrutinises new legislation.

The Labour party has also set out amendments that would require the government to submit the legislation to greater parliamentary scrutiny, including forcing the publication of assessments of how the bill would impact on individual workers, equalities, employers, and unions. Labour is committed to repealing the legislation when it is in Government.

Criticism is global. The TUC has received a series of letters of solidarity from unions around the world criticising the UK government over the legislation. Letters have been sent from unions in Algeria, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Norway, Peru, Romania, and Spain. International unions have also sent letters to British ambassadors condemning the legislation. In its letter to the British ambassador to Spain, the Unión Sindical Obrera (USO) expressed "deep concerns" about the bill, declaring: "Contrary to UK government claims, these measures would push the UK even further outside of international democratic norms." A key government defence of the legislation has been that it would bring the UK "into line" with many other European nations, including Spain.

The reality is that we are living in an emerging authoritarian state. We have seen social and economic rights stripped away since 2010. Rights to protest have been restricted. Voter suppression legislation is in force and fundamental rights at work are now in jeopardy. What's it all for – to defend the indefensible – a deeply unequal society."

(Councillor Matthew Fulton- McAlister asked whether in his last 5 weeks as Leader of the Council, Councillor Waters would reaffirm this council's support for trade unionism in the city. Councillor Waters said that he would make it his top priority.)

Question 12

Councillor Peek to ask the cabinet member for environmental services the following question:

“Fly-tipping remains a significant issue in some of parts of our city as the impact of the increased charges brought in by the County Council in 2017 remain a driver for this criminal offence, together with other factors. Despite this, I was reassured to learn that of the 5844 incidents of fly-tipping last year, 98% were resolved promptly, within 1 working day. As part of the wider Love Norwich campaign, can the cabinet member for environmental services comment on how the additional £100,000 invested through the recent budget can further enhance our communities to tackle this problem?”

Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for environmental services’ response:

“The issue of fly-tipping is indeed an issue of considerable concern to the Council and whilst I am sure the charges you refer to have not helped this, it provides no excuse for those who fly tip. This is why we have developed our “Love Norwich” initiative aims tackle a range of environmental anti social behaviour, including fly-tipping, littering, dog fouling, and graffiti. With regards to the £100K investment announced at the budget meeting on 21 February 2023, this will allow the council build on the recent engagement work that has taken place to encourage residents to take pride in their neighbourhoods. This next phase will allow us to install CCTV at fly tipping hotspots across the city and use the video footage recorded to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to fly tippers and potentially prosecute the worst offenders. We are finalising the list of locations we will be targeting using the data we collect on an ongoing basis. Over the next 2 months we will be consulting with communities prior to installing the CCTV cameras, and once they are installed we intend to take robust action against offenders. Improved coordination and focus will be delivered through partnership working with colleagues across the Council and partner organisations.

I’m confident that the additional expenditure that we are able to provide due to our robust financial position will make a real positive impact on many communities across the city.”

(Councillor Peek, by way of a supplementary question, asked the cabinet member whether she would consider all options including sharing such images on a wall of shame. Councillor Oliver said that the council had made significant investment in CCTV and would consider all sorts of measures to tackle the problem of fly-tipping, including sharing, what she preferred to call it, a “rogues’ gallery”, and called on people to report fly-tipping.)

Question 13

Councillor Vivien Thomas to ask the cabinet member for community wellbeing the following question:

“For many of my constituents, particularly those who do not have access to a large garden, the opportunity to enjoy their local park remains a real priority. Therefore, prioritising these, as evidenced through the recent budget last month, remains very important. Building on the investment in the new play equipment being installed in Wensum Park, discussed earlier this year, can the cabinet member for community wellbeing update council on the further wider environmental improvements being delivered to the park, working with the Norwich Fringe Project and other partners?”

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

“The council has received £80K from the Levelling Up Parks Fund to carry out environmental and biodiversity improvement works in Wensum Park. These works have now started, with further works programmed for later in the year. The Norwich Fringe Project have been working with a number of partners to thin out and tidy the riverside scrub area and remove fallen trees, and address the antisocial behaviour that has unfortunately been taking place there.

Additional works include:

- Installation of a new footbridge, and replacement of the weir
- Drainage of the current pond and ornamental ditch
- Installation of a 1.2 m wide granite path, to link the footbridge with the tarmac path and providing disabled access across the site.
- Planting of 500 native species saplings providing seed ,fruit and nut to encourage biodiversity. The saplings will also be climate change resistant
- Ongoing management of the trees by coppicing to maintain clear sites lines, preventing anti social behaviour and increasing the age structure to the woodland to promote biodiversity.
- Introducing mature 12ft trees such as Bay Willow and Common Alder within the next six months, creating a more defined landscape feature to the site.
- Planting of a woodland wildflower seed mix which will produce bursts of colour including poppies and cornflowers, providing a nectar source for pollinators.

This extensive work will create a more welcoming environment within the park and support the council’s biodiversity objectives within its parks.”

(In reply to Councillor Vivien Thomas's supplementary question, Councillor Giles provided further details of how the Norwich Fringe Project worked with volunteers to maintain and enhance the natural areas across Norwich. The Norwich Fringe Project (NFP) had around 20 volunteers who assisted staff on Wednesdays and Thursdays. In addition, the NFP worked with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and other friends' groups. The council was grateful to these volunteers who volunteered their service, which provided a cost saving to the council and a sense of community spirit and ownership in these natural areas and sites.)

Question 14

Councillor Kidman to ask the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion the following question:

"Fuel poverty is a top concern for many of my constituents and TUC analysis has found that energy bills will account for up to 10% of an average salary from next month, when the government's energy price guarantee is due to rise from £2,500 to £3,000 a year for a typical household. Contained in the budget from last month were a range of positive steps this council will take to help tackle fuel poverty. Which are the top actions that the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion believes will make real difference to citizens in this city?"

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion's response:

"Through our cost-of-living crisis response, we have significantly strengthened our support to residents affected by fuel poverty, directly through our own services, or by supporting our residents to access funding or services from our VCSE community. The support around fuel poverty includes offering emergency fuel payments, replacing end of life heating systems and the installation of double glazing and other energy efficiency measures. Our cost of living support goes beyond this, with help, for example, with food vouchers, support for social supermarkets, and support for advice charities. Improving energy efficiency in our housing stock and housing stock across the city is ultimately the solution to reducing energy debt, improving living conditions and achieving net zero. The council recently announced the inclusion of £290m for improving energy efficiency and reducing emissions in our social housing to 2050, with £53m committed to be spend by 2028. We are currently delivering a £1.2m of Social Housing Decarbonisation project funds and are awaiting the imminent announcement of a further £4m of project funds under the same scheme. A separate procurement exercise is underway to deliver £5.3m of energy efficiency works through the government's ECO4 scheme.

Our decarbonisation plans extend beyond our own housing stock, to the city as a whole. The council is proposing to lead and coordinate a citywide response to climate change which will see us move away from fossil fuels within a single generation, in accordance with the City Vision. This will be

achieved by greatly improving the energy efficiency of homes of all tenures and transitioning to renewable forms of energy. We look forward to consulting on the full details of our Environmental Programme in the coming months.”

(In reply to Councillor Kidman’s supplementary question, Councillor Hampton said that her question on what central government could do to help was a timely one, with the Chancellor about to announce the Spring Statement. The government had a critical role in addressing fuel poverty and the cost of living crisis that underpinned it. The council was committed to eradicating fuel poverty in its 2040 City Vision and was doing all that it could with the available resources. She outlined the sustainable long term solutions that the government could take which included reforming the energy market, increasing household income, retrofitting homes and securing clean energy in the future, and the measures that it could take to tackle the immediate crisis, such as scrapping the planned energy price increase, ending windfall profits, upgrading houses to reduce carbon emissions and eradicating fuel poverty by supporting the Local Electricity Bill.)

Question 15

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

“The procurement of goods and services this council delivers makes a significant difference to the wider city and particularly its local economy and was discussed in detail at last month’s budget. Can the cabinet member for resources comment on this further?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources’ response:

“Anyone who has had an opportunity to read the procurement strategy update that went to cabinet last week will quickly realise the scale of our local spending. Of nearly £370m of contracts that this council enters into, about £250m of those contracts are with suppliers based in the Norwich boundary. As I referenced at cabinet, when combined with our desire to support organisations pay the living wage this means we’re helping to secure good jobs in our local economy.

It’s not always the big scale contracts where we can have an impact. At cabinet we also saw the example of decoration vouchers, which we provide to new housing tenants to allow them to decorate their home to their own style. Whilst the scale of spending means, by law, we have to enter larger contracts which can be a barrier for the smallest firms, we have also agreed to continue a separate arrangement with Thorns DIY shop too. Using a risk-based approach, we have made our procurement rules easier in part to ensure local businesses are not put off bidding for work due to requiring them to make complex bids.

There is always more we can do; encourage our partners to maximise spend and look to use our spending power to drive the greatest social value to our communities but I am confident we are well placed to do so.”

(There was no supplementary question, as Councillor Everett was not present at the meeting.)

Question 16

Councillor Driver to ask the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods the following question:

“Crime and anti-social behaviour have become an ever-greater problem in recent years, particularly with the damaging impact of County Lines and wider damage of losing thousands of police, all our PCSO’s in Norfolk and the erosion of services which often help to reduce re-offending. The response and role this council takes is therefore vital. Can the cabinet member for safe, strong, and inclusive neighbourhoods comment on the opportunities that the new community safety strategy, passed at cabinet last week, can offer communities across this city?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods’ response:

“The need for a strategy was identified in the council’s corporate plan following the recently adopted Norfolk community safety strategy. The strategy will provide a clear vision of how we with partners and communities will look to tackle the causes and prevent crime and disorder holistically in Norwich. The strategy and new partnership that will be created will look to work at a local and neighbourhood level to tackle ASB, domestic abuse, crime and disorder issues contributing to helping people feel safer in their homes and communities. We will deliver this through an action plan developed with partners in the statutory, non-statutory and voluntary sector and listening to tenants and residents about what matters to them most in their communities to help them feel safe and secure”

(In reply to Councillor Driver’s supplementary question, Councillor Jones said that she was excited about the strategy and action plan. The investment included three new CCTV cameras which were easy to deploy, the purchase of a further set was planned, and training for the ASB team. Further investment was planned to support people’s health and wellbeing. She was proud of the progress that had been made by the team. Over the last 6 months several enforcement actions had taken place.)

Question 17

Councillor Vaughan Thomas to ask the cabinet member for environmental services the following question:

“Last year I was proud to be one of the councillors that voted in favour of the planning application to approve the development of seven new one-bedroom homes on Kett’s Hill to help former rough sleepers move forward with their lives, built on a piece of derelict land. It is often said, by all political parties that “the city council is committed to breaking the cycle of homelessness”, but this actually takes planning committee members with the guts and capacity to

make decisions which put people first. Can the cabinet member for environmental services comment on progress with the development?"

Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for environmental services' response:

"Thank you for your question and planning committee's support for this development. I was delighted to be invited to see the completed seven one-bed houses shortly before the new residents move in. The new homes have been built using modular, off-site manufacturing, with a timber frame, to ensure low embodied carbon and they all benefit from air-source heat-pumps. There is parking on site and each new home has its own small front and back gardens, as well as having easy access to Mousehold Heath. This development is the second in a series of three new build projects across the city, specifically for rough sleepers. The first was a development of six flats which was completed in Dec 2021 at Lakenfields. The third is a development of 12 flats proposed in the west of the city, which has a funding allocation and will soon be submitted for planning. We're also currently working on plans for a possible fourth bid later this year.

As well as the new build projects, we've secured funding for 15 open market housing purchases, and we've also made 15 Housing First improvements to properties already in our stock. Across the three funding programmes, we have now secured £2.6 million in capital towards build costs and just under £600,000 in revenue to fund support worker costs. Across all projects, we will be providing new homes to 55 individuals in desperate need of housing. In recent years, due partly to these projects working alongside the excellent work of the pathways partnership, there has been a reduction in the number of entrenched rough sleepers in the city, bucking the national trend. Sadly, we still expect there will be people presenting as homeless, but it's great that the people moving into these new homes are highly likely to break the cycle of rough sleeping in the long term. We've received incredibly positive feedback from the residents at Lakenfields who have had their lives completely transformed by having a safe and comfortable home to call their own."

(Councillor Vaughan Thomas expressed his concern about opposition to developments for accommodation for homeless people at Lakenfields, Recorder Road, Northumberland Street and Kett's Hill and that this would bring the strategy to a halt. Councillor Oliver replied that she was concerned. She had visited accommodation at Kett's Court, which was being provided in partnership with Broadland Housing Association. Partnership working was the way forward to provide this accommodation and she called on all councillors to support this, particularly at a time when numbers of people rough sleeping in the city was increasing.)

Question 18

Councillor Brociek-Coulton to ask the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods the following question:

"Representing a ward which has seen crime rocket in recent years, including burglary, I have long welcomed the city council alley-gate programme which

offers residents the opportunity to have a strong metal gate fitted to their property. Can the cabinet member for safe, strong, and inclusive neighbourhoods comment on whether the symbolic figure of 100 properties protected have now been achieved?"

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods' response:

"Research, and experience from a previous scheme in Norwich, shows that alley gates are effective in reducing residential burglaries and protecting those shared communal spaces from anti-social behaviour. The alley gate scheme, funded and managed by the city council is one important aspect of the council efforts to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Since the start of the scheme in 2020 we have installed thirty-one gates, improving security and feelings of safety for 142 households across Norwich. Residents feedback has been incredibly positive, confirming the real difference the scheme is making."

(In reply to Councillor Brociek-Coulton's supplementary question, Councillor Jones acknowledged the impact that alley gates had to reduce crime and said that this was a practical solution. The programme would include extending it to other areas but also included maintenance and repairs to the existing gates.)

Question 19

Councillor Huntley to ask the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:

"The site of the former 19th century lime kiln in Drayton Road, opposite Lime Kiln Mews, has been derelict for almost 20 years and remains both a significant eyesore but also a lost opportunity for potential social housing development. Stopping this site from being landbanked through using a Compulsory Purchase Order remains an opportunity for this council, as very successfully shown at the Kings Arms site. Can the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth comment further on this and other sites in the city?"

Councillor Stonard, the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth's response:

"Thank you for the question. There are several sites across the city on which there has been no development activity for a number of years, this is sometimes due to physical constraints but may also be due to owners holding unrealistic expectations of their sites' value. This means that several sites benefitting from a planning consent have lain idle for many years. In 2020 the council successfully obtained a Compulsory Purchase Order on the former site of the Kings Arms pub in Mile Cross which had lain derelict for years, attracting fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. The site is now occupied by five low-carbon council homes and is an example of the council using its powers to deliver much-needed housing to families."

Using this as a model the council bid for and received government Towns Fund money in order to set up a Brownfield Sites Revolving Fund, with the intention of acquiring similarly stalled sites and putting them into valuable use. The council prefers to acquire such sites through negotiation but will consider using CPO where necessary.

The site opposite Lime Kiln Mews has indeed been vacant for many years. In December last year cabinet approved the use of CPO powers on this site and one other in order to ensure that a route to development is in place in the event the owner fails to do it themselves. I can confirm that if the site is not developed by the owner within a reasonable period, the council will use its powers to ensure it is put to valuable use.

Officers are currently studying several sites around the city and will seek to acquire those they consider unlikely to be developed without its intervention.”

(In reply to Councillor Huntley’s supplementary question about the potential to provide council homes on this site opposite Lime Kiln Mews, Councillor Stonard said that if this site became available for development by the council it would seek to address the excesses of the private rental market and provide high quality affordable homes for rent, such as it had at Goldsmith Street and the Kings Arms site.)

Question 20

Councillor Mike Sands to ask the cabinet member for resources the following question:

“In a matter of just a few weeks one of the most profound and anti-democratic measures, namely the introduction of compulsory Voter ID will take place for the local elections in May. Council leaders from across the country, including in Norwich, our local Member of Parliament Clive Lewis and CEO of the Association of the Association of Electoral Administrators have all criticised the policy. Will the cabinet member for resources comment on whether he feels sufficiently assured that support and resource from the government will be provided to ensure the elections are both democratic and successful?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources’ response:

“On several occasions in this chamber we have made clear our strong feelings against the new laws requiring voters to produce ID at polling station. I am concerned that many residents may turn up on polling day without appropriate ID and feel disenfranchised from the vote. The council has received confirmation of its initial allocation from the government which includes specific funding to support accessibility in polling stations, something which we can welcome, but also to fund additional members of staff in polling stations to help with challenges and difficulties that can arise. We have also been informed by government that if we do incur additional costs we can make additional bids for funding either before or after the election.

Nonetheless, as much as we may regret it, this is now law and it is incumbent on us as a council to do what we can to ensure residents are aware and bring their ID with them on polling day. I and the Leader have been engaging with the Returning Officer and elections on the various plans in place to make sure voters are aware, including promoting on social media, information with council tax bills and the Citizen magazine and prominent messaging on poll cards. Whilst I may never be fully assured regarding the current government intentions, I am assured and confident in our very experienced elections team and us as a council to do what we can to help our residents vote on 4 May."

(In reply to Councillor Mike Sands' supplementary question regarding his views on the government's electoral reforms, Councillor Kendrick said that he considered that the introduction of voter identification was a retrograde measure, aimed at reducing the level of turnout at the poll particularly among people from ethnic minorities or young people. It was based on the Republican Party's policy in the USA, where it had been counterproductive because the turnout from African Americans had increased. Councillors could help their constituents by ensuring that they knew what ID to bring to the polling stations or advise them to use postal votes.)

Question 21

Councillor Erin Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:

"I read with alarm that the national picture for retail predicted for 2023, thanks to the impact of the calamitous Conservative budget in September last year and the predicted deep recession this country will face, will be significant. However, shortly before Christmas the city council result of the retail monitor survey carried out painted a different and much more positive picture within Norwich. Can the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth comment on this?"

Councillor Stonard, the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth's response:

"Thank you for the question. The October 2022 retail monitor has shown that vacancy rates have fallen within the city centre (reduced from 14.5% in July 2021) to 12.2% and data from BID also shows that footfall has returned to pre pandemic levels.

The retail sector both nationally and within Norwich has experienced a lot of challenges in recent years brought about by changing consumer behaviour driven by technology and prevailing economic conditions and as a result of the pandemic. Whilst it is likely that these challenges will have ongoing impacts for the viability of some retail businesses, the past 12 months have shown just how resilient the majority of Norwich's businesses are (especially Norwich's independent businesses) and how successfully they have managed to recover. Whilst a number of multiples have ceased trading within Norwich, there is clearly investment happening with new businesses arriving.

As with all cities, Norwich faces an extremely uncertain time ahead. Whilst Norwich has recovered well from the impacts of the pandemic, rising costs and interest rates will impact both retailers and consumers. The city council will continue to work with businesses and partners to make the City Centre an attractive destination and place for investment.

Hopefully future surveys will reveal further positive news.”

(As a supplementary question, Councillor Erin Fulton-McAlister where she noted that retail was key to the city’s unique offer and asked Councillor Stonard to comment on the importance of the Article 4 directive and other steps being undertaken by the city council and Norwich BID. Councillor Stonard said that the city was bucking national trends in the retail and footfall and agreed this was due to its unique offer. The Article 4 directive contributed to the vibrancy of the city centre by protecting office spaces from being converted to substandard accommodation. There was inward investment in the retail and leisure sectors that was welcomed.)

Question 22

Councillor Sue Sands to ask the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:

“Investing in our city centre, to continually drive and enhance its economic potential but also provide an inclusive and positive environment for all our citizens remains a vital priority for this administration. With work now soon underway to improve Hay Hill, can the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth comment on the opportunities this site offers to radically enhance this part of the city centre further?”

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

“In July 2020 we published our public spaces plan for the city centre. It was based on the understanding of how important good public spaces are to the success of a city. They create civic pride, encourage business investment and nurture democracy.

The plan outlined a series of projects that would continue the proud tradition of public space improvement that began with the pedestrianisation of London Street in 1967 and most recently led to the transformation of Tombland. Hay Hill is our next project and we have secured £3.2m from the Towns Fund for this project.

Hay Hill lies at the very heart of the city centre but it does not work well. The surfaces are cluttered and hard to maintain, the steps are complicated and prevent smooth movement and the sculpture of Sir Thomas Browne lacks the focus it deserves. The public expressed their clear support for change through a consultation last spring. One of the most powerful and important voices came from people with disabilities who explained how they struggled to navigate and negotiate the space.

We have listened to these concerns and the scheme we have designed will create more convenient and comfortable routes with edges and steps clearly delineated and lots of opportunity to sit down and rest. It will be a joyful space with planting that attracts nature and a water cascade that delights the senses, but it will also host events and drive much needed economic activity and investment in the heart of the city.”

(In reply to Councillor Sue Sands’ supplementary question, Councillor Stonard said that he considered that Hay Hill improvements would make it an important public space for people to enjoy and relax, and would encourage footfall and contributed to the vitality of the retail and leisure sectors.)

Question 23

Councillor Padda to ask the cabinet member for environmental services the following question:

“Despite the government promising to eradicate rough sleeping by the end of this parliament, the numbers of people sleeping rough in the UK is going up yet again, with data from the autumn of 2022 showing a 23% rise on the total compared to the previous year. Shelter believes this is due to a toxic mix of rising rents, the cost-of-living crisis, and a failure to end no-fault evictions hitting vulnerable people. Will the cabinet member for environmental services comment on the situation in Norwich and the difference delivered by the services this city council delivers?”

Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for environmental services’ response:

“Nationally the number of people sleeping rough in England is 74% higher than in 2010 when recording by government started. We have bucked the trend seeing a decrease to 7 people recorded last autumn. Set against a backdrop of rising rents in the private sector and a cost-of-living crisis makes this achievement remarkable. The downward trend continued since the peak of 2016 when a high of 34 people were recorded on the annual count. Sadly, people still end up on our streets but now through the services delivered by the council’s housing options team and Pathways Norwich that is funded by the council we have a coherent and effective approach to tackling this form of homelessness. We can’t do this alone and we depend on working with agencies using a wraparound multi-agency approach around the person who needs our help and support to get their lives back on track.”

(In reply to a supplementary question from Councillor Padda, Councillor Oliver reiterated her comments about the decrease in the number of rough sleepers. It was important that the council could give as much support as it could and continue to provide a budget to deliver services year on year.)

The following questions were second questions from members. As the time taken by questions had exceeded thirty minutes, these questions were not taken. This is in line with paragraph 53 of Part 3 of the council’s constitution.

Question 24

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

“I have been finding out more about the council’s complaint process and discovered that, despite an optimistic self-assessment of compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Code for Complaint Handling, the council does not have the necessary systems to monitor whether its processes do, in fact, comply with the code. This is evidenced by the majority of cases my colleagues and I have been working on, as well as at least two Housing Ombudsman rulings against the council for its failures to deal with damp/mould and failing to comply with its own complaints policy. Given that goodwill and endeavouring to comply with the code is not sufficient, how can we have confidence that the city council is meeting its obligations as a social landlord and has assessed the level of risk this will put the council under when more stringent rules for ensuring compliance are introduced with the Social Housing Regulations Bill?”

Councillor Harris, the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing’s response:

“The Housing Ombudsman refreshed their Complaints Handling Code in March 2022. All Registered Providers had to demonstrate compliance with the Code by completing an annual self-assessment by 1 October 2022. There were 44 mandatory ‘must do’ requirements. Following the implementation of the council’s new Complaints Policy last summer, the council is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code.”

Question 25

Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods the following question:

“In 2015 new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) came in. Since 1 April 2018, landlords have been required to improve the energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of their properties to ‘E’ or above, unless exempted. My councillor enquiry shows 740 rented properties in Norwich still suffer the worst EPC ratings of F or G; forcing tenants to live in cold substandard conditions. I was informed that Norfolk County Council is responsible for enforcement. However, the Regulations state that the local authority is responsible for enforcing compliance with MEES in relation to domestic private rented property. Several districts are taking enforcement action against landlords who fail to insulate their properties to at least E rating. KL&WN Council has provided a webpage and online form enabling tenants to report a property which fails to meet the MEES. Will the council take enforcement action against private landlords who fail to comply with MEES?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods’ response:

The council does take strong action against private landlords who fail to provide decent quality accommodation as the cases of St Faith's Lane and St Peter's House have demonstrated. It has produced the Norwich private renters' charter to increase awareness of rights and raise expectations. It also often takes action against landlords where there is excessive cold and many of these will relate to properties that are rated F and G under MEES legislation.

The private rented sector has increased massively in recent years and resources available to police the sector have failed to keep pace. The Council is currently bringing forward a restructure of its planning and regulatory services and this will see increased resources being made available for the private sector housing team and further investment in technology to support them is also planned.

Following the restructure, we will be engaging more fully with landlords of private rented accommodation, reminding them of the MEES legislation and their duties to comply with this and working to further update and strengthen the private renters' charter."