



**NORWICH**  
City Council

## **Council**

**20 March 2018**

### **Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees**

#### **Question 1**

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

“Last year, I strongly opposed the decision to close three residents’ car parks in the Armes Street/Northumberland Street area for redevelopment. While residents agree that there is a need for more affordable housing, this must be planned properly and the needs of existing residents taken into account. Feedback from residents stated unequivocally that this would cause severe parking problems in the area, and I made this point repeatedly to the council, but the plan went ahead. As predicted, the lack of parking is now causing significant upset and conflict among residents, with some cars being vandalised.

Now the predictions of residents and Green councillors have been proved correct, will the cabinet member apologise for the council’s misjudgement in closing all three of these car parks at the same time?”

**Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth’s reply:**

“Councillor Bogelëin’s objections were noted during the planning process including at pre-application and planning applications committee stages.

These three sites were part of a wider programme of 16 sites which are being transferred to Orwell Housing Association for badly needed affordable housing. They form part of a programme that has been fully researched and planned over the last four years. Sites were identified and assessed by officers and ward councillors were consulted on each site’s suitability prior to the cabinet approving the programme in October 2014. The sites were granted planning permission in October and November 2016.

Local residents were consulted as part of the pre-application process and officers increased the number of residents consulted following a request by Councillor Bogelëin. There was a 16 per cent response rate from local residents and loss of parking was their primary concern.

When a car park is proposed for development, a number of car park surveys are undertaken by officers to ascertain whether or not their loss would have a negative impact on the area. Due to the proximity of these three sites to each other, it was agreed with planners that the sites should be assessed together. Car park surveys were carried out throughout 2016 with cars and available spaces monitored at various times during the day and night, including at midnight. Each of these car park surveys showed that there were enough spaces on the road to accommodate all vehicles using the car parks. We therefore proceeded with the applications.

Neither council officers, nor Orwell or their contractors have been notified of any acts of vandalism. If vandalism has occurred it should be reported to the police.

Orwell's contractors have received only one call about their vans being parked such that residents were unable to park their cars. This was addressed straight away and arrangements were made with the local school to enable them to park on the school grounds.

At planning applications committee, the three sites were considered as separate applications rather than together. The committee report for each noted that there would be some harm to residential amenity caused by the loss of parking but that this must be weighed against the significant benefits of delivering affordable housing in a sustainable location in the city. Planning applications committee agreed with the officer advice, that in planning policy terms, addressing housing need is of greater importance than providing off-road parking spaces. This is particularly so in a location which has good links to public transport and the city centre where there is the opportunity to use other modes of transport such as buses and cycles.

Construction commenced at all three sites in October 2017 and is due to be completed this autumn. Between them, the three sites will provide eight one bed flats and three two bed houses."

## **Question 2**

**Councillor Haynes to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion the following question:**

"The council has done work lately to improve things for people with disabilities in the city. However, despite repeated requests from me over the last couple of years, little or no attention has been paid to less visible disabilities such as deafness, learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. Does the cabinet member for social inclusion think the council is doing enough to help those with less visible disabilities?"

**Councillor Davis, cabinet member for social inclusion's response:**

"It is very important to ensure that all in society have access to services and environments as far as practically possible and clearly councils play a key part in helping to ensure this. I am therefore pleased with the steps the council has taken to improve access for people with disabilities – such as streetscape improvements and

providing grant funding to Norwich Door to Door – as well as the support it provides to groups that support people with disabilities.

The needs of people with less visible disabilities is also important and whilst we have relied on consulting with umbrella groups to help inform our highway schemes in the past we will be ensuring a greater range of groups representing specific disabilities are consulted in future. This work will begin in the new civic year.

It goes without saying that there would always be the possibility of more work being done around this (and many other areas) if resources weren't so tight and we will continue to campaign for better funding for local government.

### **Question 3**

**Councillor Tim Jones to ask the cabinet member for health and wellbeing the following question:**

“Towards the end of last year, the council unlocked the side gate to Earlham Cemetery at the top of St Thomas Road to allow public access during the daytime. The gate had been closed for many years following instances of anti-social behaviour in the cemetery. Regrettably, the council did not consult nor advise St Thomas Road residents or Green Party ward councillors about their decision to open the side gate. In response to complaints from St Thomas Road residents, the environmental services department replied, “This is an historic and established access point for the cemetery and there is no requirement to consult on whether it should be opened and closed as it forms part of the listed site”.

However, this doesn't address concerns expressed about the environmental impact of re-opening the side gate which has allowed people and their dogs to walk across an area of previously undisturbed soft ground planted with bulbs in a quiet area of the cemetery, making it very muddy.

Will the cabinet member ask for the side gate to be closed again, and does s/he agree that the council should be doing more to consult residents and all ward councillors on local matters that affect them?”

**Councillor Packer, cabinet member for health and wellbeing's response:**

“The council unlocked the cemetery gate on St Thomas Road for public use as this is an historic and established access point for the cemetery. The gate is opened and closed in accordance with the cemetery gate opening schedule.

I am aware that there were some issues in this locality previously; however, the majority of problems concerned drivers and vehicle passengers depositing drug and sex paraphernalia inside the cemetery near to this gate. The perpetrators of these acts gained access to the cemetery through one of the main entry points and not through this pedestrian access. These particular problems have reduced significantly over recent years and both Earlham and Rosary cemeteries whilst places for burial and quiet reflection are also public open space and have not been designed to keep people out.

In terms of any anti-social behaviour that may have impacted directly on residents as a result of this gate being opened in the past, I note that this was many years ago and it is very likely that the perpetrators will have moved on by now. We have had no complaints from residents about ASB since we opened the gate and neither have we had complaints about the bulbs being damaged. Officers will of course monitor any specific and verifiable complaints of ASB in this area as and when they are reported and officers will work with the police if required, to resolve any such issues should they arise. We will also review the use of this access point if there is any clear evidence that the access itself is actually a cause of ASB.

The decision to close this gate should have been the subject of proper consultation at the time, given that it is an historic and established access point to a listed cemetery. Unfortunately there is no record of this having taken place. Should there be any future discussion on an opening or closure for this or any other cemetery gate then views would be sought with stakeholders including residents and members. We always try and consult both formally or informally with local residents and ward councillors on issues that will affect them. The environmental impact of increased footfall will be assessed and options will be forthcoming for future management and maintenance regimes.

As part of our ongoing works to enhance and protect both Earlham and Rosary cemeteries it is important that the public are aware of the spaces in-line with a desire to make them places for the living as well as quiet reflection.”

#### **Question 4**

**Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:**

“Last summer, the council asked Norse to trial alternatives to glyphosate-based weedkiller in light of a growing body of scientific evidence which links it with serious health issues including birth defects and cancers, as well as damage to ecosystems. Norse conducted a trial in an area of soft landscaping in Earlham Cemetery using three substances, one of which was vinegar – which is not recommended as a tool for large-scale weed control. It was unclear how the substances had been chosen. I contacted Weedingtech, who produce Foamstream, a plant-based non-toxic foam used in conjunction with hot water, to enquire about the possibility of a trial in Norwich. Foamstream is used by half the UK’s water companies and several councils, including Glastonbury, Hammersmith & Fulham and Southwark.

At my request, Norse agreed to invite Weedingtech to Norwich to demonstrate the Foamstream equipment. In their report back to me, Norse said that the process proved slow. However, it turned out that the demonstration site used was the hard paving next to the Lilly Pond and the adjoining listed buildings at Eaton Park. If glyphosate is currently used in this area, this is a serious hazard because the run-off goes straight into the pond, and its application should be stopped immediately. If it is not used there, it seems an unhelpful choice of site for the Foamstream demonstration.

Does the cabinet member agree that more serious consideration should be given to replacing glyphosate with non-toxic alternatives, and that further trials should be conducted based on the available evidence about which alternatives are effective?"

**Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe city environment's reply:**

"Investigations of alternatives to glyphosate based products have been trialled, not least because the council is continually examining potential efficiency savings in all areas of the joint venture and the need to meet the council's environmental responsibilities. The council is also working with NNE to examine ways to reduce the total amount of the product that is applied in order to reduce ongoing costs.

With regard to the 'Vinegar Trials', Norwich was not the only authority to trial its use: Bristol made national headlines because of the smell over its trial areas. Like these other authorities, we found it not to be effective against long rooted weeds.

It must be recognised that Glyphosate-based products have proven to be particularly effective against perennial weeds and, to date, no equally effective and comparably priced alternative has been identified. All potential alternatives have proved to be less effective than glyphosate based products in terms of:

- Cost - they are more expensive
- Weed reduction is less effective
- Re-growth is quicker
- Re-growth is more plentiful
- Roots are not killed
- They are more labour intensive
- They require re-treatments

In addition to these factors, there is no proven alternative to a glyphosate-based herbicide for the treatment of Japanese Knotweed which occurs in the city and the council has a duty to remove on council owned land.

With regard to the comments about use in the vicinity of the Eaton Park Lily Pond, the herbicide used is Barclay Trustee Amenity and is specifically defined as an aquatic herbicide. The product label describes it as "For weed control near watercourses and lakes in the presence or absence of fish. Provided that use is as directed on this label, water may be used for irrigation or livestock without interruption".

For Foamstream and other alternatives, as trialled both here and in other parts of the UK, test results are variable and inconclusive. In order to make an informed choice on replacing a herbicide that has been used effectively for 45 years, the council will need to see a persuasive body of evidence to support any proposed alternative. Typically this would need to be 2-3 years' worth of evidence which confirmed the long-term effectiveness against re-growth (measured across seasonal changes) and proving that a similar standard of weed control could be achieved at or below current costs."

## **Question 5**

### **Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:**

“There is a growing body of evidence showing that exposure to polluted air does long-term damage to children’s health, in particular respiratory system and lung function. A recent study from ClientEarth showed that 60 per cent of parents want traffic diverted away from schools at the beginning and end of the day, with just 13 per cent opposing the idea.

Does the cabinet member support the introduction of such ‘pollution exclusion zones’ to protect children from polluted air, and will he raise the matter with the joint highways committee?”

### **Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe city environment’s reply:**

“As Councillor Price says air pollution appears to have a much greater impact on children than adults in general with the British Lung Foundation stating that it can stunt the development of children’s lungs. I am therefore sure all members will agree in the importance of addressing this.

I am pleased that the councillor has made reference to ClientEarth. The day after their recent successful High Court action against the UK Government, I, with several other Councillors across the UK, met ClientEarth. Norwich was not among the list of 33 Local Authorities for which the High Court required action: they were happy with our Action Plan submitted to the DEFRA.

Monitoring shows that air quality in Norwich is on an improving trend due to the work of city and county councils to, for example, remove extraneous traffic from city centre streets and retro-fitting the exhausts of buses to reduce emissions. I am also pleased that we will ask the Secretary of State to allow us to undertake targeted enforcement of drivers who leave their vehicle’s engine idling unnecessarily. However, that said, there remain pockets of poor air quality that need tackling through a variety of approaches, that will involve the use of legislation, partnership working, new technologies and a change in behaviour away from car use.

Members may have seen the questions on air quality that form part of the public consultation to inform the Transport for Norwich strategy review. This is because it is planned that air quality will feature prominently in the review providing a clear way forward.

The outcome of the review is not due to be published until summer 2018 however and we cannot afford to sit on our hands in the meantime. Officers will continue therefore to work with partners such as the UEA and transport operators in making bids for funding and exploring different and innovative approaches to improve air quality. Specifically regarding children, all schools should have a travel plan to encourage increased numbers of pupils and parents/carers to walk and cycle to school instead of travelling by car and we will continue to engage with schools on delivery of these plans.

Turning to exclusion zones – such zones would be very complicated to introduce, challenging to enforce and it would be essential that such a measure did not simply transfer the problem to elsewhere. They also could be very costly. However they are an innovative approach which other local authorities are piloting and I am therefore happy to ask Norwich Highways Agency committee if they would be prepared to explore pollution exclusion zones further.”

## **Question 6**

### **Councillor Grahame to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion the following question:**

“As part of the Cosy City scheme, the council writes to residents eligible for government grant funding for energy saving improvements such as loft insulation. Homeowners and private sector tenants who are in receipt of benefits or suffering from an illness made worse by the cold can access these improvements at no cost to them. Officers have informed me that there is only a 10% response rate to these letters, despite the fact that residents could save hundreds of pounds a year on fuel bills if they took advantage of the grants.

This appears to be a huge missed opportunity to improve Norwich’s housing, lift people out of fuel poverty and reduce the risk of council tax arrears and other costs to the council.

Does the cabinet member agree that we should not accept this 10 per cent take-up as adequate, and what are her views on how the council can increase take-up of this funding which could mean warmer homes for so many of Norwich’s poorest and most vulnerable residents?”

### **Councillor Davis, cabinet member for social inclusion’s response:**

“Thank you for your timely question.

With the severe winter this year I do agree that our poorest and most vulnerable residents should be taking advantage of the council’s affordable warmth programmes.

We continue to deploy a range of engagement activities in addition to direct marketing to encourage residents to take up the support that is on offer. This includes promoting the levels of available support via the Citizen, public events and other marketing platforms such as social media.

The Cosy City team also works directly with a wide range of stakeholders in the city such as Age UK the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) and CAN (Community Action Norfolk)

Direct referrals from our stakeholders are an excellent way to help access the hard to reach groups in the city who may have underlying health issues or are worried about rogue tradesmen.

I would also like to add some context to your question on direct marketing. According to the DMA (Direct Marketing Association) mailing out letters is still one of the most effective forms of direct marketing, with a 4.4 per cent response rate. Therefore, with a 10 per cent take-up and the additional marketing initiatives outlined above, we are continuing to generate positive outcomes in helping residents out of fuel poverty. So, while fuel poverty levels are increasing nationally (11%), we have bucked the trend in Norwich for the fourth consecutive year (9.9%) This equates to over 1,400 less fuel poor homes since 2012.

This is a real achievement especially during a period of reducing grants for domestic energy improvements from central government."

### **Question 7**

**Councillor Jackson to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:**

"During the recent cold weather, there was considerable concern and distress from members of the public about the welfare of people who were sleeping rough despite the activation of the council's severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP). Officers were clearly working hard to find accommodation for people, but it was equally clear that there were still people out on the street. There were also reports of people who called the emergency out-of-hours number to report people sleeping rough not getting through or being told that nothing could be done. Five days after the activation of SWEP, with temperatures having been below freezing for several days, it was arranged for St Peter Mancroft Church's Octagon building to be opened as a night shelter until the worst of the weather was over. Around 30 people accessed this shelter – roughly the same as the council's estimate for the total number of rough sleepers in Norwich.

Can the cabinet member comment on why it took five days and the intervention of volunteer groups to find accommodation for these 30 people and why the emergency number was not consistently available; and can he state what actions the council is taking to ensure it is better prepared for the next occurrence of extreme weather?"

**Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe city environment's response:**

"Under SWEP the council works with many partners to plan and provide additional capacity to provide accommodation to all rough sleepers. The number of SWEP beds provided in supported housing projects and hostels is limited, which means that when the council have more applicants than available supported housing beds we move onto hotels or bed and breakfast provision. This ensures that no-one is ever turned away and that accommodation is always available for rough sleepers in severe weather.

In this instance, SWEP was triggered on 22 February and all rough sleepers were offered accommodation, as were all those contacting the council's out of hours service. Only ten people agreed to take up our offer of accommodation. Of these 10 people, only six used the accommodation over that weekend. While we can offer



accommodation and assistance, we cannot compel people to take the accommodation up.

Over the following week the weather deteriorated significantly and more rough sleepers were persuaded to accept our offers of assistance. Accommodation that had been arranged in the city filled up and officers were unable to place clients in accommodation that would have been used which was out of the city because transport links had been cut due to the heavy snow. As such, we were grateful for the offer from the vicar of St Peter Mancroft church to provide additional capacity. While the initial offer was for clients to sleep on pews or floors, the council was able to provide camp beds, sleeping bags and blankets. Norfolk County Council social care provided volunteers from their teams to attend in the evenings to assist anyone who had support or social care needs.

Officers continued to provide SWEP beds in supported housing projects, B&Bs and hotels but when this filled up, clients were directed to the church. The information about provision at St Peter Mancroft was also given to rough sleepers who had declined previous offers of accommodation in case they changed their minds, or wanted to sleep somewhere more anonymous.

The people who used the St Peter Mancroft provision were not all rough sleepers. Our calculations show that around half of the people who attended were those who regularly use the soup run and had stayed at the church rather than return to their own accommodation.

Supported housing and hostel providers have confirmed that a number of their residents did not use their rooms during that period.

On the day that SWEP finished all those clients accommodated under the provision were asked to attend an advice session so that assistance could be given to engage with services and address their longer term accommodation needs. Only five of those clients who had used the SWEP accommodation attended.

While social media reported that some calls were not getting through to the out of hours service, volumes of contact to this service were understandably high due to the weather conditions and therefore some callers may have experienced delays. Be assured however that all reports, calls and emails were acted upon.

I would also like to respond to your observation that it took five days and the intervention of volunteer groups to find accommodation for these people.

The council's response to rough sleeping and the provision of accommodation, including during SWEP arrangements, has always involved voluntary sector organisations. These arrangements are implemented and plans escalated, as they were on this occasion, to access additional accommodation as conditions require. During the recent period of cold weather, the council implemented emergency planning arrangements to ensure that people were provided with accommodation. My observations are that the SWEP arrangements were implemented successfully in what were very unusual conditions.

I would like to thank all the organisations who supported the SWEP arrangements and the officers concerned who co-ordinated the arrangements as I know they all worked extremely hard to support some of the most vulnerable people in our city.”

## **Question 8**

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

“Earlier this year Cow Hill was closed off to traffic to allow scaffolding and building work to be carried out on a property there. Since then, a large number of cars have been using Willow Lane as a cut through to get onto St Giles Street, despite signage informing motorists that this road is a one-way street. Given the narrow nature of this road and the limited visibility, this is very dangerous. I have had reports of road-rage incidents, and feel it is only a matter of time before an accident occurs. I have had correspondence with council officers and the police on this issue, but am not satisfied that adequate enforcement action is being taken. Does the cabinet member agree that this dangerous situation needs to be addressed, and will he ensure that the one-way system is enforced?”

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

“Clearly the situation Councillor Schmierer describes is far from satisfactory. However I am not sure what more he expects the city council to do about it. As we all know the council does not have any powers in respect of enforcing moving traffic offences which is what drivers ignoring the one way restriction are committing; only Norfolk Constabulary can take enforcement action in respect of this.

I understand that the city network co-ordinator has explained to Councillor Schmierer the efforts that have gone into coming up with a traffic management plan for the closure of Cow Hill. He is satisfied that the traffic management company responsible for the closure have supplied adequate signage but unfortunately vehicle users are choosing to make an illegal manoeuvre and ignore a permanent one-way restriction. One of the street works inspectors is regularly checking the site to ensure that the signage remains in place, and has not identified any deficiencies. Notwithstanding this, discussions are underway with the traffic management company to see if there is a suitable place to provide further information signage around Wellington Lane. As some motorists are ignoring the permanent and increased temporary signage already, however, additional signage is unlikely to stop such behaviour altogether.

I understand, Councillor Schmierer, that the city network co-ordinator has offered to walk round this site and the sites of other road works in your ward to look at the potential issues but as yet you have not taken him up on this suggestion. I am assured that the offer remains in place and you just need to contact him to arrange a convenient time.

## Question 9

### **Councillor Maxwell to ask the leader of the council the following question:**

“The Chancellor’s Spring Statement was revealed last week posing further significant challenges for local government. Can the Leader comment on these in relation to the impact upon Norwich City Council?”

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

“Can I thank Councillor Maxwell for this timely question. I will start by referencing some of the more technical announcements.

No changes were made to fiscal policy in the Spring Statement. While GDP growth forecasts have been revised upwards in the short-term, overall the average GDP growth throughout this period remains at 1.4 per cent and so the structural deficit remains broadly unchanged. Any impact of the revised forecast on local government funding will be known until the Autumn Budget 2018.

£1.7 billion was announced at Autumn Budget 2017 for improving transport in English cities. Half of this was given to Combined Authorities with mayors. The government is now inviting bids from cities across England for the remaining £840 million. We are awaiting details of the bidding criteria for this fund, or the authorities that will be eligible.

The Statement confirmed the government’s commitment to delivering an investment programme of at least £44 billion over the next five years as announced in the Autumn Budget 2017. The council was successful in their bid for £12.2m funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund to help facilitate the physical regeneration of the site and delivery of social housing at Anglia Square.

Spring Statement 2018 announces that the next revaluation, currently due in 2022, will be brought forward to 2021. This is bringing forward the existing government promise to increase the frequency of the revaluations from five years to three years.

At a more fundamental and political level, the Spring Statement was a missed opportunity to address the havoc wrought on public services by a misguided and malign ‘austerity’. It is local government, more than any other public service that has borne the brunt of these policies over the last eight years.”

## Question 10

### **Councillor Manning to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion the following question:**

“I was pleased to see yet another tranche of Big Switch Save being launched once again. I understand it now also includes renewable energy providers too which is positive addition. Can the cabinet member for social inclusion comment on the success of the scheme and new opportunities it offers?”

**Councillor Davis cabinet member for social inclusion's response:**

"Thank you for highlighting this practical and popular scheme that has helped thousands of Norwich citizens to save money.

Through the power of collective purchasing we work to secure the lowest energy prices for our registrants each winter, therefore helping to reduce the cost of energy and offset rising energy prices.

You are right to highlight the 16th edition of the Norwich Big Switch and Save as being especially exciting as for the first time two renewable energy providers won the auction.

This means you can save money and play your part in reducing carbon emissions by supporting the renewable energy industry.

Over the last 15 tranches, 22,000 people have registered for the Norwich Big Switch and Save. If all homes took up the offered savings a total of at least £5 million would be saved on energy bills: money that would be better spent in our local economy. So I would urge residents to take advantage of the exceptionally good offer.

Finally I would like to note that Norwich City Council endeavours to engage with fuel poor households regularly to ensure that they are aware of the Switch and Save and other available help.

We will continue to work hard to help our residents out of the fuel poverty trap. So while fuel poverty levels are increasing nationally, we have bucked the trend in Norwich for the fourth consecutive year. Norwich now has 1,400 less households in fuel poverty, not having to make the agonising decision of whether to heat or eat."

**Question 11**

**Councillor Ryan to ask the leader of the council the following question:**

"I was pleased to see former Leader of Norwich City Council, Councillor Steve Morpew and Robert Ashton launch a bid to develop 'Norfolk Mustard' in response to Unilever declaring that they will be withdrawing from Colman's factory. Can the Leader comment once again on our ongoing work to support employees at both Britvic and Unilever?"

**Councillor Waters leader of the council's reply:**

"Thank you, Councillor Ryan, for your question.

Since my last response to council in January, we have continued to work proactively with both Unilever and Britvic and the workforce in both companies. I have met with representatives of the Unite and GMB Unions alongside the city's two members of Parliament, Clive Lewis and Chloe Smith, to explore options for both companies to stay in the city.

In reality, the council has very little influence to change each companies' decision. Following the meeting, and at the city council's suggestion, GMB Union have written to Chloe Smith MP requesting an urgent meeting with Secretary of State Greg Clarke in Norwich to explore the development of alternative proposals that retains the business in Norwich.

At the beginning of March, I was in contact with Britvic who confirmed that they have made the decision to move out of Norwich for commercial reasons. They were now working with other providers to deliver an enhanced redundancy package for their workers alongside support for retraining and redeployment opportunities with other employers in the city. Unilever on the other hand are still engaged in a formal consultation process with their workforce and they are not able to discuss future options for the site until the consultation period has been completed. Once this process has been completed we will reconvene our meetings with Unilever to review the outcome of the consultation."

## **Question 12**

**Councillor Vaughan Thomas to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing the following question:**

"I was pleased to read that even the Secretary of State for Local Government, Savid Javid, name checked the positive Goldsmith Street development as an example of best practice building in social housing. Will the cabinet member for Social Housing comment on how the development is progressing and how, if the government is supposedly positive about this, it might change its policy direction to help unlock our capacity to increase home building within the city?"

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

"Thank you for your question. We welcome Goldsmith Street being recognised as an exemplar scheme by the Secretary of State alongside being recently highlighted in an article about the Best New (World) Architecture of 2018.

Development is progressing on site, with all of the timber frame now erected, internal fit out of the dwellings is well under way and it is anticipated that the development will be complete by mid-October.

One of the main barriers to local authorities developing new affordable housing is right to buy and the government restrictions around the use of right to buy receipts, such as the cap of 30 per cent on any scheme cost and only allowing three years from receipt to spending the money. There has been much discussion of late in the housing press that the government is starting to recognise these barriers but I wait to see if the proposed social housing green paper will include an easing of these restrictions that would free up the council to deliver far more new homes which I know council fully supports and are much needed.

The government has recently announced £1bn of additional HRA borrowing that will be made available for local authorities in areas of high affordability. A prospectus for bidding is due to be published within the next month, and I look forward with interest to see the detail of this, including what the definition is of high affordability, which will determine the opportunities for the council to bid to be able to develop further excellent schemes for social rent.

Ideally the council would like to see the borrowing cap removed. This was recommended by the Treasury Committee in January; as otherwise, they concluded that the government's housebuilding targets would not be met.

There is still a potential threat to the HRA, in the form of a high value assets levy that stock owning local authorities may have to pay to cover the cost of extending the right to buy to housing association tenants. This has been postponed for this year but the government has yet to determine if this will be a requirement in the future. If government were to provide some certainty around this policy it would allow us to plan accordingly.

Despite the restrictions in place the council has delivered 43 new council homes for social rent since 2014 with a further 111 under construction, and agreements in place to purchase a further 39 which comprise the remaining 30 social rented units at Three Score phase 2 and 9 on Northumberland Street."

### **Question 13**

**Councillor Malik to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:**

"Will the cabinet member for Safe City Environment join me in thanking all staff involved with the SWEP arrangements earlier in the month, but also comment on the significance of the "Meeting complex needs and the prevention of rough sleeping innovation funding award" paper taken at cabinet on 14 March?"

**Councillor Maguire cabinet member for safe city environment's response:**

"Naturally, I am pleased to have the opportunity to thank all staff for their tireless efforts to provide accommodation and support to rough sleepers during the recent severe weather. I would also take this opportunity to thank our valued partners and those dedicated volunteers that all played a significant role in ensuring that no rough sleeper was without accommodation. I am sure that of council are appreciative and would like to thank those involved.

This council is proud of its commitment to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping. Our innovation funding award is indeed significant and marks a step change in the way the council's response to rough sleeping is delivered. What the council is doing is really new and innovative; a shared response from the statutory and voluntary sector to the challenge of addressing rough sleeping and helping people with complex needs.

We are excited and proud to be working with partners who are so committed to improving people's lives, and this collaborative approach will make a real difference by combining the resources we have to help vulnerable people."

#### **Question 14**

##### **Councillor Coleshill to ask the cabinet member for health and wellbeing the following question:**

"I was pleased to see the plans launched for the new customer contact centre at City Hall. Given the changing needs and demands of our citizens, investing in a modern new service will give significant benefits. Can the cabinet member for health and wellbeing comment on the plans and the benefits likely to be achieved?"

##### **Councillor Packer cabinet member for health and wellbeing's response:**

"It is an exciting opportunity for us to provide a modern, bright, flexible space suitable for the modern service expectations of all our customers. The new look centre will have accessible support available across the day with our fully trained staff visible throughout the light and airy centre, 'floor walking' and providing a mobile reception service to our most vulnerable customers. Clear signage from all entrances and zoned areas, delivered through a mixture of carpeting and furniture, will lead customers through the space supported by the floor walkers and the central help point positioned near the main entrance at Bethel Street.

Our new customer service model of 'self serve' and 'appointment based' service will provide all customers with an opportunity to choose an appointment time that suits them, as well as enabling them to get assistance through our self serve points, where support from trained digital champions will be available to reassure and smooth any worries about using digital processes.

Our centre will provide a range of spaces suitable for the many types of interaction we have with customers from highly secure and private spaces to more relaxed and open environments that help us to deliver a personal individual service or potentially provide the professional space for groups of customers to use our facilities to view the most recent planning applications supported by a duty planning officer.

Self serve facilities to quickly provide documentary proof for support of an application will be available without the need to spend long periods of time in the centre.

Opportunities for continued development of partnership working and co-location of services that support our customer model will be enhanced through this new look centre.

The centre will provide a tailored, supportive service that is easy to access and enables all elements of a person's personal journey to be delivered in the one location either directly by our staff or through partners working alongside us or by sign posting to the right service."

## Question 15

### **Councillor Peek to ask the leader of the council the following question:**

“I was pleased to read some of the positive feedback coming from the consultation work around the 2040 Vision. Can the Leader comment on the significance of this and how ongoing consultation will lead to a new draft vision document and associated actions?”

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

“Our vision for Norwich needs to be rooted in the views of everyone who lives in the city as well as those who visit it. Therefore, I am delighted that recent feedback reflects what we know Norwich to be: a vibrant growing city with social, economic and cultural strengths, offering a variety of experiences, which truly make it a unique destination city to live, learn, work and visit.

Not only are people passionate about the city, it’s encouraging to hear that they are also broadly positive about the council, recognising that we are good at keeping the city a pleasant and clean place to be, and providing good quality council housing stock.

Whilst there is much to celebrate, people understand that we face challenges too, with pockets of deprivation, poor educational attainment and health inequalities, skills mismatches and difficulties in recruiting the right staff.

The feedback also highlights that people recognise the need for a shared ambitious vision and that they want to be involved in, its development and delivery.

The current phase of consultation concludes with the 2040 Norwich City Vision Youth Conference taking place on 1 May. This was scheduled for 1 March but was cancelled due to the severe weather we had. We are keen to obtain some feedback from young people so in the meantime a short online survey for 11-25 year olds was launched on Monday 12 March for two weeks.

On completion of the engagement phase, we will be working with key partners and stakeholders, via a City Vision Network, to co-produce a draft vision framework and identify key priorities and actions, ready for public consultation in the summer. Our aim is to launch the 2040 Norwich City Vision at a follow up conference in November.

The City Vision Network will be flexible and consist of existing strategic partnerships, professional networks and groups representing a range of communities. These organisations and partnerships will be grouped around the city vision themes forming hubs that will own priorities and be responsible for developing and taking forward specific actions to deliver the vision.

This approach of co-production and shared ownership will provide real direction for our journey to 2040, enabling the city to build on its strengths, tackle the challenges and maximise opportunities over the coming months and years, making Norwich a world-class city.”



## Question 16

**Councillor Beth Jones to ask the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods the following question:**

“I was pleased to see the launch of the new Active Hours initiative which will be the city’s first social currency project. Can the cabinet member for Safer, Stronger Neighbourhoods comment on the initiative and the benefits for our city?”

**Councillor Herries, cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhood’s response:**

“I am very excited to be launching this new project in April 2018. Sitting within the wider Get Involved programme, the council, in partnership with Active Norfolk, were successful in securing £150,000 over three years to pilot this as an approach. This is another example where secured external funds have been secured to support core areas of work.

Active Hours will create a collaborative, networked partnership of organisations in neighbourhoods where the joint ambition is to improve the wellbeing and social capital of residents through activities which involve physical activity although often in less traditional ways than simply sport. The project will support these partners to create great opportunities for residents to engage with delivery of their local activities in a way which makes best use of their passion and skills and suits their lives.

The target will be in four geographic areas: West Earlham; Lakenham; Mile Cross and Heartsease. The project will prioritise people in the 21-50 age group (working age) and aim to engage a significant number of women, residents with disability and long term health conditions, and BAME residents as key under-represented demographics within physical activity volunteering.

The ambition is to incentivise residents who have been less likely to volunteer in the past due to the barriers they faced both with the currency and also by helping the organisations involved address and mitigate those barriers.

For those residents we would expect to see an increase in confidence especially in engaging others in their own communities, better social connections and an improved sense of wellbeing. Through use of the currency element, we would also expect to see them increasing their own participation in activities which are not those run by their own organisation and an increase in their levels of physical activity accordingly.

Complementary to the benefits of individuals is the benefit to the community groups themselves as a result of access to development support, training, new volunteers and partnerships with other local organisations. We seek to make these groups more robust and resilient, teaching them about evaluation and impact in order to support them to apply for external funding and to become an organisation which values and nurtures their volunteers to improve retention.

The project will assess the development of the organisations themselves as a result of changing the way they recruit, train and develop these participants. There will be a

Theories of Change model which would be used with all organisations taking part, and assessed regularly as the project develops. It will measure confidence, competence, volunteer experiences and retention and ability to work sustainably.

As a result of increase capacity in groups, we would hope to see an increase in the availability of community-based fitness activities which also increase the use of assets in the local area. We would hope to see groups taking more ownership of local areas (activities taking place in parks and woodlands, more activities running in community buildings). The programme seeks to learn how better to communicate with harder to reach communities, therefore we would hope to see members of the wider community having an increased knowledge of what is available in their area and, even if they are not currently taking up activities or volunteering, where to find out information if they chose to.

The first year of this project will focus on developing the partnership of organisations, allowing them to shape the model and delivery. This will be underpinned by local resident engagement workshops identifying and understanding why people do not currently volunteer so as to inform the training and development of the groups.

In year two, these groups will begin to offer residents opportunities to earn and spend this currency, joining Active Hours as a member and participating in a way which suits them."