



**COUNCIL**

**7.30 p.m. – 9.10 p.m.**

**22 July 2008**

Present: Councillor Hooke (Lord Mayor), Mr Waller (Sheriff) and Councillors Arthur, Banham, Bearman, Blakeway, Brociek-Coulton, Cannell, Collishaw, Divers, Driver, Dylan, Fairbairn, George, Gledhill, Holmes, Jago, Jeraj, Little(A), Little(S), Llewellyn, Lubbock, Makoff, Morphey, Morrey, Offord, Ramsay, Sands, Stephenson, Watkins, and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Blower, Bremner, Gihawi, Read, Wright and Waters

**1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor Read on his recent wedding and wished him all the best for the future.

The Lord Mayor announced that, since the last meeting, he had attended a number of engagements including -

- the Royal Norfolk Show;
- Institute of Food Research Dinner;
- Peace Cycle event;
- unveiling a plaque at the Maids Head Hotel to commemorate their refurbishment;
- Sewell Park 100 year celebration;
- the Tall Ships event in Rouen which included celebrations to celebrate Rouen's new twinning with Cleveland, Ohio;
- Lord Mayor's Business Reception;
- Great Yarmouth Borough Council's Civic Service;
- the John Innes Institute Conference.

The Lord Mayor's Street Procession on 5 July had been a huge success with approximately 40,000 people enjoying the event watching 72 floats and that approximately £6,000 had been raised for the Civic charities.

Tickets for the Lord Mayor's Ball on 4 October 2008 were now available. The Ball was in support of the Civic charities and he hoped as many people as possible would support the event.

The Lord Mayor congratulated the Council's Food Safety Team in reaching the final of the Municipal Journal Local Government Achievement Awards 2008. He said that it was a great tribute to the outstanding work of the Food Safety Team, who received recognition for the work on the Norwich Safer Food Award. The City Council was the

only Norfolk local authority to reach the final and narrowly lost out to the winners, Lancashire County Council.

## **2. PETITION**

### **Responsibilities of Dog Owners**

The Lord Mayor received a petition from Pat Harker as follows:-

'We the undersigned want owners of dogs to behave responsibly, with all dogs in built up areas kept on leads and controlled in an appropriate manner. We want people and their pets to be able to go outside without the fear of being attacked. Only this week in Charles Square a family pet, in this instance a kitten was mauled by an uncontrolled dog and died of its injuries.'

Councillor Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member Residents and Customer Care responded:-

'The Council welcomes the petition and applaud the residents for taking a stand on this important matter. We would encourage members of the public to report dogs out of control and causing concern. Council also echoes the sentiments that people and pets should be able to go outside without fear. To that end I would urge all residents who have dogs to make sure they are controlled in the proper manner.

When reports of dogs not being controlled properly are received, the areas are visited and where possible people are advised to control their dogs in the appropriate manner. If the person owning the dog is known they are visited by the relevant council officer and advised of the need to control their dogs.

At present the council is duty bound to deal with stray dogs and since 1 April this year has dealt with 402 stray dogs. Dogs that are considered dangerous are a matter for the police and should be reported to them direct.'

## **3. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 24 June 2008.

## **4. QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

The Lord Mayor advised members that 18 questions, including one urgent question, had been received of which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of Appendix 1 of the Council's Constitution. The questions were as follows:-

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|-------------------|---|
| <b>Question 1</b> | Councillor Stephen Little to the Executive Member for Community Safety and Cohesion on street parties.                      |
| <b>Question 2</b> | Councillor Claire Stephenson to the Leader of the Council on 'NightVision'.   |
| <b>Question 3</b> | Councillor Samir Jeraj to the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee regarding consultation on Planning Applications. |

- Question 4** Councillor Peter Offord to the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development on closure of Post Offices.
- Question 5** Councillor Ruth Makoff to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on land at St Edmund's Close.
- Question 6** Councillor Adrian Holmes to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services on requests for smaller wheelie bins.
- Question 7** Councillor Tom Dylan to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services on stray dogs.
- Question 8** Councillor John Fisher to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on industrial units on Hurricane Way.
- Question 9** Councillor Niki George to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on bus lanes on Dereham Road.
- Question 10** Councillor Antony Little to the Leader of the Council regarding expenditure on the Unitary Bid.
- Question 11** Councillor John Wyatt to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on Three Score Land.
- Question 12** Councillor Evelyn Collishaw to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services on access to Neighbourhood Housing officers.
- Question 13** Councillor Joyce Divers to the Executive Member for Resources and Governance on admission of the Freeman in the City.
- Question 14** Councillor Brian Watkins to the Executive Member for Resources and Governance on delivering value for money.
- Question 15** Councillor David Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services on door entry system at Springbanks.
- Question 16** Councillor Rosalind Wright to the Leader of the Council on the Norwich London Rail.
- Question 17** Councillor Judith Lubbock to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on street cycle hire.
- Question 18** Councillor Brian Morrey to the Leader of the Council on Council and Executive functions.

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

## **5. BOUNDARY COMMITTEE REVIEW – STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor Morphew, Leader of the Council, made a statement on the recent announcement by the Boundary Committee of its preferred options for Local Government Review in Norfolk. He considered that the preferred option of a Unitary Norfolk failed to meet the requirements for accountability and representative democracy and the Council would continue to work towards the case for the "doughnut" option as this was a once in a generation opportunity that should not be missed. He encouraged people to make their evidence based comments to the Boundary Committee.

Councillor Ramsay, responding on behalf of the Green Group, considered the options were poor and failed to address accountability issues. The Green Group would support the "doughnut" as the best options proposed.

Councillor Watkins, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, also considered that the options did not address accountability and representative democracy issues. The Liberal Democrat Group would continue to play a pro-active and constructive role in supporting the case for a Norwich Unitary Council.

Councillor Little, responding on behalf of the Conservative Group, commented on the importance of the Council not negating its responsibility to deliver good quality services whilst building the case against the Boundary Committee's preferred option of a Unitary County.

## **6. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2008/09**

Councillor Morphew moved the recommendations in the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and said he wished to alter the recommendations to appoint Councillor Blower to the Theatre Royal (Norwich) Trust instead of an officer representative. With no member objecting, the amendment became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Ramsay seconded the recommendations.

### **RESOLVED to -**

- (1) agree appointments to outside bodies for 2008/09 as set out in the appendix to this report, subject to the amendment minuted above;
- (2) grant devolved authority to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups, to agree nominations to any outstanding vacancies together with any vacancies arising during the year; and
- (3) where officer representation has been agreed for the future, grant devolved authority to the Chief Executive Officer to determine the specific officers to be appointed.

## **7. MOTION - RENEWABLE ENERGY TARIFF**

Councillor Ramsay, moved and Councillor Dylan seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED**, that Council notes:

- that the UK produces less than 2% of its total energy from renewable energy sources and is at the bottom the European Renewable Energy 'league table';
- that countries in the European Union that have adopted a Renewable Energy Feed in Tariff such as Germany, Italy and Spain have seen a substantial rise in the percentage of their energy from renewable sources. If adopted in the UK this would facilitate a large increase in energy generated from local renewable sources in Norwich, by the Council, by residents and by local businesses, and hence would be a huge step towards the Council's agreed 6% carbon reduction targets.

Council asks the Executive, in consultation with the Climate Change Working Party, to consider whether supporting the amendment to the Energy Bill currently before Parliament that calls on Government to establish a Feed in Tariff within 12 months for the generation of local renewable heat, renewable power and renewable gas, is an appropriate way to help the Council meet its 6% carbon reduction target, and if so, to consider writing to:-

- (1) the Energy Minister, Malcolm Wicks MP, calling on the UK Government to act with urgency and to ensure the adoption of a Tariff for local energy under the current Energy Bill which will now be delayed over Summer;
- (2) our Norwich MPs urging them to support the amendment to the Energy Bill;
- (3) Friends of the Earth and the Renewable Energy Association informing them of the Council's support for their campaign on this issue."

CHAIR

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Questions to Executive Members and Chairs of Committees**

#### **Question 1**

##### **Councillor Stephen Little to the Executive Member for Community Safety and Cohesion:-**

"In response to a question my Colleague Councillor Gledhill asked back in March, the Executive Member for Community Safety and Community Cohesion said that he would ask officers to look into the options available to facilitate street parties. Can he report back on this?"

##### **Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council's response, in the absence of Councillor Bert Bremner, Executive Member for Community Safety and Cohesion:-**

"This is a complicated matter and officers are looking at best practice in other cities. The Events Team are looking at how, despite the constraints, we might have a more flexible policy - can I suggest Councillor Little contact them and arrange to be briefed around some of the issues."

#### **Question 2**

##### **Councillor Claire Stephenson to the Leader of the Council:-**

"How has the NightVision project progressed since being allocated £10,000?"

##### **Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council's reply:-**

"The Council has allocated £5,000 to support Night Vision.

The objectives of Night Vision are:

- To strengthen the appeal of the City Centre, particularly in the early evening and assess the contribution this might make to widening choice and increasing diversity.
- To bring forward proposals for increasing business and other activity after hours in cooperation with the city centre stakeholders, including the business community.
- To assess the need ,if any, for improvements in the management of the centre after hours to support the proposals
- To work with local partners in devising specific initiatives to stimulate business/ other activity "after hours", or sustain it long term.

This project has been set up and is being managed by the City Centre Management Partnership. A working party has been established and the Civic Trust has been appointed to undertake the project. Stefan Gurney, the City Centre Management Partnership Manager has been designated as the project manager. The working party has agreed the Project Initiation Document.

The project is now in its first phase. This includes a review of existing literature, research, surveys and policies and a "Street level" performance review of the City Centre has been conducted by the Civic Trust and members of the working party at 6 pm. and 3 am. The Civic Trust is now drawing together its initial conclusions and highlighting opportunities for action, for consideration by the working party at its meeting on 1st August 2008. Next steps will be agreed at that stage."

### **Question 3**

#### **Councillor Samir Jeraj to the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee:-**

"Green Councillors have recently been contacted by residents with views on planning applications on Bond Street, on Trafford Road and at City College, in all of which the residents feel there have been problems with consultation, or that consultation was clearly insufficient. Does the Council plan to review and improve the way it consults residents on planning applications?"

#### **Councillor David Bradford, Chair of the Planning Applications Committee's reply:-**

"I understand that the concerns relate to a number of distinct issues:

- (a) The information available on the Planning Public Access website;
  - (b) The numbers of neighbours notified directly by letter;
  - (c) The lack of notification to existing community groups.
- 
- (a) In respect of the first issue, following the comments by local residents commenting on the City College application, planning officers have already requested that improvements be made to the wording of the website to aid clarity for users. The changes necessary have been identified and will be undertaken by colleagues in the Web Team. It is hoped that these changes will be completed within the next few days.
  - (b) It is a statutory requirement to notify immediate neighbours by letter or advertise by way of site notice. It is the Council's policy and practice to do the former. In addition there are separate statutory requirements to advertise on site and in the press all applications affecting a listed building or in a Conservation Area. It is important that any policy is applied consistently and fairly across the whole City otherwise there could be maladministration identified by the Ombudsman. Any increase in properties notified by letter would obviously increase costs. It is inevitable that a line has to be drawn somewhere, and the person living in the next house may always feel aggrieved that they should have been notified. Any additional site notices would also have resource implications.
  - (c) Community groups have an important role to play in representing the local community's views. I will ask officers to consider how they may be better involved in planning applications.

I have requested that the issue of better community involvement be looked at following the Audit Commission's report on the Planning Service, which is expected in the next month, and in the light of any proposals that may be coming forward corporately, and in consultation with the Community Engagement Team."

In response to a question from **Councillor Jeraj**, **Councillor Bradford** said that officers were looking at the website issue and he hoped it would be resolved in the next month or so.

#### **Question 4**

##### **Councillor Peter Offord to the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development:-**

Campaigners in Suffolk are using new rules to claim for legal aid to get a Judicial Review on the closure of their Post Offices and asking Post Office Ltd to reconsider its decision on the closures or face an injunction. The recent news that Norfolk County Council's dossier to the Consultation Team was lost in the post begs the question whether it had sufficient time to consider the 200 page document and make a properly considered decision on the closures.

Furthermore, the Post Office pledged to improve the service at the Castle Mall Post Office and provide Post Watch with a plan which was to be monitored closely but this was not made public.

Can the Council request Post Watch to shed light on the plan and its cost implications and ask Post Office Ltd to reconsider its decision regarding the closure of the Norwich Post Offices?"

##### **Councillor Linda Blakeway, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development's reply:-**

"The Council is pleased to note that the efforts of all concerned has meant one of the three proposed closures in Norwich was avoided.

However there remains a great deal of concern about the process and outcomes and a great deal of sympathy for those customers of the New Costessey office which has subsequently been proposed for closure.

As part of our ongoing campaign the Council will certainly be contacting Postwatch and the Post Office Ltd to obtain details as to the improvements planned for the Castle Mall service to ensure that residents and businesses are disadvantaged as little as possible by the closure programme.

If Councillor Offord wishes to put forward any specific reasons why we should ask the Post Office Ltd to reconsider, I would be happy to discuss those with him."

**Councillor Offord** asked whether the Executive Member would investigate the data used to inform Post Office Limited's decision. **Councillor Blakeway** said this was discussed at Scrutiny Committee and included in the original submission. If Councillor Offord had any further evidence that incorrect data was being used he could share it with her and she would pass it on.



## Question 5

### **Councillor Ruth Makoff to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

"What does the council expect to happen to the abandoned land on St Edmunds Close, given that, since planning permission was refused in the past, it is unlikely that the Crown will be able to sell the land for development, and does the Executive member agree that the only way now for the land to be maintained is for the council to take it on?"

### **Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

"We are investigating ownership of this land so the Council can decide what course of action it should take. It is not unusual for a neighbour to purchase such land as a garden extension, or for it to become a community project, so it is not necessarily a forgone conclusion that the Council should assume control. In some cases the land is in ownership, with the owner unwilling to maintain the site whilst they await a planning consent. In these cases we discuss the issue with the owner direct."

**Councillor Makoff** said she understood that the land was in the hands of the Treasury and its Solicitor expected the Treasury to disclaim it. If this happened, the Crown would have no obligation and she asked if the Council would consider buying the land. **Councillor Morrey** said that **Councillor Makoff** seemed to have more information than Council officers and if she would share it with the Council then officers would investigate.

## Question 6

### **Councillor Adrian Holmes to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-**

"A number of residents in phase two of the alternate weekly collection roll-out have contacted Green Councillors to complain that they have asked the Council for smaller sized wheelie bins and have not been provided with them. How many residents in phase two have asked for smaller sized wheelie bins (for residual waste or recycling) and how many of them have been provided with the smaller bins?"

### **Councillor Julie Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services' reply:-**

"At present there should be a maximum wait of two weeks between the request for the bin and its delivery. So far there have been 1281 requests for smaller bins in the Stage 2 area of which 1112 have been delivered. The outstanding requests are due delivery for this week and next week. If there is anybody still waiting for a bin I would appreciate if you could forward the addresses to Citizen Services who will check and ensure they have been included and arrange for delivery of the appropriate container as soon as possible. I am pleased that people are being so involved in the Alternate Weekly Collection and responding so positively."

**Councillor Holmes** asked, as a supplementary question, whether officers would be available to talk to residents who were still not convinced that they wanted a blue bin.

**Councillor Brociek-Coulton** said that officers were talking to residents and if Councillor Holmes informed her which residents were unhappy she would pass the information to the relevant officers.

#### **Question 7**

#### **Councillor Tom Dylan to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-**

“Following contact from the organisers of the petition that has been submitted to this Council meeting, I contacted council officers using the councillor enquiries system at least twice in the last month to ask about what action the council is taking to deal with the problem of stray dogs, and dogs not on leads. I have not received a response, and am interested to know what action is being taken?”

#### **Councillor Julie Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services’ reply:-**

“I apologise for the officers not getting back to you and this has been taken up with those concerned. As you may well know the responsibility for stray dogs passed from the police to local authorities on the 6th April this year as a result of Section 68 of the Clean Neighbourhoods Act.

To accommodate the new duties a small unoccupied Council building was renovated to provide a comfortable short-term kennelling facility. This facility is used while Officers attempt to identify and contact the dog’s owner. If we cannot contact the owners reasonably soon after collection the dogs are moved to a commercial kennelling facility. Efforts to locate the owners continue, but after 7 days in the commercial kennels the dogs are available for re-homing. These kennels have been successful in re-homing all of the unclaimed strays collected since last summer. Since the 1st April the council has dealt with 402 stray dogs.

When reports of dogs not being controlled properly are received, the areas are visited and where possible people are advised to control their dogs in the appropriate manner. If the person owning the dog is known they are visited by the relevant council officer and advised of the need to control their dogs.”

**Councillor Dylan** asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Executive Member would ensure that there were more pro-active measures, such as additional dog patrols, use of wardens, PCOs etc. rather than the reactive actions referred to in the answer. **Councillor Brociek-Coulton** reminded members that Council only had one dog warden. However, she would discuss this with officers and report back to Councillor Dylan.

### Question 8

**Councillor John Fisher to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

"Can the Executive Member set out the Council's long term plan for the industrial units on Hurricane Way?"

**Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

"These units are held by the Council as long term investment assets, and our long term plan is therefore to continually seek opportunities that sustain the best return for Norwich. There are currently no specific changes proposed or in progress."

### Question 9

**Councillor Niki George to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

"Would the Executive Member consider joining me in writing to the Joint Highways Committee to urge a change in the hours for the Bus Lane on Dereham Road to allow greater access at rush hour for cars in order to reduce congestion and pollution at these key times?"

**Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

"The bus lanes on Dereham Road provide a vital function in helping bus services avoid congestion. Opening the bus lanes up to general traffic would give the buses no advantage over general traffic and therefore I would not support such a suggestion.

Without the bus lane, bus services would be both delayed and journey times would be less reliable. Passengers would be discouraged from using them and would be more likely to use cars instead. This would add to traffic flows on Dereham Road thereby compounding the problem of increased delays and unreliability, not only for buses but also for general traffic. Also more people using private car and reduced patronage on buses are likely to add to pollution rather than reduce it."

**Councillor George** asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Executive Member would support a change of hours to allow greater use of the bus lanes by other vehicles at rush hour. **Councillor Morrey** said no for the reasons stated in his answer.

### Question 10

**Councillor Antony Little to the Leader of the Council:-**

"Including planned expenditure to the end of the financial year, how much has the City Council's Unitary Bid now cost the taxpayers of Norwich, including staff costs?"

**Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council's reply:-**

“Councillor Little is well aware of the answer to this question. He was sent an email detailing expenditure on 25 February 2008. The situation has not changed since then

Total spend, since early work from around October 2005 to end March 2008 (i.e. 2 years and 6 months):

Area of expenditure	Sum spent
Direct employees (e.g. internal secondees) (NB some of this is the Director of Transformation salary, of which a significant proportion is used for other, non-unitary corporate activities)	£196,144
Transport	£685
Supplies and services (including external consultancy)	£382,306
Support costs	£900
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£580,035</b>

All of this expenditure has been approved by Council.

There are no additional staffing costs. We have taken the decision to second staff to the unitary project, so that the impact on the rest of the organisation and front-line services is minimised.

Council has agreed that the total funds available for unitary work in 2008/09 is £800,000. This is not a budget as such, but is a sum to be drawn against depending on the requirements of the Boundary Committee, and implementation once a decision is made.”

He also knows that the Government is requiring substantial savings from this exercise so it is in effect a spend to save project over the longer term. I wish I could justify officer time to work out how much money has been spent in transaction costs between the four councils over the past many years that could have been avoided and the quality of service improvements that could have been funded by not having a multiplicity of staff in four councils covering the same functions and not integrating services effectively.

The County Council has admitted the City has had a bad deal - and I wonder if he would care to put a figure on that cost to the City. Rather than repeat questions he already knows the answer to for what appears to be a narrow party political purpose, it is a pity he doesn't engage in the debate about whether we can find better ways to fulfil the potential of the City and improve the governance for the people as his contribution would be welcome. He could the join his colleague councillors from the other three parties in putting the interests of the City above his self serving party political interests.

**Councillor Antony Little** asked, as a supplementary question, if the Boundary Committee's proposal that there is one Unitary Council for Norfolk is progressed, would the Leader would remove the Childrens' and Social Services role from Executive Portfolios. **Councillor Morpew** said he would not because whatever the result of Local Government Review, he would want to maximise the Council's positive impact on children and older people and would ensure that the necessary resources were included to ensure maximum influence.

## **Question 11**

### **Councillor John Wyatt to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

"Persimmon Homes are reported to have actually acquired the land at Three Score for a 1200 home development (EEN 28.11.07) but are now saying that they are putting new projects on hold (EDP 07.07.08). At the time of the land sale, the then-Deputy Leader of the Council said that this deal "hit all the right buttons" (EEN 28.11.07). Can the Executive Member confirm that a start can only be made on this development at the whim of Persimmon? Can he tell us which buttons it hit? And can he answer the question that he totally dodged last month about why a development of this size was not phased with more than one developer involved?"

### **Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

"Councillor Wyatt obviously did not understand what he was told last month so to reiterate the contract has already been subject to a tender process for sale as one lot, in order to encourage sustainability and secure the best financial return whilst allowing a developer to be able to put in the infrastructure required. This approach was approved by Executive on 13 December 2006.

Persimmons are the selected bidder, as agreed by Executive on 19 September, 2007, and negotiations continue with a view to finalising the transaction and making a start on the development.

I suggest that Councillor Wyatt asks the former Deputy Leader Brenda Ferris what she meant by her statement because I know I am brilliant but even I cannot read peoples minds. So I have no intention of trying to second guess what Brenda meant and put words into her mouth that you and your colleagues would then use to attack her if you did not agree with them. Finally at last Council I did point out that this was still a matter of commercially confidentiality and nothing has changed that situation."

## **Question 12**

### **Councillor Evelyn Collishaw to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services:-**

"I was disturbed to be contacted by a disabled resident who wished to access housing services at Bullard Road in Catton Grove and speak to a housing officer. However he was told that this was not possible anymore despite not receiving any prior warning. Could the Executive Member please clear up what the situation is and how this resident should contact a housing officer?"

### **Councillor Brenda Arthur, Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services' reply:-**

"Thank you for raising this issue of access for residents, especially those with disabilities, to our Neighbourhood Housing Offices. I am concerned that any resident contacting one of our offices would not be redirected to the most appropriate way in which they can have their needs met. However, I understand that the specifics of this

individual situation are being investigated and that a full response will be with you in the next couple of days.

There are two ways in which I can respond to the issues of access you have raised. Firstly, we have recently commenced a review of our Housing Offices as we have identified that the access to them for residents can be difficult. We anticipate the outcomes of this review, which should tell us what actions are required to make them even more accessible, will be available by October.

Secondly, as our Neighbourhood Housing Officers spend most of their working days out with tenants and arrangements can be made for planned appointments which meet the needs of the residents. I am surprised that this was not offered but trust that the investigation underway will explain this.

I am sure that a Neighbourhood Housing Officer will be visiting the resident in question. Furthermore, I can assure you that staff in both the Neighbourhood Offices and in the Tenancy Service Team and Residents Service Team have been advised of the need to ensure that this incident is not repeated."

**Councillor Collishaw** asked, as a supplementary question, why was the decision made to stop providing these services in Area Offices before the review was complete. **Councillor Arthur** said she understood that this decision had been made following a reorganisation in 2005. The Executive's view was that there should be as much use of resources in the community as possible hence instigating this new review.

### **Question 13**

**Councillor Joyce Divers to the Executive Member for Resources and Governance:-**

"As Council is aware the rules of admission of Freemen in the City are antiquated and outmoded with women not being granted the same rights as men. The Council may have obligations to change these rules under ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) legislation and may, through section 239 of the 1972 Local Government Act, have the power to promote a local bill to enact change. Could the Executive Member update council on what progress has been made in investigating this issue?"

**Councillor Steve Morpew to reply in the absence of Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Resources and Governance:-**

"It has long been the Council's wish to admit women as well as men to the Freedom of the City as the current position is clearly anachronistic, unfair and overdue for change but our advice from a specialist barristers' chambers on this point has been that the Council has no power to change the rules. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has commissioned further advice to explore any effect that the Human Rights Act 1998 might have on the issue and that is awaited. The promotion of a local bill to effect the change is possible but is not only disproportionately costly but possible only at very limited times of the year. This option may therefore be a last resort for the Council. We are also working with Norfolk members of parliament to obtain an order from the Secretary of State to effect the rule change."

**Councillor Divers** asked, as a supplementary question, for a timescale for the response regarding the effects of the Human Rights Act. **Councillor Morpew** said he could not say. However, Councillors would be kept advised of progress.

#### **Question 14**

**Councillor Brian Watkins to the Executive Member for Resources and Governance:-**

“Despite the Audit Commission reporting that “Without up-to-date comparative information on performance and cost the Council is unable to demonstrate that Norwich Connect provides ongoing value for money”, Cllr Waters stated in the EDP (26/07/08) that “We recognise it’s delivering value for money without a doubt.” Could the Executive Member outline how he is going to prove this?”

**Councillor Steve Morpew to reply in the absence of Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Resources and Governance:-**

“The Norwich Connect contract contains a provision requiring benchmarking to be carried out this year. This will allow an up to date comparison to be made and ensure value for money is achieved.”

**Councillor Watkins** asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Executive considered it was unwise to suggest that the Council delivered value for money without evidence and if it agreed that more effective scrutiny of the contract was necessary in future. **Councillor Morpew** said that, as far as he was aware, the quote was from the early part of the process during business process re-engineering. Monitoring of contracts was part of the new performance framework and he agreed that more scrutiny would be appropriate.

#### **Question 15**

**Councillor David Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services:-**

“Council is proposing to spend approximately £93,000 installing door entry systems at 101-183 Springbank, when there seems to be very little need for them. How much consultation with the secure tenants has there been, both on the need for this proposal and as to whether they wish to have it carried out?”

**Councillor Brenda Arthur, Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services’ reply:-**

“The installation of door entry systems for Nos. 35 - 183 Springbank are in this years programme and the proposal for the work has been priced by the relevant contractor and is currently out to leaseholder consultation prior to any work starting on site. I have been advised that the consultation period closes on the 20th July 2008. The Council has recently been made aware that a number of residents do not feel this work is necessary and under such circumstances we will review the requirements and the programme and then make a decision on what work is to be carried out. Clearly it is not in the Councils interests to carry out such work where there is no need, particularly in view of the high demand across the city for access control systems.

It is important to note that the Council has a 5 year draft programme for door entry installations which has been drafted using information on high areas of ASB behaviour (this takes many forms but one of the main sources of information are reports of ASB from residents) in order to set priorities. The priorities are set by the Partnership Task Crime Group not the Council and are reviewed annually to identify if certain areas have had more instances of ASB behaviour over the past year and therefore are a higher priority for a system to be installed than the previous year. Clearly for Springbank to have been included in the programme there have been a large number of reports of ASB in the area, however, if this situation has now changed the Council will review the need for such work keeping residents fully informed of the outcomes."

**Councillor Fairbairn** asked, as a supplementary question, whether if tenants were not keen on this provision, would the funding be allocated to an area with greater need and demand. **Councillor Arthur** said that other Ward Councillors who had been in the area for longer informed her that many tenants were happy with such systems and there had been a reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents. However, if there was no need and tenants really did not want this system, it will not be installed.

#### **Question 16**

##### **Councillor Rosalind Wright to the Leader of the Council:-**

"Recent press reports have highlighted the inadequacy of the Norwich-London rail service. Could the Council Leader ensure Council that he is doing everything in his power to lobby for improvements and expansion to the network in the region and will he encourage all Councillors to sign a Downing Street e-petition outlining the urgent need for a public inquiry into rail provision within East Anglia?"

##### **Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council's reply:-**

"I too am very concerned about poor performance and quality of the Norwich to London rail service. For example

- Whilst improving, reliability of the service is slightly below the national average and below the average for all of National Express Anglia's services;
- Earlier in the decade the fastest train between Norwich and London took 1hr 36 minutes whereas it now takes 1 hr 54 minutes;
- There is a lack of seat capacity on peak period services;
- There is frustration over extended engineering works; and
- The quality and viability of connection with Eurostar at Stratford is uncertain; and
- There are concerns that proposed replacement trains, although they will increase seat capacity, will not be of Intercity standard.

In fairness the line south of Colchester is very congested partly due to passenger growth but also due to additional freight services. Both Network Rail and National Express Anglia have a number of plans to help remedy these problems. They include:



- Introduction of bi-directional signalling on the Colchester – Marks Tey section to improve performance: 2007 – 2009;
- Scheme to increase berthing capacity at Norwich station: 2007/08
- Improved maintenance so that line possessions are minimised and line becomes a “7 day” railway;
- Introduction of new trains to replace existing: 2009 – 2012;
- Infrastructure improvements to enable proposed new trains to operate: 2009 – 2012;
- Extension of platforms at Stratford to allow 12-car operation to enable more trains to stop and improve connections to underground, etc.; and
- Improvement in signalling flexibility on the approaches to Norwich: 2010.

In the longer term (post 2019) Network Rail are considering “four-tracking” between Colchester and Chelmsford with a new line across to the London Underground Central Line and then running into the proposed Crossrail 2 alignment, thereby delivering additional capacity and new journey opportunities.

Clearly these proposals are welcome but of course Norwich’s prosperity and development depend to a large degree on high quality transport infrastructure. We therefore need cast iron guarantees that these plans will be delivered and to a speeded up timescale. In particular I would like to see:

- That the agreed Network Rail/National Express Anglia performance plan is fully funded and delivered on time;
- Network Rail implements more quickly its published infrastructure plans to improve reliability and capacity;
- National Express Anglia introduces some faster services during morning and evening peak (this is likely to be subject to availability of paths and could mean fewer stops e.g. Chelmsford and Stratford)
- National Express Anglia brings forward the introduction of new trains and for these to be full Intercity standard (making use of the Department for Transport’s Intercity Express procurement programme);
- Network Rail provides alternative services via Cambridge when engineering possessions close the main line;
- Network Rail deliver a “7 day” railway within 5 years (i.e. to eliminate weekend and other major engineering possessions); and
- The opportunity of interchange with Eurostar, Javelin and underground services is maximised albeit set against a requirement to reduce journey times on key services.

In my view improvement of the Norwich to London rail service ranks as highly as other regional infrastructure improvements such as dualling of the remainder of the A11. Therefore I am working to develop a much stronger voice for Norwich as neither the strategic transport bodies nor campaigning groups have had any tangible success. In my new role as Chair of Regional Cities East (RCE) I have initiated discussions with our partners - especially Ipswich, Colchester and Southend who are similarly affected, and with the involvement of EEDA, to see how we can work together to influence investment decisions. It is a little premature to say more at this time but I am sure Council and the City as an economic driver will appreciate this Council using its position and influence as part of an urban and city based partnership to get a grip on an issue that deserves top priority. Working with the portfolio holder for Sustainable City Development we will drive the ambition we all share for a truly integrated transport system despite the fact it is actually not a City

Council function. I expect to be able to report further on the RCE initiative during the Autumn or Winter.”

#### **Question 17**

**Councillor Judith Lubbock to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

“At the last Council meeting a feasibility study into on street cycle hire was agreed. Can you say whether initial steps have been taken to set up a demonstration from companies who offer on street cycle hire?”

**Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development’s reply:-**

“The above resolution was a request to officers to investigate the feasibility of a cycle hire scheme. It was part of a wider motion to ask officers to also investigate the possibility of:

- Producing a plan for systematic improvements to the Norwich cycling network including junction treatments and new links
- Consulting partners and community groups such as TRAs and Norwich Cycling Campaign in the designing of both the plan and of the specific proposals when opportunities arise
- Submitting this document to the Norwich Highways Agency Committee requesting that the plan is incorporated into the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) to inform the detailed implementation of the relevant NATS policies and to input into the Local Development Framework

At the present time officers are examining how the additional work to respond to the resolution can be taken forward as part of service planning. Councillor Lubbock needs to appreciate however that the request for this new work was only made at the last Council and staff resources are already fully committed on existing work.

The request for a street cycle hire feasibility study can be informed by work carried out as part of the Spatial Metro project. However whilst this project indicated some enthusiasm for the concept by the public, further and more detailed work would be needed to properly inform Members about the feasibility of such an initiative. This workload needs to be examined against the priority of existing work commitments and a realistic timescale for taking forward the work needs to be established. Perhaps Councillor Lubbock can suggest which pieces of work Officers should drop to accommodate this new work halfway through the financial year.

This question along with the motion mentioned in it is one of the reasons I have asked the Leader the next question.”

#### **Question 18**

**Councillor Brian Morrey to the Leader of the Council:-**

“As Councillor Morpew is aware many councillors have expressed concern that motions passed in council have substantial financial and resource implications that have not been included in the policy and financial framework, nor do they feature in the Corporate Plan. At the last council meeting the Leader asked for an explanation of the way council has been required to make decisions since 2001 to be circulated. Would he place that on the council record in answering this question and would he also advise council on how he, as Chair of the Executive, intends to deal with motions passed by council in the future?”

**Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council's reply:-**

“The statement circulated to Council after the last meeting by the Head of Democratic and Legal Services is as follow:-

‘Prior to the adoption of the "modernisation regime" under the Local Government Act 2000 the City Council operated as a single administrative entity dealing with all City Council business and functions via a network of Committees and Sub-Committees. The perceived slowness of decision taking in this system lead to the options for Local Authority governance set out in the 2000 Act.

I share the irritation and frustration of many members that matters are brought to council that have no budget and could have been tested for inclusion within the policy framework, service plans and corporate plan. The extremely inclusive approach this administration has adopted means all parties have ample opportunity to contribute and all suggestions are weighed and discussed seriously. To be accused of not following the will of council by not rushing to engage with every motion passed by council is either a wilful misunderstanding of the way the council operates or else a wilful attempt to create mischief or adverse publicity.

It does little for the reputation of the council to pass un-costed and impossible to implement motions, and even less for staff struggling with the resources available to meet already huge demands. Having spent so much time getting the council finances back on track and refusing to spend money we haven't got or make promises we know we can't meet, this administration is not about to throw it all away.

However, it is appropriate that motions passed by council should be considered to see if there is anything that can be accommodated within the existing plans or whether there are grounds to revisit priorities.

In future I therefore propose to have all motions passed by council reported to the next suitable Executive meeting. Where appropriate the Executive will ask the Scrutiny Committee to advise on whether they believe the issue justifies revisiting the policy and budgetary plans approved by council, and if so what they would like to see the city council stop doing in order to make available sufficient resources to implement the motion to council. Scrutiny could then make recommendations to the Executive to inform their decision on a course of action.

This may appear very time consuming, but in fact only makes public the immense amount of time already absorbed by motions passed in council outside the policy and budgetary cycle.”

