

COUNCIL**19:30 – 22:20****23 September 2014**

Present: Councillors Lubbock (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Arthur, Barker, Blunt, Bogelein, Boswell, Bradford, Bremner, Brociek-Coulton, Button, Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Gayton, Gihawi, Grahame, Harris, Henderson, Herries, Howard, Jackson, Jones, Kendrick, Little, Manning, Neale, Packer, Ryan, Sands (M), Sands (S), Stammers, Stonard, Waters and Wright.

Apologies: Councillors Haynes, Maxwell and Woollard, and Mr Armstrong (Sheriff)

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor said that since the AGM she had attended over 90 events including most recently the Battle of Britain ceremonies which were supported by RAF Marham and the central band of the RAF and included magnificent spitfire fly pasts. The ceremonies were fitting tributes to those who fought and those who lost their lives in the 1940 battle of Britain. They were also a reminder of what the RAF is doing today in a positive way in Iraq, Afghanistan and West Africa.

She thanked those councillors who attended the ceremonies and urged those councillors who have not yet attended any civic events to find time to do so – they will not be disappointed.

She welcomed the Sheriff William Armstrong along to this Council meeting – stating that he and his wife Monica have been unstinting in their support for her as well as undertaking their own duties as Sheriff and Sheriff's lady. She also thanked the Civic Association, previous Lord Mayors and Sheriffs who had also been very supportive.

At the invitation of the Lord Mayor, Councillor Brociek-Coulton updated members on the city's success in the Anglia in Bloom competition. Norwich had received a gold award in the city category and there had been a silver award for the Mancroft ward in the urban community category. St Peter Mancroft church had been awarded best churchyard and there was a bio-diversity nomination for the University of East Anglia. She thanked Councillor Arthur and Councillor Driver (who had been Lord Mayor at the time) for supporting Norwich in Bloom when they met the Anglia in Bloom judges; Councillor Little for his work in respect of Town Close and all the individuals throughout the city who had put so much work into another successful year for Norwich in Bloom.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Lord Mayor said that two questions had been received from members of the public.

Question 1

Marion Fallon to the cabinet member for housing

How many council tenanted households in the Norwich City Council area have been evicted this year and what proportion of these were fully or partially due to the bedroom tax?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing's response:

There have been five evictions in the current financial year, between April and September 2014. Three were partially affected by bedroom tax at some point since April 2013, two were not affected by bedroom tax at all. All these cases have been dealt with in accordance with the council's rent arrears policy and every appropriate option to maintain the tenancy has been explored. This action has only happened after all other attempts to reach agreement with the tenant for the payment of rent have been exhausted. Most cases currently reaching the point of eviction had rent arrears and possession proceedings commenced prior to the introduction of bedroom tax in April 2013. Any council tenant faced with financial difficulties should contact the council as early as possible and all available help will be provided.

Question 2

Josh Graham to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport

I had a look at the council's current corporate plan, which I understand, is the guiding document for local policies. As a person concerned for the wellbeing of the planet and in the light of the upcoming climate summit, recent extreme weather events and clear research, I wonder: isn't it time to have preventing catastrophic climate change as a main priority?

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

The council's current work on this is encompassed within its environmental strategy. This environmental strategy sets out a road map for how the council will work towards achieving its key environmental objectives, priorities and commitments for the city. However, the council is currently developing a new corporate plan for the next five years and the draft framework does already have this included within one of

the proposed priorities. The next step on the development of the corporate plan is that it will be considered by the council's scrutiny committee on the 30 September and then cabinet on the 8 October. There will then be a 12 week public consultation on the draft priorities alongside options for the council's budget for 2015/16.

Josh Graham asked, as a supplementary question, how the council would ensure that sustainability was maintained as a priority in the future. **Councillor Stonard** said that the council had demonstrated that this was clearly a priority for the council as shown by the way it was embedded within service delivery. The council had a very good track record and was one of the better councils at this.

4. PETITIONS

The Lord Mayor said that two petitions had been received.

Petition 1

George Colley presented the following petition –

Increase your 'refreshment quota' and let us rent your 50 vacant market stalls.

For the past six months I have been trying to persuade, yes you heard me, persuade Norwich City Council (NCC) to rent me one of their 50 vacant market stalls. It seems the NCC are adamant about leaving the market empty and denying you the chance to have local, high quality, handmade and affordable food available at your doorstep. Let's put the Norwich market back on the map.

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for customer services' response:

It is council policy to ensure there is a broad mix of products and services on offer at Norwich Market so it is as vibrant and diverse as possible. We also have a duty to be fair to our existing stallholders. We have 190 stalls and currently 41 of these are vacant, with three of the vacancies likely to be let within the next six weeks. These are comprised of 20 high risk and 15 low risk – high risk being those requiring specific utilities such as electricity, gas, water and drainage. Businesses preparing and cooking food onsite require these facilities under current Food and Safety Act legislation. We do not currently have any of these kinds of stalls available for rent and this is the category of stall which the petitioner would require. We are conscious Norwich Market is important to the city and our current and future plan is to work with traders to make it as successful as possible. With this in mind, we recently promoted the market through an initiative called Making Markets Matter, and will continue to support stallholders through future similar events.

Petition 2

David Raby presented the following petition –

Protect Elm Hill's heritage.

We call on Norwich City Council's cabinet to recognise the historic, architectural, amenity and tourism importance of Elm Hill to Norwich and its citizens by transferring the 24 listed Elm Hill buildings to stewardship category in its list of council owned heritage assets and adding a new criterion of 'group value' to the special characteristics of stewardship properties. This would safeguard the buildings from any potential future sell off by the city council and would better protect the integrity of Elm Hill as a whole.

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

Elm Hill is a massively important part of the heritage offer of Norwich. Its heritage importance enjoys a high level of protection through planning policy, the conservation area designation and because most of the buildings on it are statutorily listed. The Heritage Investment Strategy which was adopted earlier in the year (following considerable involvement of stakeholders in its preparation) sets out the city council's approach to managing its historic assets. The strategy set out a considered approach to making the most of these assets, outlining a number of steps that we would take in managing these assets, particularly when considering possible disposal. The strategy contains a number of safeguards about how all heritage assets will be handled, and crucially fits in with our overall asset management strategy. This requires that we maximise the returns on our properties, not only to balance our accounts but also to fund the programme of investment needed in our property portfolio.

The Heritage Investment Strategy recognises that all of the council's heritage assets need special treatment. It also recognises that some need especially careful treatment particularly because their value derives from reasons such as an enduring civic function or they are never going to generate a commercial rate of return. This was why the category of stewardship properties was created. I am concerned that there has been some "scaremongering" suggestions that the council is intending to "sell off" Elm Hill. This is clearly not the case.

Of the 29 properties the city council owns on Elm Hill, five are already recognised to be stewardship properties. Eight further buildings are listed grade II and so also have some additional restrictions regarding their sale under the strategy. However, many, including the half dozen housing properties we still own, simply are not appropriate for this approach to be taken.

For the approach to stewardship properties to work as intended they do genuinely need to be special, adding factors such as group value to the criteria for designation risks substantially increasing the number of stewardship properties, increasing costs and introducing inconsistencies into the Heritage Investment Strategy.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED, unanimously, to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2014.

6. QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS / COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Lord Mayor advised that 17 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members of which notice had been received in accordance with the provisions of appendix 1 of the council's constitution, and the questions were as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| QUESTION 1 | Councillor Grahame to the cabinet member for resources on criteria for choosing the council's banking provider. |
| QUESTION 2 | Councillor Boswell to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens. |
| QUESTION 3 | Councillor Jackson to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on conservation area appraisals. |
| QUESTION 4 | Councillor Stammers to the leader of the council on filming public meetings. |
| QUESTION 5 | Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for housing on bidding for funding to build more council houses. |
| QUESTION 6 | Councillor Little to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety on leaf clearance. |
| QUESTION 7 | Councillor Carlo to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety on replacing lost trees. |
| QUESTION 8 | Councillor Ackroyd to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on 'A' boards on the pavement. |
| QUESTION 9 | Councillor Wright to the cabinet member for customer services on delivering council services through post offices. |
| QUESTION 10 | Councillor Sands to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the Push the Pedal Ways scheme. |
| QUESTION 11 | Councillor Sands (S) to the cabinet member for housing on the work of the council's home improvement team. |
| QUESTION 12 | Councillor Button to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on recycling. |
| QUESTION 13 | Councillor Harris to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on highway improvements at St Stephens, Chapelfield and Grapes Hill. |

- QUESTION 14** Councillor Barker to the cabinet member for environment, development and transport on the Switch and Save scheme.
- QUESTION 15** Councillor Brociek-Coulton to the cabinet member for resources on food banks.
- QUESTION 16** Councillor Packer to the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety on the green flag for Eaton Park.
- QUESTION 17** Councillor Gayton to the cabinet member for resources on cabinet consideration of the TTIP.

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

7. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENT OF ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

Councillor Arthur moved and Councillor Sands (M) seconded, the recommendations in the annexed report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to –

- (1) approve the revised scheme of delegation to officers;
- (2) to appoint Anton Bull, executive head of business relationship management and democracy, as the electoral registration officer;
- (3) make other changes in the constitution to reflect changes in the senior structure.

8. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

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

RESOLVED, unanimously, to delegate the appointment of the monitoring officer to the chief executive, in consultation with the three group leaders.

9. ANNUAL AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT 2013-14

Councillor Little moved, and Councillor Neale seconded, the recommendations in the annexed report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to receive the annual audit committee report 2013-14.

10. GREATER NORWICH GROWTH BOARD – ANNUAL GROWTH PROGRAMME 2014-15 AND NORWICH ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2015-16

Councillor Arthur moved, and Councillor Bremner seconded, recommendations in the annexed report.

RESOLVED -

- (1) with 22 voting in favour, none against and 14 abstentions, to approve the Greater Norwich annual growth programme for 2014-15;
- (2) unanimously, to include £160000 for the Norwich projects in the council's capital programme for 2014-15 (to be funded through income from the community infrastructure levy (CIL));
- (3) unanimously, to approve the draft Norwich annual business plan for 2015-16.

11. MOTION – SOCIAL HOUSING

Councillor Arthur moved, and Councillor Bremner seconded, the motion as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that –

Social housing faces great challenges in meeting the needs of those affected by welfare cuts and real changes over recent years, including the 'bedroom tax' and increased pressure from the escalating number of council homes lost through 'Right to Buy' after the coalition government increase in discount in 2012.

The government had made funding available for local authorities to bid for which would enable new housing to be built but the lending conditions mean that the rent for these homes have to be at 80 per cent of market rent. There are people on our waiting list who may not be able to afford this.

Council, therefore, **RESOLVES**, to –

- (1) ask the leader of the council to write to the two MPs for Norwich, laying out the case for the council being able to support people and future generations who cannot afford high rents by allowing it to bid for funding to build good quality homes at social rent which current and potential city homes tenants can afford and –
 - (a) requesting their support for this;
 - (b) requesting them to actively lobby ministers to raise the housing revenue account a cap and give local authorities the freedom to manage this process rather than via offering one-off opportunities;

- (c) asking them to lobby the minister for communities and local government to ensure the housing programme favours a Norwich social rented programme;
- (2) ask the cabinet to –
 - (a) consider how the city deal can continue to enable the delivery of more council homes at social rent levels, including working in partnership with other providers and local authorities;
 - (b) support the work of the SHOUT campaign and take a lead in affirming the positive value and purpose of social rented housing.

12. MOTION – TOWNS AGAINST TAX DODGING

Councillor Arthur moved, and Councillor Waters seconded, the motion as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that –

Norwich City Council ability to provide quality local services would be significantly enhanced by increased funding from central government. Clamping down on tax dodging could enhance government ability to give more support to local authorities. Council, therefore, **RESOLVES** to –

- (1) support the Towns Against Tax Dodging campaign;
- (2) ask the leader of the council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking the government to listen to the strength of public feeling and act to end the injustice of tax dodging by large international companies in the UK.

13. MOTION – SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Councillor Grahame moved, and Councillor Jackson seconded the following motion-

According to the Local Government Association, by the end of this parliament, local government will have to have made 20 billion pounds worth of savings. This is mainly down to a major reduction in funding from central government. There are alternative sources of funding that can be used to reverse this attack on public services.

In light of the continued effect of a coalition government's cuts programme upon local residents, council **RESOLVES** to ask the government to reverse the ongoing reduction in grants to councils and recommend alternative measures including –

- (1) the levy of a financial transaction tax on speculative activities;
- (2) raising income tax for those within incomes above one hundred thousand pounds;

- (3) cracking down on tax havens and tax avoidance;
- (4) introducing a wealth tax on the top one per cent, those with assets of more than three million pounds;
- (5) putting far greater emphasis on tax that discourage environmentally or other damaging behaviour;
- (6) not replacing Trident.

Councillor Waters moved, and Councillor Gayton seconded that the procedural rule in paragraph 14.7 in appendix 1 of the constitution be suspended to allow wider amendments.

RESOLVED, with 21 voting in favour, 13 against and one abstention to approve the procedural motion.

Councillor Waters moved, and Councillor Gayton seconded the following amendment –

To –

- 1) Remove everything after “...measures”.
- 2) Add the following –
...including:-
 - (i) An end to the bias against our poorest areas by ensuring that funding is distributed more fairly.
 - (ii) Removing the instabilities created by the localisation of business rates and the localisation of key welfare budgets.
 - (iii) Remove the power of the Secretary of State for communities and local government to determine what constitutes “excessive” council tax increases by local government.
 - (iv) Give longer term funding settlements – capital and revenue – so that councils can better plan ahead and avoid expensive reactive costs and focus on preventative approaches.
 - (v) Devolve funding to local government to strength its role in local economic growth.

RESOLVED –

- (1) with 21 voting in favour, 14 against and one abstention to approve para 1(of the amendment);
- (2) with 20 voting in favour, 13 against and one abstention to approve para 2 (of the amendment).

RESOLVED, unanimously, that –

According to the Local Government Association, by the end of this parliament, local government will have to have made 20 billion pounds worth of savings. This is mainly down to a major reduction in funding from central government. There are alternative sources of funding that can be used to reverse this attack on public services.

In light of the continued effect of a coalition government's cuts programme upon local residents, council **RESOLVES** to ask the government to reverse the ongoing reduction in grants to councils and recommend alternative measures including –

- (1) An end to the bias against our poorest areas by ensuring that funding is distributed more fairly.
- (2) Removing the instabilities created by the localisation of business rates and the localisation of key welfare budgets.
- (3) Remove the power of the Secretary of State for communities and local government to determine what constitutes "excessive" council tax increases by local government.
- (4) Give longer term funding settlements – capital and revenue – so that councils can better plan ahead and avoid expensive reactive costs and focus on preventative approaches.
- (5) Devolve funding to local government to strength its role in local economic growth.

As 2 hours have passed since the start of the meeting, the Lord Mayor invited members to consider whether any of the following matters could be dealt with as unopposed business.

14. MOTION – ANTI-MYTH PUBLICITY

Councillor Howard moved, and Councillor Galvin seconded, the following motion –

Council **RESOLVED** to ask the cabinet to establish – along with partners – a publicity campaign to counter myths against the homeless, unemployed, disabled, addicts, single mothers and other groups who are similarly and negatively affected by austerity and welfare reform.

With 14 voting in favour, 19 against and two abstentions, the motion was declared lost.

15. MOTION – DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CITY

RESOLVED, unopposed, that –

In 2013 there were estimated to be over 14 thousand people affected by dementia in Norfolk and that figure is expected to continue rising.

The Alzheimer's Society is running a campaign to make communities more dementia friendly. They want people with dementia to enjoy a good quality of life for as long as possible, able to continue every day activities like shopping, meeting up at a café, or spending time with friends.

They hope to recruit at least one million dementia friends who will help people with dementia to live well for longer.

Council, therefore, **RESOLVES** to –

- (1) support the dementia friends campaign;
- (2) ask cabinet to encourage –
 - (a) all staff and councillors to take part in an Alzheimer's Society information session,
 - (b) Norwich, through partnership working, to become a dementia friendly city.

LORD MAYOR

APPENDIX

Question 1

Councillor Grahame asked the cabinet member for resources:

“Could the cabinet member comment on whether he is happy that ethical criteria were fully taken into account when choosing Barclays as the council’s banking provider?”

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources’ response:

“I am disappointed that the Co-operative bank has chosen to leave the public sector market leaving us with the task of finding a new banking services provider.

Banking services for the public sector is a relatively limited market. To cope with the volume of transactions and money a degree of scale is needed. Our own business involves a wide variety of transactions such as collecting money (by direct debits, standing orders etc.) and payments (such as by BACS, cheque etc.) for a variety of customers including council tax, business rates, benefit claimants, garden waste collection, parking permits etc. This involves thousands of transactions and over £850 million p.a.

We have worked with the other Norfolk authorities to secure a new banking services provider. The council is bound to follow the requirements of public procurement rules and this needs banks to step forward and want to do business with us. There are few banks who apply for this business so our choice is limited to begin with. However, we were clear that we needed a bank that could cope with our business as well as add value in other ways.

The Public Contracts Regulations 2006 prescribe the grounds for rejecting suppliers that the council can consider. I am satisfied that these were fully taken in to account and there were no grounds for rejecting Barclays. Further the tender questions included the following question:

Councils are mindful of the opportunities presented by the Social Value Act and have an aim to develop strong, sustainable and cohesive communities where disadvantage is addressed and individuals and businesses are supported. The Councils would like to know what contribution you can make to address financial exclusion, lack of financial training and education, and the environment.

Barclays provided good examples to support their answer to this question and the opportunity to work with us to develop this further as part of their service provision. We look forward to developing this with Barclays through the life of our contract with them.”

Councillor Grahame asked, as a supplementary question, what the council would do to influence Barclays to promote family friendly and fair policies. **Councillor Waters** said the council had a range of ways it could use its influence to ensure that organisations behaved in an appropriate manner. He said that Barclays had laid out clearly the things it believed it had done wrong in the past and what they had done to correct things. The council was happy with the answers it received.

Question 2

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

“Will the cabinet ask for an options paper to be brought to the sustainable development panel on how the council can respond to paragraph 53 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states ‘local planning authorities should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.’ This follows some applications at the planning committee which the committee found difficult to resolve on existing council policy.”

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

“Gardens are clearly crucial to quality of life, bio-diversity and a healthy environment in Norwich and need protection from inappropriate development. The city council passed a resolution endorsing this position in January 2009 when it also resolved to:

- (1) write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government requesting that gardens be re-classified as greenfield sites;
- (2) ask the Local Development Framework Working Party to consider how the council's planning policies can be strengthened under existing legislation to help protect gardens from development.

Since then thankfully government policy has changed regarding the classification of garden development and also the NPPF has been introduced.

In response to the second resolution the issue was considered by the Local Development Framework working party and this discussion informed the preparation of policies in the Development Management Policies Plan which was taken forward by the Sustainable Development Panel.

This work concluded that garden development had not been identified as a significant problem within Norwich and there had been only limited levels of development on garden sites. Some redevelopments, such as on corner sites, were identified as having clearly added to the townscape with very little garden land being developed. The approach taken was not therefore to promote policies seeking to restrict garden development but instead promote criteria based policies seeking to encourage high standards of design in new development. This led to policies DM3 and DM12 being included with the emerging plan that was approved by Council in 2013.

Our approach to date would seem to have been appropriate: there have been only 56 applications to build on garden land over last six years (2008/09 – 2013/14) of which only 33 were approved by the Council (a much lower rate than for other types of

development). In addition, of the 23 applications, which were refused by the Council, only three were allowed on appeal which suggests to me that the Council's policies are effective and are being implemented properly. The 36 approvals mentioned above resulted in 49 new dwellings being permitted.

In terms of whether current policies support the Council's wider planning strategies and priorities, the council argued through the recent examination process that both these policies met the requirements of the NPPF with regards to garden development. The Inspector's verdict on this point is still awaited but it should be noted that he did not consider it necessary to consult on any possible modification on this point so it is anticipated our proposed policies will be able to be adopted as part of the plan when this matter is considered by council (expected in November).

With emerging policies not yet adopted I don't think this is the right time to review our approach on the subject. The levels of development of garden land are monitored and this information can be considered by the Sustainable Development alongside other monitoring information in due course. I think it is better to formulate policy based on the analysis of longer term trends rather than one-off cases."

Councillor Boswell said that the council needed robust planning decisions and asked, as a supplementary question, if now wasn't the right time to review, when was the right time. **Councillor Stonard** said that it was appropriate to wait for the outcome of the recent planning examination process. He re-emphasised that the council had only lost three appeals since 2008/09 and emphasised that the best way to set policy was through a sound evidence base.

Question 3

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

"Will the cabinet ask for an options paper to be brought to the sustainable development panel on how the council can respond to section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to carry out a conservation area appraisal for conservation areas within Norwich. This follows some applications at the planning committee which the committee found difficult to resolve on existing council policy."

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

"The city council has a very successful programme of producing conservation area appraisals. Since 2007 appraisals have been produced for 13 of the city's 17 conservation areas. They are carefully researched, well illustrated and informative and their production involves considerable input from local communities. On publication they are generally well received by local people, and serve to increase the appreciation of special qualities of the areas. Although not their primary purpose, they can be of use in making planning decisions.

There are four conservation areas currently without an appraisal and each appraisal generally takes about a year to complete. Work has begun on the Hellesdon appraisal

and it is hoped that this will be finalised later in this financial year. No decision has yet been taken in relation to the order and timing of appraisals for the Newmarket Road, the Earlham, and the Unthank and Christchurch areas but I hope that at least one further appraisal will be brought forward in 2015-16.

As appraisals are led by the specialist design and conservation officers it will be difficult to accelerate the programme for them without either increasing costs or reducing the level of specialist resource directed to other areas of activity. Whether to do this or not will be determined in the planning service plan for next year in the light of available resources and competing work pressures. But bearing in mind the pressures on council resources and the scale of development activity we are witnessing at the moment I suspect either option is unlikely.

Sustainable Development Panel's role is more to work at a high level and to comment on policies and strategies than to get into the type of detail requested in the question and so I don't think it's the right place for debates on the precise order of priorities in the service plans. However, I am aware from this question and the previous one about garden development that there is considerable public interest in how we protect the character of areas and therefore will ask officers to ensure relevant discussions take place at my quarterly Shadow Portfolio Holders briefings and will take all of this into account in my discussions with officers about service plan priorities for next year."

Councillor Jackson asked, as a supplementary question, if appraisals were used as the basis of granting decisions, what did the cabinet member think was the status of decisions in the absence of an appraisal. **Councillor Stonard** repeated that the council only had the resources to undertake one appraisal per year and it had three more to complete. He reiterated that the shadow portfolio hold a meeting with the best place for discussions about this and he would include this on future agendas.

Question 4

Councillor Stammers to ask the leader of the council:

"Following the new rules from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) which makes it unlawful to restrict filming, blogging and tweeting at council meetings, this council, via the constitution working party has drawn up some guidance for the public.

Will the leader ask the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and Greater Norwich Growth Board - two bodies on which she represents the council - to consider their response to the DCLG statement, and whether they will permit filming, blogging and tweeting of their meetings, in the cause of greater transparency of bodies spending public funds?"

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council's response:

"The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 allow filming and recording of local government meetings and therefore any member of the public attending a meeting of the Greater Norwich Growth Board would be entitled to record and film it if they so wish.

The New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership is a partnership between local government and the private sector and is not covered by the regulations. However, I will be happy to raise this with the partners.”

Question 5

Councillor Haynes to ask the cabinet member for housing:

“Norwich City Council has again not bid for additional borrowing room in order to build more badly-needed council houses in the city. The advantages of the various options were spelt out in the cabinet report. Can the cabinet member expand on why cabinet considered that the option of not bidding outweighed the other options available, and whether or not the cabinet will consider bidding next time such an opportunity comes around?”

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing response:

In April 2014, the government published the prospectus for the Local Growth Fund – Housing Revenue Account Borrowing Programme 2015-18. The terms of the offer would have enabled the council to borrow, on average, only an additional £30,000 for each new unit. The council took the decision that this restriction would mean that a bid could not be made since it would have required very significant additional capital to be diverted from other essential projects.

On publication of the successful bids, however, it became clear that the government had abandoned its own criteria and allowed additional borrowing, on average, of £60,000 to the small number of applicants. Because of this, it was clearly worth reconsidering whether or not to make a bid in the second round.

Of the options available to the council, which were presented to cabinet earlier in the month, only one was considered to stand any chance of success since it would only require an additional level of borrowing similar to the previously successful bids £60,000. However, because the funding would be dependent on the new properties being let at an ‘affordable rent’ (i.e. 80% of full market rent), cabinet had serious concerns about their affordability. To provide some context, modelling showed that a 2-bed flat or house, let at an ‘affordable’ rent, would cost some £30 a week more than the same property let at a social rent. This would also create a two-tier system where some council tenants would be paying a considerably higher rent compared to other council tenants living in similar homes.

In view of this, cabinet decided that submitting a bid to the local growth fund would not be in the best interests of the city’s citizens.

The artificially low cap on borrowing within the HRA is a result of the government’s desire to control the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement and is neither related to prudential financial management nor housing need. It is therefore a matter of great frustration to the council and we have lobbied hard for it to be lifted. We should always consider all opportunities from Government to provide badly needed homes in Norwich. However if Government offers are unrealistic; delivering homes which are

neither affordable nor achievable except at the expense of other vital investment in homes, it cannot make sense to bid for them. In view of this the Leader will be meeting the housing minister, Brandon Lewis, to request a more realistic approach to the HRA borrowing cap and to ensure far more truly affordable homes can be built.

Question 6

Councillor Little to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety:

“Every autumn the leaves fall and cause a slip hazard on residential streets in the city, such as Sigismund Road or Beaumont Place. This is a particular problem for those with limited mobility or who need to use pushchairs, but the council only clears each street once or twice in the season. Does the cabinet member support this approach?”

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety response:

“The council has a leaf clearance programme which is designed to be flexible and is adjusted to when and where accumulations of leaves occur. Most roads are cleared of significant leaf fall twice during the autumn. Where it is known that leaves can create a slip hazard, such as Beaumont Place, these are monitored to ensure the slip hazard is removed. If anybody has concerns about accumulations of leaves I would urge them to report it to us and arrangements will be made to clear the leaves, normally within 24 hours.”

Question 7

Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety:

“The city council recently introduced a tree sponsorship scheme priced at £250 per replacement tree. Could the cabinet member please comment on whether current policies including the new scheme, will ever be able to replace the trees that have been lost?”

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety response:

“Since 1st January 2011 to date 591 street trees outside of the conservation areas have been removed. Within the same period the council has planted 333 trees. This does mean that overall there has been a net loss of 258 trees on our streets. It is worth noting that there something like 15,000 trees on our streets across the city. This does mean that the city has only lost less than 2% of its street trees since 1st January 2011.

The tree sponsorship scheme has not attracted any new money as yet since it has only just been launched. There will be an article in the winter edition of “Citizen” to advertise

the scheme to all our residents. Further details can be found on our website. The council is actively pursuing other lines of funding with some success, for example we recently received a grant from Trees for Cities to replace 11 trees on Clarkson Road and the work on the Pink Pedal Ways will ensure a further 83 trees are planted this year with more to come. This is on top of plans to replant 57 trees utilising council set budgets. As can be seen we are working hard to attract other investment resulting in a much reduced gap between trees that are removed and replaced."

Councillor Carlo said that of the three hundred and thirty three trees that **Councillor Driver** says have been planted, it would be interesting to know how many of these were street trees. She asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would be willing to walk with her through wards to see the number of street trees that had been lost. **Councillor Driver** said that one of the problems had been that when housing estates had been built many years ago, the wrong trees were planted for the type of area. What was important is that consideration was given as to what the best type of tree was to plant for future developments to ensure that the same mistakes were not made again.

Question 9

Councillor Wright to ask the cabinet member for customer services:

"In July 2012 council resolved to ask cabinet to consider the potential benefits of working with local post office branches and Post Office Ltd to deliver council services.

Could the leader of the council please provide me with an update of the discussions that cabinet has had in respect of this?"

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for customer services response:

"As part of our transformation programme we are continuing to develop our channel shift programme and look wherever possible for opportunities to use post offices and improve access to local services for residents. Payment for council services through the Post Office network is actively encouraged through the use of barcodes on documentation. This enables our customers to pay at one of the post offices if they have not already arranged for payment via another method like direct debit or chosen to use an electronic method of payment using a debit card. Since April 2014, each month we have received on average 27% of all payments (excluding direct debit payments) through a post office so that is a significant volume of traffic using the post office network in the community. There is no doubt that our residents value the increased accessibility that the post office opening hours and location gives to them.

As part of the Post Office's overall transformation programme we actively engage with them to understand how that is progressing and whether there are further opportunities to work more closely with them particularly around the development of the welfare reform agenda. We will continue to work closely with the Post Office network them to identify further opportunities."

Councillor Wright said the council placed a lot of emphasis on channel shift and asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would consider looking at

being able to issue parking permits and providing terminals for things such as individual electoral registration, in post offices. **Councillor Harris** said that these were interesting thoughts and she would discuss these with the relevant heads of service. Anything that encouraged increased use of post offices would be welcome.

Question 10

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

“Thanks to the Labour City Council, the Push the Pedalways scheme will promote and develop cycling and help fulfil yet another practical environmental commitment. Despite this there has been recent negative disinformation which has caused confusion. What is the Cabinet Members view on the on-going development and consultation around the scheme?”

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

“For those of you who may not be aware, Councillor Sands is talking about the £5.7M cycling scheme which will implement a pink pedal way between the Hospital and NRP to the West and the new eco town at Rack Heath to the East taking in the UEA, The Avenues, the city centre, Mousehold Heath and Heartsease along its way. The bulk of the funding (£3.7M) has come from the Governments Cycle City Ambition fund and local partners including ourselves, the county council, Broadland District Council, the clinical commissioning group, public health and the UEA who are all contributing to the project. Our aim is to provide an 8 mile route that can be safely ridden by an unaccompanied 12 year old and contributes to sustainable economic growth by connecting jobs to communities.

The pink pedal way consists of 19 individual projects ranging in scale from small areas of cycle parking to a complete redesign to part of Tombland to accommodate cycling. We are just over a year into the project and to date between we and our partners have completed some of the smaller scale schemes such as introducing cycle parking at the Hospital, the University, on Gaol Hill and St Andrews Plain. We have also introduced a new zebra crossing on Bluebell Road and the existing zebra crossing on Earlham Road by Park Lane has been made safer by putting it on a speed table. The way-finding and street clutter reduction project has started and will continue throughout the next year of the project.

Planning permission has been secured for a new cycle track across Heartsease recreation ground and for one connecting Heathgate to Gurney Road along historic route of Dragoon Street. Work started in Heartsease earlier this month and work around Heathgate and Gurney Road will start before the end of the year. We also have all the necessary approvals in place to introduce contraflow cycling on the northern end of Magdalen Street and the western end of Cowgate and implementation work will commence in the New Year.

Over the last few months we have held a number of public consultations on high profile schemes. Next month the Norwich Highways Agency Committee will hear what the public thought of the proposals to improve cycling in Tombland and Palace Street and will make a decision as to whether the scheme should be implemented. The second round of consultation on the proposals for The Park Lane to Vauxhall Street closes shortly and this has sparked much lively debate among the local community. Just last week we started a second consultation on a scheme to transform the western section of The Avenues to include generous off carriageway cycle tracks, dedicated parking for residents and extensive tree and verge protection. Decisions on the future of these last two schemes will be made in November.

The consultation processes for the push the pedal ways scheme has aimed to be as open and inclusive as possible and to give local people a real opportunity to shape the development of each project. This has included a two-stage consultation process, which initially invited the public to comment on a range of options before they were refined into more detailed proposals, which, in turn, have been subject to a second round of public consultation. This approach has resulted in significant changes to some of the final consultation proposals, for example along The Avenues and on Vauxhall Street. Ward councillors have been briefed in detail on the options for their wards and have been able to discuss and share their views with officers and the portfolio holder. There also have been public meetings/exhibitions, in each locality and at City Hall, attended by council officers who work on the project. In addition, letters and leaflets have been delivered to thousands of individual households in the areas around the pink pedal way.

There is still a chance for people to contribute to consultations. The Avenues consultation is ongoing until 9 October and later this year we will be launching consultations on the proposals for 20mph speed restrictions within the whole of the inner ring road and in the Heartsease area. Full details of these can be found on our website under Pedal ways. Anyone who lives in a street that is directly affected by our works will also receive a letter informing that about any relevant consultations.

The push the pedal ways projects are complex and contain many elements. It has been good to see the amount of public discussion that has been generated by these proposals but, unfortunately, some of it has been misinformed and has been potentially confusing for people; therefore, I would encourage anyone who is interested and wishes to make a comment to view the detailed information that is available on the council web site, or at City Hall, the Millennium Library or the many local exhibitions. I also would encourage the public, if they wish, to contact the push the pedal ways team to clarify any issues.

Under the terms of the cycle ambition grant all the schemes I have outlined need to be completed on site by the end of September 2015, so there will be work going on throughout the city for the next 12 months.

I sincerely hope that this is just the start of the city's cycle ambition. The Labour administration is working hard to encourage more and more people to use more sustainable forms of transport, including cycling, and to make our streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Our cycle network consists in total of 6 radial and 2 orbital pedal ways and by rolling out these improvements we aim to double the level of cycling

in Norwich in the next ten years - which will be good for the environment as well as benefiting the health of local people.”

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Sands (M)**, **Councillor Stonard** said that it was important for councillors to remind people that this open and inclusive process had involved a two stage consultation and there were still opportunities for people to respond to the final consultation. He said that once implemented, this would be a nationally recognised scheme which the council should be proud to celebrate.

Question 13

Councillor Harris to ask the cabinet member for environment, development and transport:

“Can the cabinet member explain from his perspective, how the benefits of the new highways improvements in the St Stephen’s, Chapelfield and Grapes Hill areas will affect shoppers, cyclists, bus users and others?”

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

“For those of you who may not be familiar with the proposals let me first outline exactly what the changes are in the city centre. On Grapes Hill a new uphill bus lane has been introduced, Chapel Field North will become two way to provide direct access into the city centre for buses from the west of the city, a bus gate has been introduced on Rampant Horse Street to remove all traffic other than buses and taxis from the street between Marks and Spencer and Debenhams and general traffic is to be removed from St Stephens Street.

These improvements are part of a coherent long-term plan called the Norwich Area Transport Strategy (NATS) that is being implemented across the City and will in future see further developments in the Prince of Wales Road, Rose Lane, Westlegate and Golden Ball Street areas. All these changes aim to remove through traffic from the City Centre and to create a better and more pleasant environment for shoppers, pedestrians and cyclists, as well as supporting public transport.

The current changes, referred to in the question, will bring a wealth of benefits to bus passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, city centre shoppers, tourists and businesses, alongside enhancing the city’s economy and supporting the planned growth in the greater Norwich area. Some of the key benefits are:

- Bus passengers using routes between the city centre and the west along Dereham Road, Earlham Road and Unthank Road will see a two-minute reduction in their journey time. They also will see an improvement in the reliability of the services in contrast to the current unpredictability of the congestion along Chapel Field Road. These benefits will not only be felt by

existing residents of the city but by the inhabitants of the new developments to the west in Costessey and Easton.

- Pedestrians and shoppers will see almost all of the traffic removed from Rampant Horse Street (between Marks and Spencer and Debenhams) making crossing the road significantly safer and easier, while Theatre Street and Chapel Field North will see significant reduction in traffic, creating a more pleasant route for pedestrians. This will further enhance the vibrancy and prosperity of the retail offer in the heart of the city.
- I touched on earlier the benefits to cyclists from the introduction of the pink pedal way, which runs through this part of the City Centre. Alongside the overall reduction in traffic in the area, cyclists will benefit from an improved crossing of the ring road; two-way access along Chapel Field North; the creation of an innovative zebra crossing that can be shared by cyclists; and the creation of a traffic free route along Little Bethel Street. Improved cycling facilities across the city are key to encouraging people to move away from the private car and to adopt a healthier lifestyle.
- Goods vehicles delivering to the heart of the retail area will no longer have to negotiate their way through the city centre to make their deliveries. Instead they will have a direct, well signed route off the outer ring road along Chapel Field North
- Coaches too will benefit from having direct access to convenient drop off points in the city centre and tourists will have easy access to the tourist information centre and the Theatre Royal. Lack of convenient coach facilities in the city centre has often been cited as a factor which hinders Norwich's ability to maximise its potential as a tourist destination and with every coach expected to generate around £4,500 income for the city's businesses this is a market we must develop.

These are just the start of the changes we are planning to enhance the city centre, as part of the NATS, to encourage more people to walk cycle or take the bus and to support the city centre economy. They will make significant and lasting improvements to our City Centre environment and will help us secure its economy for the future”

Councillor Harris asked, as a supplementary question, how this fitted in with longer term plans for the city centre. **Councillor Stonard** said that this was part of the broader Norwich area transportation study. This new scheme was just one component which should be seen in the wider context of the overall strategy.

Question 15

Councillor Brociek-Coulton to ask the cabinet member for resources:

“Can the cabinet member for resources comment on trends on foodbank demand in Norwich since this was last reported to council?”

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources response:

“In October it will be 4 years since the Norwich foodbank gave out its first food to a local person in need. Since that time, the foodbank have unfortunately recorded increasing demands for their support and assistance. This worrying trend, while slowing, is still increasing.

In the 12 months to 31 August 2014, the foodbank distributed three days of food to 9,844 people, which includes 3,219 children. That is a 28% increase in people and a 38% increase in children over the preceding 12 months.

August 2014 was the first month that a reduction in people being referred to the foodbank for help was seen when compared to the corresponding month in the previous year. This may be the result of a new initiative that the Norwich foodbank has introduced over the same period – FISH (Food (and Fun) In School Holidays) – rather than a reduction in need.

In February 2013, Norwich was named as the authority with the highest percentage of children in poverty in the East of England by the Campaign to End Child Poverty report and according to the Department of Education, 23.5% of children in Norwich were eligible for free school lunches as of summer 2012. This could prove a considerable strain to families during the long school holidays and to provide help over this period the foodbank have developed the FISH project as a way to meet this shortfall.

The Norwich Foodbank FISH initiative aims to help address the issue of children going hungry during school holidays when no free school meals are provided and Schools Parent Support Advisors are not available to help.

Five clubs ran with 793 meals served and 172 children fed. There was a total of 29 sessions run at various venues across the city. Support was received from the whole community once again including allotments, supermarkets, schools and volunteers. Part of the costs for the project were met by part of a grant awarded to Norwich foodbank by the city council.”

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Brociek-Coulton, Councillor Waters** said that he was concerned that people were becoming “immune” to the ongoing problem such as a huge increase in use of food banks when no free school meals were available that he believed there was a chance that, like the United States of America, foodbanks would become part of the accepted “feature of the landscape”. He said that foodbanks did a great job but they were a response to a problem not the solution. He would arrange a meeting with foodbanks to find out how they were getting on, what was the scale of the problem and what they believed should be the exit

strategy to ensure that the need for foodbanks was something of the past and not the future.

Question 16

Councillor Packer to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety:

“Thanks to practical investment in our shared green and open spaces, does the cabinet member feel that the changes and differences made since 2006 have helped facilitate and secure the prestigious green flag for Eaton Park in July?”

Councillor Driver cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety response:

Since 2006 the parks and open spaces service has been, and continues to be, on a journey of continuous improvement. The Green Flag award for Eaton Park is well deserved recognition of the administration's commitment to its parks and open spaces and the way in which they are managed.

There have been a number of key factors including: -

- Investment levels maintained throughout the period
- Working with local communities and external partners to secure additional funding
- Collaborative working with colleagues, local communities and partners
- Improved management of the S106 programme
- Implementation of cross service project teams
- Introduction of the neighbour model linking community needs to operational delivery
- Attracting inward investment

Just a few examples include:

- £50,000 of Playbuilder funding used to improve the play provision at Lea Bridges Park
- A grant of £50,000 from the HLF was obtained through working with Eaton Vale Residents Association to deliver a number of enhancements at Marston Marsh improving access and an outdoor classroom for use by local schools.
- Partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association attracted £125,000 of match funding to build four all-weather floodlit tennis courts at Eaton Park.
- Norwich Parks tennis, delivered by an external provider, is a community tennis initiative providing a well-used service to the public and results in an income to the council.
- The Friends of Marlpit Wood were formed with support from the council. This has enabled improvements to the access to the site and information provision in the woodland.

- Friends of Eaton Park have accessed a number of grants enabling improvements to be made in the park in relation to seat provision, tree planting and the provision of outdoor table tennis.

The provision of parks and open spaces is routinely identified by residents of the city as something they value and as being important to them. As a result, and despite difficult economic times, the council has not only maintained its investment in the maintenance of the sites and facilities but has managed to attract much interest and investment from other sources.

External groups, such as TCV, LTC Green Spaces, Friends of Wensum View, Friends of Marlpit Wood and Friends of Eaton Park, along with individuals provide a very welcome addition to the management of the parks and open spaces through the work they carry out as volunteers. They provide a real link between our communities and the services we offer, undertaking tasks such as litter picking, bulb and tree planting work, survey work, guided walks and practical conservation tasks. Last year, volunteers contributed over 10,000 hours of their time to the management of their local open spaces. A massive contribution, which the council and parks and open spaces service would like to put on record their appreciation and thanks for the personal time they give to the council to do this work. Without it we would not have achieved the successes we have had.

The move from external contractor to undertake grounds maintenance and other services to a joint venture has enabled the delivery of an effective and efficient service. The move away from a traditional 'client contractor' relationship, to one of collaborative working, has started to develop a workforce who have pride in the sites they manage and the service they deliver and a shared vision to strive for excellence in the service provided and associated outcomes.

The council will continue to invest in its parks and open spaces, with a commitment to ongoing repairs and maintenance being funded by the general fund and a programme of improvements works funded by the capital programme, S106, CIL and any external funding that can be accessed directly or by partners.

Recently Norwich's parks and open spaces were specifically identified as a key contributory factor in Norwich being recognised in a national poll as the best place to grow up as a child. The award of a Green Flag Award, the national benchmark standard for parks and green spaces in the UK, recognises the high level of quality achieved in the management of parks and open spaces. The Green Flag award for Eaton Park is not only independent recognition of the quality of Eaton Park and the way in which it is managed, but also the principles which underpin the management of all the city's parks and open spaces.

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Packer**, **Councillor Driver** said that the Daily Mail survey showing Norwich was the best place for kids to grow up in was largely due the amount of green spaces available to them. The administration would continue to make resources available to ensure the city continued to be a pleasant place to grow up in and to ensure that parks and gardens and open spaces were places that were open to everyone to use.

Question 17

Councillor Gayton to ask the cabinet member for resources:

“Will the Cabinet Member for Resources inform Council of their consideration of the TIPP, which was referred to Cabinet at the last meeting of Council?”

Councillor Waters, cabinet member for resources response:

“A report is being prepared for the November meeting of cabinet on this very important issue. As part of those preparations, we will be seeking the views – among others – of the two Norwich MPs and MEPs representing the eastern region.

The report will focus in particular on the scope of the TTIP negotiations and whether it threatens national policies in areas like labour standards and environmental protections or exposes public services, like the NHS to the full impact of competition law.

The coalition government position on TTIP is a cause for concern. Last year, Michael Fallon said in answer to a private question; “the government has not sought to exclude health services from the scope of the TTIP negotiations.””

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Gayton, Councillor Waters** confirmed that they would be happy to convene an all party meeting, inviting local MPs, to consider the implications of TTIP on city services. The position on TTIP seemed ambiguous and it was important to get a clear view of the government’s commitment on this issue.