NORWICH City Council

MINUTES

Council

19:30 to 22:35 **29 September 2022**

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

1. Lord Mayor's Announcements

The Lord Mayor thanked members of the council for their support in moving the meeting of council due to the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

He invited Councillor Waters to say a few words in memory of Brenda Ferris, a former councillor, Lord Mayor and Sheriff of Norwich, who had sadly passed away.

A minute's silence was held.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public questions/petitions

The Lord Mayor announced that three public questions had been received.

The first public question was from Mr John Griffiths who was unable to attend the meeting and would receive a written response.

The second question was from Mr John Marais on behalf of Norwich Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament the following question.

Mr Marais asked the leader of the council the following question:

> "At Lakenheath, the United States Air Force has recently positioned B61 nuclear missiles and F35 fighter jets to deliver them. Norwich, 42 miles away,

> is now a potential target for nuclear attack should America become embroiled in a nuclear exchange. There has been no democratic discussion in Parliament, or local councils, about this. These weapons at Lakenheath threaten the lives of Norwich citizens, who are already uncomfortably aware of the extremely loud F35 training flights thundering over our city. I implore the council to discuss these concerns and raise them urgently with central government.
> Having recently sponsored the planting in Norwich parks of tree seeds from Hiroshima, as a memorial gesture of peace, the council clearly understands there is a relevance of the nuclear weapons issue to Norwich. Can the council please take action to address the nuclear threat facing Norwich?"

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

> "Practically it is about shaping public sentiment.
> At the height of the Cold War, during the 1980s, we were one of a number of councils that declared themselves nuclear free zones.
> Recently, the planting of tree seeds from Hiroshima at a number of locations in Norwich is a statement about remembering the awful power and effects of nuclear weapons.
> Earlier this year we gave the Freedom of the City to our sister UNESCO Cities of Literature, in Ukraine – Lviv and Odessa. Ukraine decommissioned its nuclear arsenal after independence in 1991. The Freedoms were awarded for defending democratic values against an authoritarian regime that had illegally invaded a peaceful sovereign country and which threatens to use 'tactical nuclear weapons'.
> The city council has a consistent record, locally, and in the case of Ukraine, internationally, of highlighting the threat that nuclear conflict poses and how it must be avoided at all costs."

Mr Marais asked, by way of a supplementary question, if Councillors understood that if missiles at Lakenheath were used as a first strike weapon that Norwich would be unwillingly implicated in a criminal act of mass murder. In response Councillor Waters agreed it would be a criminal act, he referred to the end of the cold war and the peace dividend that came from that with the decommissioning of nuclear weapons and stabilisation of the threat of nuclear war.

The third question was from Mr Jack Parkins.

Mr Parkins asked the leader of the council the following question:

> "I would like to give thanks to those councillors who have supported the striking RMT members in their ongoing dispute with the Government over significant attacks upon the terms, conditions and safety measures of staff operating on the network.
> Can the Leader comment on the need for a properly funded, democratically controlled public transport system as a key driver for economic growth and wellbeing to this city and the need also for a wider agenda that supports strengthening employment rights, fair pay and good terms and conditions for Norwich workers?"

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

> "On behalf of the Labour administration, I strongly endorse the views expressed in your question. The privatisation model has failed. It's financial structures built around franchising have been ripped up as passenger revenue has disappeared. The most recent proposal: 'Great British Railways' has not moved off the page. Infrastructure projects are shelved or cut; timetabled train services are cut. No room in the Conservative's "mini – budget" of massive tax giveaways to the already wealthy and protecting the super-profits of energy companies to invest in the railways: except a statement about reducing the rights of workers to take industrial action to protect their standard of living and working conditions.
> The railways are a public service and key infrastructure for building a strong economy. Labour, nationally, is committed to renationalisation.
> A productive economy is built on strong employment rights and decent pay. We have a motion at tonight's council on that theme"

Mr Parkins had no supplementary question.

4. Minutes

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Bogelein seconded and it was:-

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2022.

5. Questions to Cabinet Members

The Lord Mayor said that thirty two questions were received from members of the council to cabinet members for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of the council's constitution.

The questions are summarised as follows:

Question 1: Councillor Kidman to the leader of the council on assistance for the cost of living crisis.

Question 2: Councillor Thomas (Va) to the leader of the council on support for local government inflation.

Question 3: Councillor Huntley to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on Compulsory Purchase Orders for social housing.

Question 4: Councillor Sands (M) to the leader of the council on social supermarkets.

Question 5: Councillor Driver to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on public tennis provision.

Question 6: Councillor Padda to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on the Biodiversity Strategy.

Question 7: Councillor Thomas (Vi) to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on Green Flag awards.

Question 8: Councillor Davis to the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods on private sector housing.

Question 9: Councillor Peek to the leader of the council on the living wage campaign.

Question 10: Councillor Brociek-Coulton to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on the River Wensum Strategy.

Question 11: Councillor Grahame to the cabinet member for resources on funding for biodiversity actions.

Question 12: Councillor Carlo to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on biodiversity net gain targets.

Question 13: Councillor Haynes to the leader of the council on NCSL performance.

Question 14: Councillor Osborn to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on retrofitting funding within the HRA.

Question 15: Councillor Catt to the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods on the land contamination at Morley Street.

Question 16: Councillor Price to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on water butts for residents.

Question 17: Councillor Bogelein to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on basketball court for Ely Street.

Question 18: Councillor Schmierer to the cabinet member for environmental services on the bin service review.

Question 19: Councillor Galvin to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on pre-payment metres.

Question 20: Councillor Champion to the cabinet member for community wellbeing of the council on trials to phase out glyphosate.

Question 21: Councillor Young to the cabinet member for environmental services on charges for bin replacements.

Question 22: Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth services on council input into the transport infrastructure grant.

Question 23: Councillor Ackroyd to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth services on Anglian Water and Nutrient Neutrality.

(Second questions were received from councillors Bogelein, Osborn, Catt, Grahame, Galvin, Haynes, Champion and Schmierer and these are detailed at appendix A to these minutes. As the time taken by questions had exceeded thirty minutes, these second questions were not taken at the meeting)

(Norwich City Council constitution, Part 3, paragraph 35).

(Details of the questions and responses were available on the council's website prior to the meeting and attached to these minutes at Appendix A, together with a minute of any supplementary questions and responses.)

6. Constitutional amendments

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

1) Adopt the new Councillor Code of Conduct, as attached at Appendix A;
2) Agree the consequential amendments to the Constitution as set out in paragraph 9 of the report and Appendix B;
3) Agree to establish a Treasury Management Committee and agree the terms of reference as set out in Appendix C; and
4) To amend paragraph 38 of the Committee Procedure Rules to remove the words "Answers shall not exceed 150 words"

7. Annual Report of the Audit Committee.

The chair of the audit committee had given his apologies for the meeting so the annual report of the audit committee would be taken at the November meeting of council.

8. Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee

The Lord Mayor advised that there was an error on page 87 of the agenda papers, paragraph 28c should refer to the Tenant Involvement Panel and not the Tenant Improvement Panel.

Councillor Wright moved and Councillor Brociek-Coulton seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Following debate, it was **RESOLVED** , unanimously, to receive the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2021-22.

(Councillor Button left the meeting at this point).

9. Motions

(Notice of the following motions 9(a) to 9(f), as set out on the agenda, had been received in accordance with the council's constitution).

9(a) Motion: Supporting the Transgender Community

The following amendment from Councillor Stonard was received.

> Insert the following "**and include this in the city council's annual Equality Information Report 2023**" at the end of resolution 6) after the words "**under the 2010 Equality Act**"
>
> Insert the following "**and as part of the forthcoming Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy around ensuring Norwich City Council is an inclusive place to work.**" At the end of resolution 7)
>
> Inserting the words "**as part of the draft Equality, diversity and inclusion plan which is under development by the city council**" at the end of resolution 10).
>
> Inserting the words "**as part of the draft Equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan which the city council is currently developing**" at the end of resolution 16).

Councillor Catt had accepted the amendment and as no other member objected, it became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Catt proposed and Councillor Haynes seconded the motion as amended.

The Lord Mayor said that notice had been received of a further amendment to the motion from Councillor Stonard which had been circulated:

> Replacing the words "**to**" in resolution 8) with the words "**working with Norwich Pride, to consider**" after "**Cabinet agrees**" and replacing the word "**acknowledge**" with "**acknowledging**" after "**publicly**".
>
> Inserting the words "**continue to**" before the word "**consider**" in resolution 12).
>
> Inserting the words "**continue to**" before the word "**work**" in resolution 13).

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

With 23 voting in favour, 9 against and no abstentions, the amendment was passed and became part of the substantive motion.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

This Council states that:
Trans women are women. Trans men are men. Non-binary people are non-binary. We believe in the dignity of all people, and their right to respect and equality of opportunity. We value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution diversity brings to our community. Our aspiration is for Norwich to be a safe, welcoming and inclusive city for everyone.

The Council notes:

1) the concerning rise in transphobia in the UK, from individuals, politicians and the media, as well as the increasing severity of the threats faced by the trans community;
2) that transgender and non-binary people may require specific support to access services without facing discrimination. All council services must be equipped to welcome and provide appropriate service and good customer care to suit transgender and non-binary people;
3) that there are transgender and non-binary people in Norwich of all ages, and that the need for better understanding and acceptance of what it means to be transgender or non-binary is an intergenerational issue;
4) the vital work done by groups in Norwich to support local trans and non-binary people, as well as the wider LGBTQIA+ community. These groups include Oasis Norfolk, Norfolk LGBT+ Project and Norwich Pride;
5) that despite many positive initiatives there is always more to do to ensure we are a genuinely supportive, inclusive and welcoming city. The council will seek to better support transgender and non-binary people to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives;that transgender and non-binary people may face intersecting struggles due to factors like their race, religion, socioeconomic background, gender or sexuality.

This Council therefore resolves to:

6) state publicly that trans rights are human rights and affirm the legal rights of all protected groups under the 2010 Equality Act, and include this in the city council's annual Equality Information Report 2023;
7) work with LGBTQIA+ groups and people to strongly encourage training for councillors and council staff to raise awareness of the difficulties transgender and non-binary people face and of the support councillors could offer to this community. This could be included in the council's existing equalities and inclusion training and as part of the forthcoming Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy around ensuring Norwich City Council is an inclusive place to work;
8) request that the Cabinet agrees, working with Norwich Pride, to consider acknowledging International Trans Day of Visibility (March 31st), in addition to Trans Day of Remembrance (November 20th) and fly the transgender flag on those days;
9) to fly the Progress Flag at Pride

10) request a review of all forms and documents created by the council with a view to ensuring they are trans and non-binary inclusive where possible as part of the draft Equality, diversity and inclusion plan which is under development by the city council;
11) encourage council staff and councillors to make small gestures that make it clear transgender and non-binary people are welcome. This could include adding pronouns to email signatures;
12) Continue to consider the particular needs of transgender and non-binary people who are at high risk of facing homelessness when implementing the council's existing strategies on homelessness and rough sleeping;
13) Continue to work with partner organisations to ensure transgender and non-binary people are not discriminated against whilst accessing homelessness services;
14) ask NHOSC to consider the barriers which transgender and non-binary people face when accessing medical care and to find ways of reducing them;
15) review with a view to improving signposting to support services for transgender and non-binary people within council communications, including a dedicated page on the council's website;
16) provide a gender-neutral option such as Mx on all council forms as part of the draft Equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan which the city council is currently developing.

9(b) Motion: Biodiversity and SUDs supplementary planning documents

Councillor Carlo moved and Councillor Osborn seconded the motion

The following amendment from Council Stonard was received.

> Inserting the words "**and the importance of the city council's Biodiversity Strategy in helping to address the issues raised in the motion**" at the end of resolution 2).
>
> Inserting the words "**continue to**" after the words "**ask cabinet to**" in resolution 3).
>
> Replacing the word "**prepare**" with the words "**consider preparing**" in resolution 4).
>
> Replacing the word "**prepare**" with the words "**consider preparing**" in resolution 5).

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

With 20 members voting in favour and 12 against, the amendment was passed.

.Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

Nature continues to decline across the UK. The loss of habitat and decline of species is largely due to intensive agriculture, other changes in land management, and

urbanisation. Climate change is adding to pressures on nature. In Norwich we can help nature recover by ensuring that any future development is more sympathetic to nature and by preventing nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphate from entering the River Wensum.

Council resolves to:

1) note the decline in nature in Norwich, Norfolk and the UK;

2) note the importance of nutrient neutrality and the negative impact of large quantities of chemicals entering rivers, particularly in protected areas and the importance of the city council's Biodiversity Strategy in helping to address the issues raised in the motion;

3) ask cabinet to continue to give high priority to reversing the decline in nature by enhancing green spaces of different types, linked together by ecological networks;

4) ask cabinet to consider preparing a supplementary planning document on biodiversity and green infrastructure; and

5) ask cabinet to consider preparing a supplementary planning document on sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

(As two hours had passed since the start of the meeting, the Lord Mayor asked if any of the remaining business could be taken as unopposed. Councillor Waters opposed item 9(c) Motion on the cost of living crisis and the Norwich Economy as he wanted debate on this item and this motion was therefore debated after the two hour mark)

9(c) Motion: Cost of living crisis and the Norwich Economy

Councillor Waters proposed and Councillor Jones seconded the motion.

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

"Over a decade of austerity, stagnant wages, rising insecure work and the recent pandemic have bought into sharp focus the imbalance of power Norwich workers experience as a critical inhibitor to improving their economic and social wellbeing. Since 2010 in-work poverty, low pay, and financial insecurity have become rampant. Incomes have stagnated and many workers have experienced real terms pay decline. In-work poverty has hit new highs, with one in six working households in poverty. Wages have suffered a decade of stagnation – the worst in over a century. Norwich workers now face an enhanced cost-of-living crisis.

Council **RESOLVES** to

1) Note.

    a) Restrictive anti-trade union laws, most recently the Trade Union Act 2016, have made it harder for unions to organise and stand up for their

members. These restrictions mean workers are denied their fair share of the wealth they create, whilst a lack of collective representation has led to a race to the bottom. The right of unions to operate effectively in the workplace, in each sector of the economy, is vital for achieving fairness, dignity and democracy at work for all.

b) A radical 'New Deal for Working People' is needed to improve the lives of workers by strengthening individual and collective rights - repealing anti-trade union laws, including the Trade Union Act, and introducing new rights to help unions bargain, recruit, organise and win a better deal for their members. Critical to this will be strengthening rights at work for all workers, from day one on the job, ending fire and rehire, making work more family-friendly, and make it easier to balance work with home, community and family life, banning zero-hours contracts and ensuring everyone has the right to regular hours they can rely on, strengthening trade union rights, raising pay and conditions, bringing in Fair Pay Agreements to drive up pay and conditions for all workers, using sectoral collective bargaining.

c) The cost-of-living crisis is structurally linked to poverty pay, the erosion of an effective social security system and the removal of public services designed to safeguard British people.

2) Ask cabinet to; -

a) Implement within the financial inclusion strategy immediate plans to best protect Norwich people through the cost-of-living emergency, using all appropriate resources of the City Council, those of partners and continue to deliver upon the motion passed in June 2022 to tackle to the cost-of-living crisis.
b) Support and enhance measures to help the local economy with new housing, quality apprenticeships and jobs. Tackle low pay and insecure work by making Norwich a 'Real Living Wage' city and deliver a 'Fine City Employers Charter' to reward those who treat their workers with respect. Use the Good Economy Commission and relationships with partners to further enhance our economic development strategy to best support a local economy whereupon sustainable and inclusive economic growth is shared fairly with those that produce wealth.
c) Call on government to support local government and statutory agencies in the fight to tackle the cost-of-living crisis with appropriate resources and powers. "

(Councillor Hunter opposed item 9(d) Motion: Library Story time events as he wanted debate on this item but as the three hour mark had been reached by this point this motion was deferred to the next meeting of Council)

9(d) Motion: Library Story time events

(This item was deferred to the next meeting of council as the three hours has passed since the start of the meeting).

(The following items were taken as unopposed business)

9(e) Motion: Defending the right to seek safety from war and persecution

Council **RESOLVES** to

1) note that:

   a) Norwich City Council is proud of our history of welcoming people seeking safety in Norwich;

   b) there are significant problems with the UK asylum system that affect people in Norwich, including a record backlog of cases awaiting a decision, a de facto ban on working, and enforced poverty and homelessness;

   c) the Nationality and Borders Act does not address these issues, and has instead created a two-tier system, punishing people seeking safety based on the journeys they make;

   d) under these laws, people seeking safety will be criminalised and threatened with removal to Rwanda;

   e) people will be warehoused in large accommodation centres, segregated from communities and denied support;

   f) many recognised refugees will receive a temporary and precarious status;

   g) over 400 charities and faith groups have signed a national pledge to 'Fight the 'Anti-Refugee Laws', as well as MPs from all opposition parties.

2) believe that:

   a) everyone's claim for asylum should be treated equally and fairly;

   b) these are fundamentally 'anti-refugee' laws that undermine internationally recognised rights for people fleeing war and persecution to seek safety;

   c) these measures will create ever-longer delays in the asylum process, lead to greater poverty and homelessness in Norwich and will undermine people's ability to rebuild their lives;

   d) people seeking safety should be housed as our neighbours and as a part of our communities;

   e) the UK needs an asylum system that empowers people seeking safety to rebuild their lives and enables communities to welcome them;

3) agree to:

a) defend the right to seek safety from war and persecution in the UK and sign the national 'Fight the Anti-Refugee Laws' pledge;

b) call on the UK Government to withdraw the UK-Rwanda agreement, repeal the Nationality and Borders Act, and work with Local Authorities and communities to build a refugee protection system that treats all people with dignity and compassion;

c) work with local organisations and people with lived experience of the asylum system to identify ways to mitigate the effects of these measures in Norwich;

d) Join the network of cities and towns which promote the inclusion and welfare of people who are fleeing violence and persecution and become a recognised Council of Sanctuary.

9(f) Motion: Ban conversion therapy

Council **RESOLVES** to:

1) recognise and oppose the harm caused to our LGBT+ community in the past through the denial of rights and equal treatment and further recognises that discrimination does still occur today.

2) recognises and oppose the ongoing harm the practice of so-called conversion therapy brings to LGBT+ people.

3) call on the Government to follow through on the promises made for several years to outlaw the practise of so-called conversion therapy.

4) also calls on the Government to ensure that any ban on conversion therapy is fully trans-inclusive, protecting all LGBT+ people from this cruel practice.

5) calls on the relevant Government department + Minister to introduce an effective ban on conversion therapy within England, supported by a programme of work to help tackle these practices in all their forms. Furthermore, this Council will highlight and promote the continued support, counselling and advocacy our local groups provide to members of the LGBT+ Community.

6) recognise the excellent work done by local people and organisations to support the LGBT+ community here in Norwich, particularly Norwich Pride and extends its thanks and support to them.

The meeting was closed.

LORD MAYOR

NORWICH City Council

Council
29 September 2022
Questions to cabinet members

Question 1

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

"Representing a ward which contains some of the highest poverty rates in the city I know that the future for many of my constituents will be exceptionally difficult. A financial time bomb will explode for families next month not just in Crome but across this entire country as a second round of fuel price rises in six months send shockwaves through every household and pushes millions over the edge. 35 million people in 13m households – an unprecedented 49.6% of the population of the United Kingdom – are under threat of fuel poverty in October. This council has a proud record of fighting for social, economic, and environmental justice for our citizens. In the face of the coming hurricane can the Leader comment on what steps this council can do to assist its citizens through these darkest of times?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"With the cost of living spiralling, we know this is a time of great concern for many people and we are doing everything we can to provide support to residents.

It is vitally important to raise awareness of the help that is available, whether it is council tax reduction, energy saving improvements, or help making sure that you are receiving the financial support that you are entitled to. The council's new cost of living hub on our website signposts this information, outlining what we, and our partners, can do to help. For those that need tailored support our budget advisors have been working hard to provide that help.

We also continue to work alongside our partners and voluntary organisations that are supporting communities. One of the ways we support them is providing free accommodation and funding for services. The recently opened social supermarkets on Hall Road and Russel Street are examples of this, and underline the role the council plays in addressing food poverty.

But it must be said that the emergency response to the cost of living crisis is a sticking plaster, made necessary by years of stagnating wages and cuts to public services leaving communities vulnerable. We need a long-term solution

creating well paid jobs in our city, properly funding essential services and ensuring we never find ourselves in a situation like this again."

(As a supplementary question Councillor Kidman asked if the leader of the council had any advice for the Secretary of State for the Department of Works and Pensions, Chloe Smith MP. Councillor Waters, leader of the council said he would be watching very carefully to see whether she was helping people through a cost of living crisis or making their situation worse.)

Question 2

Councillor Vaughan Thomas to ask the leader of the council the following question:

> "Given the spiralling rise of inflation, leading to an additional £6.2m cost to this council, can the Leader comment on whether government has given any indication that they intend to support local authorities in the coming months ahead?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

> "Council finances are being significantly impacted by the high level of inflation we are seeing, particularly across energy and fuel prices. The high inflationary pressures impact on the current financial year and future years, resulting in an increase in the forecast budget gap to £6.2m for 2023/24. Central Government has recently unveiled measures to help the Public Sector with rising energy costs for example, which will use a cost cap mechanism that will be automatically applied to energy bills from 1 October. The impact for the city council will be determined when the full details of the proposed support are published, however the current proposals only extend to 31 March 2023 and therefore will not address the forecast gap for next financial year.
>
> Whilst the reversal of the increases to NI will reduce the council's costs, the indication is that the additional resources the government claimed to have included in the 2022/23 settlement will also be removed and so this is expected at best to have a neutral impact on the council's resources overall.
>
> We are also aware that the expected Spending Review 2022 has also been deferred and so there is some question over whether a 2 year settlement promised by Michael Gove when he was the Secretary of State at DLUCH will now actually be announced or, as seems more likely, a further 1 year position will be provided.
>
> There have been no other announcements that would lead us to believe there is to be further government support to local government and, in fact, given the turmoil in markets and the cost to government debt more pressure on government finances seems likely."

(Councillor Vaughan Thomas, asked by way of a supplementary question, if the leader would write to the Chancellor to implore him to prioritise the support people needed to meet the cost and impact of inflation. In response the leader said he would and that the government was using a disaster it had created to justify further cuts to public expenditure.)

Question 3

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

> "I regularly pass the former Kings Arms Pub site on Mile Cross Road and am pleased to see this much needed new council housing being built on the site of a former derelict and abandoned pub. The use of compulsory purchase orders, despite their difficulties, have led to a much better alternative for this community. Can the cabinet member for social housing update council on progress to now complete these properties but also confirm her determination to continue to use, where appropriate CPOs to lever in new council housing in the city?"

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

> "I have been delighted to see the development of the former Kings Arms pub site progressing so well, following the council's acquisition using a compulsory purchase order. It is well over 20 years since the pub was in use and throughout the intervening period it has significantly blighted this part of Mile Cross.
>
> Following our Compulsory Purchase Order, work commenced in September 2021 and whilst the contractor has experienced some minor delays with the supply of materials and labour, construction on the five properties is nearing completion.
>
> The contractor has now given formal notice that completion is due at the end of October, and I look forward to welcoming the new tenants in the near future.
>
> These much-needed new family homes will form part of the council's housing stock and are being built to enhanced energy efficiency standards to keep bills as low as possible.
>
> As members will be aware I am determined to continue to use all powers available to us, in order to bring forward stalled development sites for homes of all tenure, and this is why we included the £5m Revolving Fund as part of our Towns Deal.
>
> We have been making contact with owners of such sites and offering to work with them, offering to acquire their sites through negotiation but also ensuring they are aware of our ultimate powers of CPO should they continue to not bring forward their site for delivery. CPO is not a swift process, but we do have the resources and determination to pursue these sites to a successful conclusion"

(In response to Councillor Huntley's supplementary question, Councillor Harris, the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing detailed how the construction of Three Score phase 3 worked to mitigate its environmental impact.)

Question 4

Councillor Mike Sands to ask the leader of the council the following question:

> "I have long disliked the manner in which the advent of foodbanks have seemingly become an accepted 'norm' as a means to administer some form of alternative social security, in the absence of proper statutory support for people experiencing poverty. I therefore welcome the development of Social Supermarkets in the city, which came from a recommendation out of our 2017 Norwich Food Poverty Network strategy. Two new supermarkets have now been opened – one in Lakenham and the other in Mancroft. Can the Leader comment on whether he hopes more of these can be delivered across every part of this city in the coming months and years?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

> "It's a fantastic testament to the strength and dedication of the voluntary and community sector in Norwich that they have identified a need and delivered the solution, with support from the council, to provide these much needed new options for those struggling in the face of this cost of living crisis. Council officers are working closely with voluntary groups, members of the Norwich Food Network and Norfolk Community Foundations' Nourishing Norfolk funding team to support emerging new social supermarkets and identify areas where there is a need and additional support is required to help local groups develop more of them. There are already plans in place for further social supermarkets in Earlham and another in Mancroft with work ongoing to create more opportunities where they are most needed."

(As a supplementary question Councillor Mike Sands asked if the leader of the council would prioritise the extension of social supermarkets throughout Norwich. The leader said social supermarkets were an important initiative and after austerity could evolve into community assets serving to provide social engagement and advice too.)

Question 5

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

> "I was pleased to finally see the new tennis courts at Heigham Park opened and a wide range of users enjoying the new facility, including those who would have previously been excluded through reasons of disability. Now that this modern, new investment in our city is complete can the cabinet member for community wellbeing comment on future plans to continue to invest and improve in public tennis provision across Norwich?"

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

> "We were all pleased to see the latest addition to our highly successful Norwich Parks Tennis programme open in the summer. This will build on the success of other Norwich Parks tennis schemes by providing high quality, accessible, affordable sports facilities that will be available for 52 weeks of the year for our residents.
>
> However, we have no intention of resting on our laurels and the council is continuing to work with the Lawn Tennis Association to expand Norwich Parks Tennis to further sites. The ultimate aim is to future proof all the tennis courts in our care and provide high quality facilities city wide. This Labour-led city council will always prioritise affordable sports facilities, and the health and wellbeing benefits that they bring."

(In response to Councillor Driver's supplementary question, the cabinet member detailed the roll out for tennis court upgrades planned for the next two years.)

Question 6

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

> "The publication of our new biodiversity strategy has attracted significant positive attention, including praise from the leading environmentalist Chris Packham. Can the cabinet member for community wellbeing comment on whether he supports this endorsement and the ongoing work to improve biodiversity in our green spaces across the city?"

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

> "The feedback received during the public consultation exercise in August has been very positive indeed. I strongly endorse Mr Packham's comment which demonstrates the innovative nature of the Strategy and its potential therefore, to become a model of excellence for local government across the UK. I look forward to bringing the strategy to Cabinet in November."

(As a supplementary question Councillor Padda asked if the cabinet member could provide examples where the council had increased biodiversity in green spaces. Councillor Giles responded by detailing the measures taken at Netherwood in Lakenham working with the Norwich Fringe Project, and local volunteers.)

Question 7

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

> "I was pleased to see Mousehold Heath, Eaton Park and Waterloo Park all secure the much-coveted Green Flag award status in late July. It is a real testament to the hard work of staff and volunteers who invest and protect in these treasured Norwich assets. Can the cabinet member for community wellbeing comment on these prestigious awards and ongoing investment in our parks and open spaces across Norwich?"

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

> "The re-awarding of the coveted Green Flag for three of our important open spaces was indeed testament to all the efforts of the many staff, volunteers and park users who look after them. We will continue to deliver the action plans which sit within the management plan for each park. These ensure continued investment and development to maintain our high standards.
>
> This year's capital programme has already seen improvements to our park football pitches completed and work ongoing to refurbish our dry stone walls around the perimeter of Wensum Park. This winter will see Year Four of works to replace the footpaths in Eaton Park. This year is also seeing toilet upgrades at Sloughbottom Park, Wensum Park, and Heigham Park; and upgrades to the large play area at Wensum Park and the Douro Place play area."

(In response to Councillor Vivien Thomas' supplementary question the cabinet member confirmed that the recent award of £85,000 the council had received from the Levelling Up parks fund would mainly be spent making improvements to Wensum Park.)

Question 8

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

"Representing a ward which contains an ever-growing number of private renters I regularly support constituents who experience problems with their absentee landlords. Poor housing conditions, utterly exorbitant rent and no security of tenure leads to constant fear for many tenants. It damages communities. I read recently how the City Council had assisted two brother who were evicted from their home of three years so the landlord could put rent up by 54pc. To be clear Lord Mayor, their rent went from £795 per month to £1,225. Can the cabinet member for safe, strong, and inclusive neighbourhoods' comment on the ongoing work to develop and strengthen our private sector housing team and ensure, like we did at St Faith's Lane, that we are best able to always protect private renters against the vagaries of landlordism while we have to wait for this for government to finally strengthen the law?"

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

"I agree that the practices that we see in Norwich's private rented sector are a cause for considerable concern. Following the publication of the government's white paper "A fairer private rented sector" earlier in the summer it remains to be seen whether and how the proposed reforms will be implemented. Certainly, additional powers are much needed to enable us to stop rouge landlords and poor standards in the sector.

Whilst we await this detail, we are taking forward a restructure proposed in the Planning and Regulatory service which will see additional resource brought in to the Private Sector Housing enforcement team. The new structure will be in place before the end of the calendar year and thereafter a recruitment drive will commence to fill new posts. We hope the expanded team will be fully resourced by spring next year. The assessment of this team and their capacity will be constantly reviewed in the context of an awareness of the significant proportion of the City's housing which is in the private rented sector. My expectation is that over time we will be able to use fines that we can levy on the City's rogue landlords to expand the team further in future years. We do undertake enforcement, such as at St Faith's Lane, with two significant investigations currently underway. The safety of our residents is at the heart of the work this team does."

(In response to Councillor Davis' supplementary question the cabinet member said she would encourage any resident facing eviction to contact the council's housing options team.)

Question 9

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

"Representing a ward in which the very real problem of poverty pay remains a systemic issue, I was pleased to see that the 'Making Norwich a Living Wage City' Action Group was recently recognised by the Living Wage Foundation. Their plan will see employers encouraged to pay the real Living Wage and become Living Wage Employers, ensuring all employees are paid what they need to live, rather than just survive. Knowing the work that the Leader and other councillors have invested in this important endeavour, can he comment on the significance of this development and the opportunities which it could bring to the city?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"Unacceptable numbers of people in Norwich are working in jobs that simply do not pay a wage that meets the basic cost of living. Paying everyone a Living Wage, calculated at a rate based on what people need to live, is the single most effective way of helping people out of in-work poverty.

Just last week it was announced that the new Living Wage rate for the coming year has increased by a record 10% to £10.90 an hour, reflecting the spiralling rise in cost of living over recent months, and underlining how vital decent pay is to people struggling.

We as a council are proud to have been accredited Living Wage employers for a number of years, paying all colleagues at least a Living Wage, alongside 50 other organisations in Norwich.

As part of the Norwich Living Wage City Action Group, we have come together with some of the city's major employers to produce an action plan to drive up the number of Living Wage Accredited businesses. Our aim is to triple the number paying the Living Wage over the next three years and we have already started working with several businesses to assist their progress towards accreditation. If we meet our ambitious targets, it would represent a pay rise for thousands of people."

(In response to Councillor Peek's supplementary question the leader of the council said that good wages and strong Trade Union membership were key to getting households out of poverty and the current cost of living crisis.)

Question 10

Councillor Brociek-Coulton to ask the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:

"The vast majority of the population is outraged by the amount of sewage being pumped into rivers and seas around the UK, including here in Norwich and Norfolk. Pollution in our local rivers can come from several sources. Ironically, one of them is Anglian Water which also extracts water from these same rivers to provide a water supply for domestic and commercial use. Anglian Water repeatedly discharges treated, and untreated sewage into rivers, and this is not by accident. In 2020, the company pumped raw sewage into rivers in our region 17,428 times, for 170,547 hours. Given the significant work of this council in developing the River Wensum strategy and its importance to the city environment, can the cabinet member comment on his concerns at this issue and promise to raise it with Anglia Water at a senior level?

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

"The River Wensum Strategy (RWS) is the result of significant partnership working which has seen huge improvements in access to and enjoyment of the River Wensum. Improving the water quality and biodiversity offer of the River Wensum are both very important issues and these are set out as policies in the Strategy. Although the responsibility for sewage spills lies with Anglian Water (AW) which is not a member of the Partnership, the Environment Agency (EA) is a member and has a responsibility to monitor water quality and has a regulatory role regarding unconsented sewage spills to our rivers. The council has contacted the EA to raise this issue and the partnership will be discussing this further at RWS partnership meetings. In addition to this, the partners are involved in supporting wider initiatives for improving water quality, such as addressing nutrient neutrality and work being undertaken by Water Resources East."

(In response to Councillor Brociek-Coulton's supplementary question Councillor Stonard said he was pleased that the public ownership of utilities was back on the political agenda.)

Question 11

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

"The biodiversity strategy has two principal outcomes:

- The development of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) for Norwich which will be created by inviting coordinated action from residents, the business community, voluntary groups and charities who own wildlife sites, to work together towards the common goal of sustained nature recovery.
- Aligning council operations with the strategy to contribute to the NRN by improving biodiversity in parks, open spaces and the green spaces in and around our buildings.

The council's aspiration to improve the biodiversity in and around our buildings could include many things, such as a Supplementary Planning document that restricts the removal of trees, requires hedges on boundaries, roof space to be utilised for green roofing (or solar) as default. It might involve grant seeking to support initiatives to site hedges, green roofs, hedgehog bridges, pocket parks and green corridors. How will whatever the strategy includes actually be funded?"

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources' response:

"Our Biodiversity Strategy is an ambitious response to the biodiversity emergency and has been welcomed by many through the recent consultation process. As set out in the Strategy, an internal Biodiversity Working Group, has been convened comprising 14 officers drawn widely from across all directorates of the council. A key workstream of the working group is to coordinate budget management activities, including the strategic management of existing budgets and to seek external funding as appropriate. As always, all decisions around funding will be taken in line with the council's normal corporate planning processes following the completion of individual business cases relating to each project."

(Councillor Grahame confirmed she had no supplementary question.)

Question 12

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

> "The Environment Act 2021 paves the way for Biodiversity Gain to be a condition of planning permission. Defra's follow up consultation refers to achieving 'at least' 10% Biodiversity Net Gain' (BNG). Norwich City Council is proposing a minimum BNG of just 10% for new development. It claims in its draft Biodiversity Strategy that 10% is an 'ambitious' target. Other local authorities have adopted a target of 20% BNG (for example, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council, Lichfield District Council, Swindon Borough Council and Guildford Borough Council). Will Norwich City Council adopt the genuinely ambitious target of 20% BNG?"

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

> "The Greater Norwich Local Plan sets the policy framework that planning applications will be assessed against, and it requires a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on site for all new developments. A change to this requirement would require a change to the policy. This will be enacted via a Supplementary Planning Document. We are currently procuring an evidence base study on the biodiversity baseline for species, flora and fauna in the city which will inform how we improve biodiversity in our green and other spaces in the city moving forward. The 10% requirement could be reviewed in later years but as a first measure it is important to be able to successfully deliver on our legislative requirements."

(In response to Councillor Carlo's supplementary question asking if the cabinet member would commit to a 20% target for biodiversity net gain. Councillor Giles said that the Biodiversity Strategy would go the Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel in November 2022 and this would provide an opportunity to discuss the strategy further.)

Question 13

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

"Over several months Green councillors have had numerous complaints about:

- housing repairs being delayed or incomplete
- surveys being scheduled but no one turning up
- lack of updates about outstanding repair, some going on for months
- poor quality of environmental services including emptying bins and street-cleaning

A severe bottleneck in housing repairs seems to be disrupting other services including customer service. Meanwhile, basics like reporting against the Norwich Standard is not happening due to issues with technology. The promised lift-and-shift from Norse to NCSL has not happened, leading to a decline in service quality. And residents have flagged that they have seen low morale among NCSL workers. All this seems to point to problems in the oversight of the council's wholly-owned company, NCSL, which lies with a company board which includes Labour councillors. What is the council doing to improve NCSL performance in both housing repairs and environmental services?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"We made no secret of the fact, that the services we transferred to NCSL would need significant improvement, we acknowledged - that full improvement could take up to three years.

We work with NCSL closely to understand and monitor performance through contract management meetings attended by officers, and through shareholder panel meetings attended by senior officers and Members. We are using social housing repairs data in the first year of the contract to benchmark and provide a meaningful comparison of performance to drive positive improvements in services for repairs and maintenance and set Key performance indicators going forward.

Through the shareholder panel meetings, we have agreed with the company that an improvement plan will be developed. This will be monitored by the company board of course as part of their own governance arrangements and closely monitored by the city council through the shareholder panel, of which Councillor Galvin is a member."

(In response to Councillor Haynes' supplementary question Councillor Waters said work to improve service delivery started before the service was transferred to the council's wholly owned company.)

Question 14

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

"Some district and unitary councils are finding ways to fund the retrofitting of tens of thousands of social homes (eg: Lewes, Leeds). That compares to the dozens, or at most couple of hundred, being retrofitted by Norwich City Council. Over the last two years Green Party councillors have repeatedly proposed motions and called for the HRA to be updated to address the potential to reduce fuel bills, support local jobs, and cut energy use.

What has been done to update the HRA to contribute essential long-term funding (other than one-off central grants) to improving the energy efficiency of council housing stock and introducing forms of sustainable energy and heating since the last budget, where such measures were noticeably absent?"

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

"A planned review of the HRA business plan is nearing completion and will be presented to Members in November for consideration and approval. The business plan will outline proposals for investment in our homes, including improved energy efficiency measures, sustainability, and retrofitting.

A new strategic Asset Management Plan is also being developed once completed it will form part of the overall longer term housing improvements strategy, which will include improved energy efficiency measures, sustainability, and retrofitting.

We have of course already undertaken several measures to improve the energy efficiency of our homes through our capital improvement programmes. Through a recently commissioned survey we have recorded a SAP score of 74.37% across our council homes, which makes us one of the better performing authorities in England.

The business plan and strategic asset management plan will help us quantify the level of investment required, so that we can seek to develop our delivery and funding approach."

(In response to Councillor Osborn's supplementary question asking how the required investment for retrofitting of council houses would be made, the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said a change in government would achieve this.)

Question 15

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

> "The council recently passed a new strategy on contaminated land. I was very glad to see this strategy considered and I reviewed it quite closely. The overarching goal is that the council will work to bring contaminated land back into beneficial use and where possible, will work directly with groups to remediate these plots. There was no mention of the council leaving sites without remediation and what factors would be considered to determine this. However, I have been told repeatedly that Morley Street will not be remediated. Can you explain this gap in the contamination strategy and explain why this apparent decision to not de-contaminate the land at Morley Street has been made, despite no reference in the strategy of sites that the council will not bring back into beneficial use?"

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

> "The Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy sets out how the Council will determine which land is contaminated, specific sites are not identified in the strategy. If the land is within private ownership, it is not the responsibility of the Council to remediate any contamination. Where contamination poses a significant risk to health we can intervene under statutory powers and where it is in the public interest to do so, the council works with landowners in the first instance to secure remediation through agreement, only as a last resort would the council take enforcement action. Remediation can be incredibly costly and so a case by case decision must be made in such circumstances. Normally, land decontamination is secured when planning permission is granted for redevelopment with conditions applied to permissions. It is hard to respond to the specifics of this case as the land is not identified clearly."

(In response to Councillor Catt's supplementary question, asking why the land had not been remediated the cabinet member said she was happy to explore why and speak outside of the meeting to the Councillor.)

Question 16

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

> "The first objective behind the Local Plan is to minimise contributions to climate change and address its impact. The weather we have seen this summer has been unprecedented with heatwaves, fires and droughts. These weather events will become even more common and even more extreme. Droughts are dangerous in two ways - they are a risk to our water supply but also greatly increase the chance of flooding. In line with objective 1 of the local plan, would the council consider reintroducing a scheme to provide standard and slow-release water butts to residents across the city as happened with the successful CATCH project in conjunction with Norfolk County Council and Broadland District Council as part of a sustainable urban drainage system?"

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

> "The local plan does indeed seek to minimise contributions to climate change and address its impact. Whilst the provision of standard or slow-release water butts to residents across the city would be a laudable project there is no funding in place to secure this. Norfolk County Council may be better placed to promote any such scheme linked to their role as Lead Local Flood Authority"

(As Councillor Price had sent his apologies there was no supplementary question.)

Question 17

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

> "The cabinet member for community wellbeing recently stated that the council 'will always prioritise affordable sports facilities and the health and benefits that they bring.' However, the basketball court on Ely Street, a court that used to provide a free sports facility to one of the most deprived areas in the city centre, has been closed off for years. The latest response from his predecessor was that a consultation had been undertaken about the future of the court. It has not been possible for me to find out since what the council's plans are for this facility. Could you please explain when this court will be re-opening, something I get asked by residents (especially those with children) on a regular basis?"

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

> "We are pleased that following recent discussions, our Community Enabling and Housing officers are making progress with a local community group who have shown interest in making use of the site. This will benefit local residents and bring the site back into use. Other options have been explored for the site and found unsuitable, so this presents an opportunity to use the site differently in line with what is wanted by residents in the area. The detail and terms need to be agreed and we will be happy to update on progress as the specific arrangements are put into place"

(In response to Councillor Bogelein's supplementary question, Councillor Giles said that discussions were in an advanced stage with a community group to make positive use of the site.)

Question 18

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

> "Many residents and visitors to the city have complained about the state of the litter bins in the city centre, including: bins overflowing, bins missing their tops and not being replaced (e.g.: Fishergate, the Moorings), and the lack of recycling bins (especially in the north city centre e.g.: Colegate). Green councillors have previously been assured that the bins service is being reviewed. Can the cabinet member say what concrete steps are being taken to address these issues?"

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

> "A review of litter bins within the city centre and further afield is currently taking place. Nine dual (litter and recycling) bins have been delivered and will be installed shortly to replace some of the old cast iron bins within the city centre. It is proposed a further 25 dual bins will replace the remaining cast iron bins in the coming months. Due to ongoing issues with vandalism (mainly bin lids being thrown into the Wensum and bins being set on fire at Mousehold Heath it is proposed that the cast iron bins will replace litter bins both on riverwalk and Mousehold Heath within the next few months also. We will continue to review areas of need and current bin capacities across the city."

(As Councillor Schmierer had sent his apologies there was no supplementary question).

Question 19

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

> "Many tenants may choose a pre-payment meter or may be required to have a pre-payment meter by their supplier. These could well end up being a sure fire way of being cut off as the fuel crisis bites this winter. And standing charges rack up even when no energy is used. I understand that the council counts on self-referral for support and advice, but could I be assured that it will be pro-active in identifying these cases which may be numerous, by asking who has a meter at present, and giving specific information to meter users through its social media, tenant and citizen magazine and other channels throughout winter?"

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

> "All communications to our residents during the autumn and winter will include information about support available, and how to contact us for advice. We will share this information through our existing channels and forums, and via our teams of contractors and staff who regularly visit tenants. As already mentioned by the Leader - the council's new cost of living hub on our website signposts this information, outlining what we, and our partners can do to help. For those that need tailored support our budget advisors have been working hard to provide that help.
>
> We are also asking our contractors and officers to inform housing staff immediately if they attend a home where there is no gas or electricity or where a tenant requires specific advice, this is the case whether the tenant has a pre-payment meter in place or not. We will then directly contact our tenants in those circumstances to help.
>
> A cross council group of officers are working together to deliver our cost of living response. This group will monitor and collect information to understand early trends and data and design our response accordingly."

(By way of supplementary question Councillor Galvin asked whether the council had spoken to National Energy Action on how SMART pre-payment meters could benefit tenants. In response the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing said she would speak to officers about this item.)

Question 20

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

> "Glyphosate is a weedkiller which is highly harmful to biodiversity, watercourses and human health and for which safer alternative methods of weed control exist. Unfortunately, this council does still use it, particularly on some hard surface drying areas. It is looking at alternatives but was not able to progress trials this year due to hot weather. As every year is likely to be hot from now on, can you confirm that trials leading to a firm decision will take place next year?"

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

> "It was unfortunate that for a number of reasons, including the extreme weather over the summer, it was not possible to proceed with the pesticide reduction project as originally planned.
>
> We have the resources in place and a detailed project brief in place that will allow the trials to commence once sufficient weed growth has occurred in 2023. I am very keen for this to commence as it will give us valuable information about how we can best manage our land in the changing climate but will have to adapt our plans in the light of weather conditions next year."

(In response to Councillor Champion's supplementary question, Councillor Giles said progress was being made on eliminating the use of pesticides.)

Question 21

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

> "I understand that the council's policy is to charge £40 per bin for any replacement or swap. Residents have asked why they should pay £80 for a pair of 120l bins to replace a pair of 240l bins when smaller bins contain less waste and take up less space, both of which are beneficial to the city. Could the reasons for these charges please be explained?"

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

> "Charges for new and replacement bins were agreed back in 2016. The £40 fee is a delivery and administration charge which is still be required even if residents are 'downsizing' their bins. I recognise this may seem contrary to our efforts to minimise waste production, but it is needed to cover costs in changing existing bins. We continue to look at waste strategy issues and will be considering further ways of minimising waste production in due course so will re-examine our charges as part of this exercise."

(In response to Councillor Young's supplementary question Councillor Oliver said that residents who found it difficult to move bins could contact the Council's waste collection agent Biffa who could assist. She agreed that ideally there would be a move to allowing people to have smaller bins to encourage less waste.)

Question 22

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

> "The county council have received £50m in Government Funding to improve bus services. Their plans to spend this sum throughout Norfolk include infrastructure changes with more bus lanes, better junctions and transport hubs, reducing costs of fares for young people and better through ticketing.
>
> What input will the city council have into these improvement plans and the spending of £50m?"

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

> "We were disappointed not to be involved in shaping the Bus Service Improvement Plan or the selection of schemes due to County Council's concerns about meeting the demanding timetable for submission set by the government. The county know we are keen to help them shape the schemes in Norwich through commenting on briefs and designs for new infrastructure. We have also said that we would like them to consider extending a flat fares scheme to Norwich if the trial in Yarmouth is successful, especially if this would make bus travel more affordable for struggling households in Norwich. Although Norfolk did well in the competition for bus funding with other transport authorities, £50m for the whole county will not be enough to persuade people out of their cars and onto buses, especially given the enormous sums planned for road building in the area that will have the opposite effect."

(In response to Councillor Lubbock's supplementary question Councillor Stonard agreed that bus operators should be held to account.)

Question 23

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

> "Water companies, Anglian Water included, have failed to deal with untreated sewage being released into our rivers, lakes, and seas.
>
> In 2021 untreated sewage was released on more than 370,000 occasions in England alone.
>
> For Norwich this means the river Wensum, a protected and very rare chalk stream, is being badly polluted so much so that Natural England has put a stop to any further development which includes increasing overnight accommodation in the catchment area of the river.
>
> Norwich and neighbouring authorities are working up a plan to mitigate the effects of pollution in the River Wensum in order to lift this 'stop' on development.
>
> Will this Council write to the Environment Agency and ask them to pursue Anglian Water, without further delay, to the fullest legal level and thereafter inform Anglian Water that because of the seriousness of the situation you have taken this action?"

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

> "The pollution of our waterways is indeed a very serious issue. The issue of the alleged breach of permit levels by Anglian Water is for the Environment Agency to enforce in their statutory role. We are not apprised of the full facts of the situation and therefore it is not considered appropriate for us to intervene in the way that is suggested. This does not directly impact on the solutions that we are working hard to identify to ensure that new development does not add to the problems created by significant historic under investment in our water infrastructure."

(In response to Councillor Ackroyd's supplementary question Councillor Stonard advised that the council was looking at outputs from new developments and how the sewage works managed nutrients which were produced.)

Please note that the following questions are second questions from members and will only be taken if the time taken by questions has not exceeded thirty minutes. This is in line with paragraph 53 of Part 3 of the council's constitution.

Question 24

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

> "We are all looking forward to the secure door entry system being rolled out across the city, so residents no longer have to live with anti-social behaviour and drug use in the communal areas of block of flats. However, there are several communal staircases where the council has indicated that a door entry system is not appropriate, such as Canterbury Place and Langley Walk. These communal staircases are already highly frequented by drug users, and this is likely going to increase when other areas receive secure door entry systems. A few months ago, the council committed to exploring alternative solutions for these staircases (e.g. partial premises closure orders). I have been unable to find out what solutions are actually being proposed. Could you therefore please explain what solution the council is seeking to ensure people living near these communal staircases are no longer disturbed by anti-social behaviour and drug use?"

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

> "Our discussions with police were that Partial Closure Orders would not be very effective on their own and are only a short-term measure. In recognition of the physical problems around installing door entry systems to certain blocks and the issues highlighted in developments like Canterbury Place and Barnards Yard this led to us submitting a bid to the Home Office, Safer Streets Fund. I can confirm we were successful and this funding will enable us to purchase CCTV systems for both developments; these will be installed in early 2023/24. We are not currently aware of any reported issues in the communal areas of Langley Walk but would encourage residents to report any incidents through the normal channels.
> Substance misuse is a multi-faceted issue and something that cannot be solved in isolation, and we rely on working with partners to reduce harm to users and the knock-on effect it has on residents. In the forthcoming Norwich Community Safety strategy (that will be launched early next year) we will set out how we aim to work with partners to help reduce the harm caused by this issue."

Question 25

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

> "I have had numerous cases where private tenants have sought support from the city council due to them being at risk of eviction, but where they have not been left waiting for someone from the housing team to contact them due to staff shortages. I was told that tenants would be prioritised when they are at imminent risk of eviction, which may mean that they wouldn't get support before a court date.
> Given that evictions are expected to rise as more people struggle to afford rent, can the cabinet member tell me what actions are being taken to ensure the housing team has the capacity needed to support private tenants at risk of eviction at the earliest opportunity?"

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

> "We believe that the most effective way to deal with homelessness is to prevent it from happening and place great emphasis on this approach through the provision of specialist housing advice and assistance to all those facing homelessness or in housing difficulty in the city. Our approach is successful, with our Housing Options team being one of fourteen in the country to receive nationally recognised 'gold standard' accreditation for the quality of its homelessness and prevention services
>
> Over the past year, our pro-active approach has directly prevented more than 650 households from experiencing homelessness and assisted many hundreds more in resolving their own housing issues. We continue to develop our service and continue to enhance our provision, with specialist advisers in post and more specialist accommodation being brought onstream.
>
> The prevention of homelessness; provision of accessible, high quality, personalised advice and assistance and a broad range of housing options for those in housing need will remain priorities for this council. Equally, our commitment to supporting those in the private rented sector, now and in the future, is set out fully in our charter for private sector tenants."

Question 26

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

"I understand that since the move of NCSL to NCC, the ability to report on quality standards (such as the Norwich standard) and the ability to produce SAP scores for properties have been lost. With energy efficiency being crucial to help residents through the cost of living crisis and fighting climate change and the quality of social housing properties being a big issue for tenants. Could I have an explanation for a plan not being in place to ensure that the ability to carry out these essential functions was retained, and an explanation of what plans are in place to ensure they are returned?

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"The ability to report on progress against the Norwich Standard has not been lost. This information was previously held in a system called "codeman". In transferring services back to the Council, the data has been downloaded from one system into file formats that can be interrogated, ready to be uploaded to NEC.

Officers are currently involved in designing the structure of NEC to enable the data to be held and utilised there. At the same time work is being undertaken to validate and ensure the integrity of the transferred data.

Throughout the period of transition, we are able to report on all aspects of the council's housing stock, including SAP ratings and compliance with the Norwich Standard."

Question 27

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

"I have had countless cases where residents are fed up and angry with the council due to a lack of communication, often having to wait months for any form of communication whether that be in answer to an online form request, contacting their housing officer or estate management. Meanwhile their issues escalate and from speaking to many of my residents, a reputation of the council being unresponsive is now widespread. What is being done to ensure that the council fulfils its basic responsibilities by responding to residents in a prompt manner?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"The council has corporate service standards for dealing with enquiries and these are managed across the difference service areas. Our customer complaints are closely monitored with key performance indicators, and this is reported into the quarterly assurance report.

It is disappointing to hear that some enquiries are taking longer to answer, and it would be useful to have details of these specifically so they can be checked, and any issues addressed with relevant managers."

Question 28

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

> "In April 2020, I requested street signs for Primrose Place, off Rose Valley, on Unthank Road and have done so on several occasions since. Primrose Place has grown in number from four to eleven homes in the last few years. The cul-de-sac has never had a street name plate and residents report the difficulty that some visitors have in finding their street. City council officers acknowledge that new street signs for Primrose Place are a high priority but eighteen months on from asking, none have been installed. When can Primrose Place residents expect to see their street signposted?"

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

> "A die press street sign for Primrose Place was installed around three weeks ago."

Question 29

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

"The new Heigham Park tennis courts, which cost around a quarter of a million pounds, were surfaced in the wrong colour early this year but nonetheless the council installed nets and lines on them in March for promotion which did not happen. It then resurfaced, re-lined and re-netted them – all before a single ball was served. What was the cost of this extra work?"

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

"The cost to reline the courts prior to full resurface added £900 to the total capital cost for the works on Heigham and Lakenham tennis courts. This launch could have gone ahead with community participation, but for the criminal damage caused to them by someone throwing jars of gloss paint over them.

Norwich Parks tennis have confirmed that Heigham Park tennis courts are already outperforming Eaton Park in bookings. It is looking to be their most successful site to date, which is great news. This Labour-led City Council will always prioritise affordable sports facilities, and the health and wellbeing benefits that they bring."

Question 30

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

"Defibrillators save lives and are designed to be used by any member of the public but time is absolutely crucial with minutes making the difference between life and death. While we have seen the recent closure of numerous establishments across the city centre where defibrillators could previously be found, and others, such as at The King Centre and The Maids Head have been out of use, the defibrillator at City Hall sits behind a locked door inaccessible to members of the public, council officers and councillors. Particularly as knowledge of defibrillator sites is generally low, will the cabinet member work with me to make sure this defibrillator is accessible to all and collate a public list of available defibrillators in the city?"

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

"Thank you for your question and I agree it is vital to make sure that defibrillators can be readily accessed. To assist with this, we have been working with the conservation team, to agree a suitable external location for siting the defibrillator. An application has now been submitted for listed building consent, in an accessible location, adjacent to the main entrance to City Hall. Once the application has been validated, site and press notices will be issued and there is a statutory consultation period for public comment. For a Grade II* Listed Building such as City Hall, Historic England will also be invited to comment. Determination is expected to take 6-8 weeks.

Should the application be approved, we will seek to install the defibrillator promptly. Following this the location of the defibrillator, and its availability to the public, will be registered on the British Heart Foundation website. Their website identifies the locations of the current defibrillator sites within Norwich.

Defib finder – find the defibrillators nearest you."

Question 31

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

"I have encountered issues of repairs and poor maintenance that tenants are suffering from across Sewell with little help from their housing officers. Moreover, numerous issues have arisen with housing officers leaving the council and this causing delays to tenants who have to start the process all over again and waiting even longer for the repairs the council are responsible for. What is the council doing to ensure that there is regular and constructive communication between housing officers and tenants and that there is a process to ensure cases are not dropped or delayed when switching over officers?"

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

"The majority of repairs will be raised either directly by tenants using the online portal, or via the customer contact centre. These orders will be processed by property services and appointments will be arranged with tenants. Property services or NCSL keep tenants up to date with progress, time scales and any issues or delays. If there is any issue to follow up or a complaint, they are followed up by a dedicated repairs support team to monitor and track repairs.

Our housing officers are not involved in day-to-day repairs enquiries and usually only involved where there are non-access issues, in which case the housing officer will attempt to engage with the tenant and support services to ensure the repair or H&S check is carried out."

Question 32

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

"Council officers recently planned to remove a healthy rowan tree from Barnards Yard. This removal of a healthy tree would have been in contravention of the council's own policy. Could the cabinet member explain to me how the removal of this tree nearly occurred, and would have if a councillor hadn't stepped in?"

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

"The removal of a rowan tree at Barnards Yard is proposed as part of the wider scheme to remodel car-parking arrangements. Removal of the tree allows for a substantially improved overall approach to the design and landscaping of the scheme.

In policy terms, where the loss of trees is accepted in these circumstances, developers (the council in this case) will be required to provide at least equivalent replacement in terms of biomass. This should be provided on-site unless the developer can show exceptional circumstances which would justify replacement provision elsewhere. The council proposes to replace the rowan tree with 5 silver birches on site"