



**Council**

**19:30 to 22:45**

**28 November 2023**

Present: Councillors Wright (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Calvert, Carrington, Catt, Champion, Davis, Driver, Everett, Fox, Francis, Fulton-McAlister, Galvin, Giles, Hampton, Haynes, Hoechner, Huntley, Jones, Kendrick, Kidman, Lubbock, Maguire, Oliver, Osborn, Packer, Padda, Peek, Price, Prinsley, Sands (M), Sands (S), Schmierer, Stonard, Stutely, Thomas (Va), Thomas (Vi), Young

Apologies: Councillor Worley

**1. Lord Mayor's Announcements**

The Lord Mayor introduced the procedure for the meeting, and said that following consultation with group leaders and at his discretion, the order of the agenda would be changed due to public interest in certain items. The agenda would then be taken in the following order: Declarations of Interest, Questions from the public, Questions to cabinet members, Motion 8(b), Motion 8(c), Motion 8(a), Motion 8(d), Motion (f), Minutes, Constitution Update – Statutory Officers and finally Update to the Capital Programme 2023/24.

The Lord Mayor announced some of the events that he had attended over the last two months which included a visit to the SOUL Foundation Social Supermarket which was funded by the Norfolk Community Foundation, this year's civic charity; the Edith Cavell Commemoration of her life and bravery in the First World War; the Norwich Works exhibition at Norwich Castle (open to 14 April 2024); events to celebrate Black History Month including the unveiling of a portrait of former Lord Mayor, Councillor Maguire; the launch of Living Wage week; the events to mark Remembrance Sunday at the war memorial and Norwich Cathedral; and the Festive Lights Switch on.

On 15 March 2022, the council granted Honorary Freedom of the City to the Ukrainian cities of Lviv and Odessa. As the National Orchestra of Ukraine was on a tour of the UK and visiting Norwich, the Lord Mayor took the opportunity to hand over the scrolls marking the occasion to members of the orchestra to take back to Ukraine.

(A full list of events is appended to these minutes at Appendix B.)

The Lord Mayor made the following statement:

“As we approach this time of festivities, where we often wish peace and joy to all, in recent weeks we have had a sharp reminder that for many, now is not a time of peace of joy, but instead a time of great suffering and hardship.

With that in mind, I call upon council to join with me in a minute’s silence in memory of all of those who have suffered loss arising from conflict around the world.”

(The Lord Mayor then led the council in a minute’s silence.)

The Lord Mayor announced that he had a request from Councillor Davis to make a personal statement.

Councillor Davis announced that she, together with Councillors Stutely, Everett, Oliver, would be leaving the Labour Group with immediate effect and would therefore sit as an independent group.

Councillor Oliver announced her resignation from her cabinet position with immediate effect.

(Councillors Davis, Stutely, Everett and Oliver then moved seats across the chamber.)

## **2. Declarations of interests**

Councillor Stonard declared an other interest in motion 8(f) as a former director of OneNorwich Practices.

Councillor Packer declared an other interest in motion 8(f) because he was a former employee of OneNorwich Practices.

## **3. Public questions/petitions**

The Lord Mayor announced that five public questions had been received within the provisions of Part 3 of the council’s constitution.

### **Question 1 - Medicinal Cannabis**

**Mr Danny Wilson, asked the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

“Unfortunately, it can be challenging for those with disabilities and medical needs to get appropriate support when facing discrimination. Can the cabinet member tell me how the council ensures both the council itself as well as businesses such as landlords and venues in the city do not discriminate against those with all forms of disabilities and particularly those who take medical cannabis in providing access to a decent quality of life in the city?”

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

“The council is strongly committed to meeting its obligations under the Equality Act. We acknowledge the positive contribution those with protected characteristics can and do make to the vibrancy of Norwich, as well as that of other groups we have identified as vulnerable to disadvantage. As such, we extend our commitment to enabling all Norwich residents, and the many other communities we serve, through the delivery of fair and accessible services, in our role as an employer, a contractor of goods and services, and a community leader, and in the deployment of our assets, funds and influence. We seek to ensure that nobody in Norwich experiences discrimination because of a perceived difference, taking a proactive role to reduce inequalities, remove barriers to participation and promote accessibility for all, supporting the overarching aims of our forthcoming Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024/27.

The Equality Act 2010 covers everyone in Britain, and it defends employees and the public's right to not be discriminated against when interacting with their employers, public services, businesses, transport, clubs and associations, and public bodies.”

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Wilson asked that members of the public requesting access to the Equalities Officer were provided with it to resolve any issues that could arise. Councillor Giles replied that he would be happy for Mr Wilson to raise any issues with him outside the meeting as he was the cabinet member for community and social inclusion and was responsible for this area and should be the contact in the first instance.

**Question 2 – Banking with Barclays**

**Ms Cat Acheson to ask the cabinet member for resources the following question:**

“Norwich City Council banks with Barclays, a bank which according to War on Want holds £1.3 billion of shares in companies supplying weapons to Israel. It is also one of the largest funders of the fossil fuel industry in the world, according to Rainforest Action Network and a coalition of environmental Non-Governmental Organisations. Given that the council has acknowledged we are in a Climate Emergency, and considering Barclays' role in funding Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine and systemic violence against Palestinian civilians, will the council commit to removing its business from Barclays, when the banking contract comes up for renewal next year?”

**Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources' response:**

“As you may be aware, there is a motion on the agenda today relating to the role that banks play in funding activities and what we can do as a council.

What Local Authorities can do when buying services is subject to significant restrictions. At the moment, we have to follow the Public Procurement Rules, which will soon be replaced by a new Procurement Act, as well as laws such

as the Local Government Act 1988. Whilst these laws may be designed to ensure that we get best value when spending public money, they also place significant restrictions on our ability to take ethical considerations into account. By law, we have to make our decisions based on economic considerations and, for example, cannot rule out companies because of their employment practices or the countries that they chose to invest in.

With that in mind, it would be unlawful for me to stand here to say that we will remove our business from Barclays. It is also worth bearing in mind that some banks that may be seen as more ethical, such as the co-op, have withdrawn from providing banking services to local authorities. However, what I can commit to is trying to ensure that we attract all willing banks to the tender, and looking at what we can do within the bounds of the law when assessing the different tenders, we receive for their social and ethical merits as part of the important criteria of ensuring we achieve best value for the public purse.

Banking services are a key part of the council's Treasury Management operations, and they provide an essential service required for any modern organisation receiving and making financial payments. The current banking contract was awarded following a joint procurement with the other 7 Norfolk councils completed in 2014. The open procurement for a new banking provider, when the current contract expires, will also be conducted via a joint procurement and will be open to all interested service providers able to meet the specification of services. The council will not be able to restrict which banks can submit tenders as part of the procurement process and it is likely there will only be a small number of interested providers willing and able to provide banking services to large complex Local Authorities.

The main benefit of a joint banking procurement is that it allows the city council to pool its banking requirements and give providers a greater opportunity to leverage better pricing and concentrate service quality as part of their tender. The council will work with the other contracting organisations participating in the joint procurement to design a service specification against which service provider tenders will be evaluated. Whilst quality of service and contract price are likely to be the key evaluation criteria, Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) policies will also be included and form part of the overall contract award."

(The Lord Mayor did not allow Ms Acheson's supplementary question which related to the Israel-Gaza war, and explained that whilst it was about important issues, it did not comply with the council's rules on public speaking as it did not arise directly from the original question or response. No further discussion on this ruling was permitted.)

### **Question 3 – St George's play area**

**Mr Stuart McLaren to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

"I recently visited the newly refurbished St George's children's play area, which has significantly improved this community amenity with its colourful, lively and imaginative ocean theme including a playful shark! Can the cabinet member comment on how the changes delivered to the new play area will

encourage more young people to get outside and enjoy the facilities provided?"

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

"Involving local families in the design of the play area from the start undoubtedly ensured the project's success, with over 400 responses online and in person responses. There was an expectation that those families involved would use the play area. That has been fed back through compliments and most recently from a resident that lives opposite the park, commenting on how well used the space is now.

The council has invested heavily in this new play area, and it has been designed to be accessible with inclusive features within the play space so that every child should have equal access to good meaningful play opportunities. The equipment is designed to enable users with a wide range of abilities to enjoy play spaces together. The play area also caters to a larger age range than before and has 44 features and can keep up to 35 children engaged and providing physical, social, emotional, imaginative, and cognitive development.

Further information/evidence on benefits of play provision can be found on the [Charter for Play – Play England website](#)."

Mr McClaren said that he was aware that the council managed 81 play areas across the city and as a supplementary question asked the cabinet member to highlight what would be the next project and how the council would seek to effectively manage and invest in its play area portfolio.

(The Lord Mayor suspended proceedings at this point due to a disruption in the foyer. Once the area had been cleared, the meeting continued.)

In reply to Mr McClaren's supplementary question, Councillor Giles confirmed that the council had a significant portfolio of play areas which was brilliant for children. A large number were constructed when council budgets were less constrained and managing the portfolio to an acceptable standard did pose challenges. Nonetheless the council would take all opportunities to upgrade play areas to good standards. The large play area at Wensum Park had been upgraded 12 months ago, and leftover Levelling-Up Parks funding was being used to upgrade the smaller play area in the park, which would incorporate an expansion into the space that was currently the disused paddling pool. The Friends Group, local children and parents would be consulted on the draft designs and shared with DRAGONS and SEND Friendly Norwich to seek input to ensure compliance under the Equality Act. Designs for play area upgrades at Eaton Park and Waterloo Park have been requested to ensure that these destination parks were maintained to the highest standard reflected in their Green Flag status. Capital funding had been secured and the consultation would follow the same process as at Wensum. The council was currently auditing its play areas for quality and value, in addition to safety checks, and this was part of the Play Strategy under the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy that would highlight how S106 funding and the council's capital funding could be prioritised to invest where it was needed most. Community First Partnership were also conducting an Inclusivity Audit of the stock to feed into the nature of the upgrades. This council highly values the

role of play areas in child development and stronger health and wellbeing outcomes, and would continue to prioritise this free access to play facilities across the city.

#### **Question 4 – Development Management policies review**

**Ms Hurst to ask the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

“When will Norwich City Council update its Development Management Policies to enhance sustainable development requirements? A recent planning application for example (23/01208/F), has missed an opportunity to install a green roof. Other authorities such as the City of London, already updated their local plan in October 2023 with climate change and resilience measures, and carbon offsetting. They recognise that green roofscapes are integral to sustainable drainage systems, reducing water-run-off, increasing biodiversity and connecting green corridors.”

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

“Norwich City Council has committed to update its Development Management Policies Plan (DMPP) once there is clarity from national government about planning reforms, in particular the proposed introduction of National Development Management Policies (NDMP), and once the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is adopted. It is important that we understand which policy areas will be covered by the NDMP before commencing work on the new DMPP in order to avoid abortive work, so the intention is to commence work on the new plan once this is clear, anticipated in summer 2024.

By then the GNLP should be adopted which sets the strategic policy framework and includes policies relating to sustainable development. This includes policy 2 (sustainable communities) which addresses a range of sustainability issues for new development including the use of sustainable drainage to reduce flood risk. Policy 3 (environmental enhancement and protection) sets requirements for biodiversity net gain and, in conjunction with policies 2 and 4, for on or off-site green infrastructure delivery.

Green roofs may be a potential solution for some urban schemes as the most suitable way of meeting the requirements for biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure provision and sustainable drainage, where considered appropriate. It is interesting to note that the draft City of London local plan policy, which is yet to be submitted for examination, is not wholly prescriptive but promotes the use of green roofs where they are appropriate.

Development of the new DMPP and implementation of the GNLP will also be informed by evidence studies currently underway, including for example a biodiversity baseline study which is likely to be completed in early 2024 and an updated Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy which should be completed late in 2024.”

Ms Hurst confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.

## **Question 5 – Engaging the Public With Democracy**

### **Mr Alex Gosling to ask the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

“One of the core principles of democratic governance is scrutiny of public office; scrutiny of the behaviour of people who hold such offices, and indeed scrutiny of the powers that they exercise while in office. This should bring about accountability for missteps, accidental or otherwise, the providing of which is a job I know many elected councillors, particularly in the opposition, take very seriously. But crucially, surely the most important people a council should be accountable to is its constituents, those who elect it and those whose who use and pay for its services. Given the reputation of local democracy, that it is often detached from the general public and their material interests, I wonder if the leader would mind giving a brief overview of some of the things he and his administration are doing to showcase and engage the public with the work of this chamber?”

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

“Thank you for your question. Of course, your participation here today recognises and reflects how we want to engage with the public in what we do.

I very much agree with you that accountability to our constituents is critical. We need to understand their hopes, ambitions, and concerns, and be guided by that in all that we do. To ensure that we are, we are currently in the midst of a major, citywide engagement exercise, seeking the views of all in the city. We will use this to inform a new corporate plan, which will set the council’s priorities and guide how we focus our resources for the next 5 years up to 2029. It’s a real opportunity to make sure the views of our city are fully understood, and taken into account, by those of us fortunate enough to represent the people of Norwich.

We have numerous engagement opportunities: focus groups, on street engagement in communities across the city with researchers on hand to as people go about their day, one to one interviews with key partners and a public survey which, as of late last week, had over 4,400 views and nearly 700 responses. We are trying to reach as many people as we can, so please do spread the word and get involved in our Get Talking Norwich survey if you haven’t already.

I also hope you have had the opportunity to engage with our corporate plan survey, available on our Get Talking Norwich platform, which closes on Thursday so if you haven’t, please do so! The corporate plan underlines what we do as a Council and what our priorities should be, so we have undertaken a lot of work to promote the survey, for example on our social media platforms and through Citizen Magazine which gets sent to every household. Since we’ve introduced Get Talking Norwich, we’ve been pleased with the significant increase in engagement we have had, such as the doubling in levels of responses to our annual budget consultation.

I was disappointed that the government recently declined to pass laws allowing local authorities to hold virtual or hybrid meetings which worked excellently in the pandemic to encourage participation. Nonetheless, I am pleased that right now work is underway in our Mancroft Room, used for many committee meetings, to improve accessibility and public engagement including better microphones, videoing technology and hybrid tools. Work is also underway to look at the way that we make best use of City Hall as a workplace and a public building.

Of course, democratic engagement is underpinned by engagement in the election process. I am pleased that we have successfully introduced auto-enrolment on the electoral register at UEA, meaning that far more students on site are now registered to vote. We have recently successfully transitioned to online postal voter registration, and will review our communications plan of the 2024 elections given the ongoing frustration of Voter ID. Of course, if you have ideas as to how we can do more, then please do feel free to contact me directly.”

Mr Gosling asked whether the video recording of council meetings could be improved as at the last ordinary meeting, not all councillors could be seen or heard. Councillor Stonard agreed with the questioner and said that he would ask for the facilities in the Council Chamber to be reviewed. He was aware that at County Hall there was a far superior system in its chamber, and he would undertake to ensure that the city council did the best it could do with the resources available to it.

The Lord Mayor confirmed that no petitions had been received for this meeting.

#### **4. Questions to Cabinet Members**

The Lord Mayor announced that 27 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members, for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of Part 3 of the council’s constitution.

The questions are summarised as follows:

- Question 1 Councillor Thomas (Va) to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on the Norwich Community Safety Partnership.
- Question 2 Councillor Sands (S) to the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on funding for housing asylum seekers and refugees.
- Question 3 Councillor Peek to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion about the Real Living Wage Campaign.
- Question 4 Councillor Fulton-McAlister to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on the contract renewal of Riverside Leisure Centre.
- Question 5 Councillor Sands (M) to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion regarding the protection of tenants and visitors of Norwich Market.

- Question 6 Councillor Packer to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on the delay to abolishing evictions under Section 21 notices.
- Question 7 Councillor Driver to the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth about consultation and on the Corporate Plan and the objectives that could be achieved from this exercise.
- Question 8 Councillor Maguire to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety about developing a community warden service.
- Question 9 Councillor Carrington to the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth regarding the campaign to save the Norwich rail ticket office and to comment on the importance of improved rail infrastructure for the city.
- Question 10 Councillor Kidman to the former cabinet member for wellbeing and culture on the council's Cultural Strategy.
- Question 11 Councillor Padda to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on the use of tents by homeless people.
- Question 12 Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion about grounds maintenance of green spaces around sheltered housing tenants' homes in Eaton.
- Question 13 Councillor Francis to the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on the current review of street cleaning services in Norwich.
- Question 14 Councillor Champion to the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth regarding the Love Norwich publication of its metrics to measure the outcomes of the project.
- Question 15 Councillor Catt to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on resolving complaints of damp and mould from residents in the council's social housing stock.
- Question 16 Councillor Young to the cabinet member for climate change asking for the council to review its communications processes and website and provision of information on the use of solar panels for residents.
- Question 17 Councillor Hoechner to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion about obtaining permission for the Island Community Group to plant fruit trees in the community garden at West Pottergate/Douro Place.
- Question 18 Councillor Fox to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety about the programme to replace fire doors at Winchester and Normandie Towers.

- Question 19 Councillor Haynes to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing on the Estate Aesthetics Programme.
- Question 20 Councillor Schmierer to the cabinet member for wellbeing and culture on making available a list of publicly available statues and sculptures as part of the Action Plan for Culture and hosted on the council's website.
- Question 21 Councillor Worley to the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on the potential to explore a trial four day working week for council staff.
- Question 22 Councillor Osborn to the cabinet member for resources on the due diligence undertaken by the council for recipients of phases 1 and 2 of the Covid small business support grants.
- Question 23 Councillor Galvin to the former cabinet member for wellbeing and culture on whether the council has assessed the impact of the closure or transfer to a new provider of OneNorwich Practices in January 2024.
- Question 24 Councillor Calvert to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on ensuring that barriers on footways and cycleway meet the council's obligations under the Equalities Act.
- Question 25 Councillor Price to the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety on concern that the closure of OneNorwich Practices could have on staffing capacity and resources on council teams working with the homeless.
- Question 26 Councillor Thomas (Vi) to the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion on the successful Mile Cross Health, Wellbeing and Economic Activity bid to secure over £7m and asked for comment on the further improvements that this would help deliver.

(The Lord Mayor agreed to allow the following second question from a member as the time taken by questions was less than 30 minutes (in accordance with paragraph 53 of Part 3 of the council's constitution).)

- Question 27 Councillor Hoechner to the leader and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth about extending kerbside collections of more materials to improve recycling rates.

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

## **5. Motions**

(Notice of the following motions (8(a) to 8(f) as set out on the agenda) had been received in accordance with the council's constitution. The Lord Mayor with the consent of council, had agreed to amend the order that motions were considered because of the public interest at the meeting.)

## **Motion – Encouraging Local Councils to Choose Climate Friendly Banks**

Councillor Hoechner moved, and Councillor Champion seconded the motion, as set out in the agenda papers at 8(b).

Following debate, it was:

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that:

“Currently Norwich City Council, alongside many other councils regionally and nationally, relies on Barclays for its banking operations. Barclays is Europe’s biggest funder of fossil fuels.

Despite a nominal commitment to net zero and the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Barclays has continued to increase its funding for the fossil fuel industry since 2016 and poured billions of dollars into companies active across the fossil fuel life cycle. This includes key oil, gas and coal companies expanding fossil fuel exploitation.

The number of providers of banking services to the local government sector is very limited. But what is more, current procurement legislation does not allow local councils to take into account the makeup and associated carbon footprint of a bank’s investments when choosing their banking partner. This means councils are unable to take into account carbon reduction in a meaningful way when procuring banking services, and continue to hand over citizens’ money to financial institutions that bankroll climate breakdown. Many local councils, including Norwich City Council in 2019, have declared a ‘Climate Emergency’. It is essential that they have the right to switch to a climate friendly bank as part of addressing this emergency.

Council resolves to:

- (1) ask the Leader of Norwich City Council to write to the national government asking them to review current procurement legislation to enable net zero compatible banking by local councils;
- (2) ask the Leader of Norwich City Council to write to the leaderships of all opposition parties in parliament asking them to commit to reviewing current procurement legislation to enable net zero compatible banking by local councils if they come to power in the next elections; and,
- (3) work with relevant bodies, including the Local Government Association, to address existing challenges to net zero compatible banking by local councils in relevant policy;
- (4) write to all major banks to highlight concerns about the role of the banking sector in contributing to climate breakdown through fossil fuel investments, and to demand that they immediately stop all investments in companies active across the fossil fuel life cycle;
- (5) request information from all major banks about their exposure to fossil fuels resulting from their investment portfolios;

- (6) signpost to residents on the Norwich City Council Website, and on Norwich City Council social media, resources to assist them in making informed choices on who they bank with, with particular reference to ethical considerations, including fossil fuel exposure.”

### **Motion – UEA Night Bus**

Councillor Lubbock moved and Councillor Ackroyd seconded the motion as set out on the agenda papers at 8(c).

Following debate, it was:

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that:

“This council knows the 25/26 blue bus route serves an important social need in our city, particularly for students, who predominantly live in western Norwich, and for whom it is the main connection into the city centre and train station. Extending the hours of operation for the service would allow it to better fulfil this need and improve accessibility for all.

We also know the blue bus route is of great benefit to our local economy, connecting thousands of students and residents to our local businesses, whose footfall and custom invigorate our city. Extending the hours on this route would allow people to more easily and cheaply access our nightlife industry in the city centre, stay out for longer, and in turn supercharge our economic growth in that sector.

It would also allow those returning from a night out on the town to negate the need for walking along streets which are poorly lit beyond a certain time of night. This would be of benefit in particular to vulnerable people in our communities, such as women or young people walking alone at night, while also meaning that local residents may face less disturbance from antisocial behaviour and excessive noise on their streets from those returning home on foot from the city centre, which has flared up in recent times.

The introduction of a pilot scheme for the UEA night bus, as is in discussion between the UEA, UEA Student Union, FirstBus, and the county council, using the bus improvement fund from the Department of Transport, would represent excellent progress in addressing existent transport issues in Norwich, particularly for young people.

We strongly believe that the county council should offer to fully fund such a trial using their bus improvement fund, and consider evidence from usage statistics and ticket revenue raised to investigate a more long-term solution which is badly needed.

Council therefore resolves to:

- (1) note that:

- (a) FirstBus have previously offered a late-night service on the 25/26 blue line route, which was cancelled during the preliminary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic as it had become uneconomical.
  - (b) Recent SNAP and UEA liaison meetings have raised night-time antisocial behaviour as an ongoing issue for local residents in wards surrounding the UEA.
  - (c) There have previously been student-led campaigns at the UEA, including by the students' union, expressing concern for the safety of young people, particularly women, walking on the streets at night.
  - (d) Students contribute significantly towards the night-time economy in Norwich, a significant number of which live along the current blue-line route.
  - (e) The current blue-line service ends at 2330, before the closing times of many night-time commercial establishments in the city centre.
  - (f) The county council have recently received circa £50m for bus improvement programmes in the immediate future from the Department of Transport, and a short-term calendar-year trial of a return for the UEA night bus (0000-0400, Monday to Saturday, once an hour, during term time) would need to take advantage of only a very small amount of this funding, about 0.1%.
  - (g) There is an ongoing campaign for a reinstated night bus from the UEA student union which has received public support from:
    - (i) David Maguire, UEA Vice Chancellor
    - (ii) Sgt Mike Larkin, Norfolk Constabulary in Norwich West
    - (iii) UEASU Council Members
    - (iv) Clive Lewis MP
- (2) clearly state its support for the return of the UEA night bus.
- (3) express its disappointment that the county council is as of yet unwilling to award the full funding this scheme needs and deserves.
- (4) ask the leader of the council to write to the county council cabinet member for transport asking that the county council reconsider its prohibitively low funding offer to the UEA and FirstBus for the establishment of a year-long trial period of this service, across two consecutive academic semesters.
- (5) Ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for sustainable transport to work with partners, including the county council, FirstBus, UEA Students' Union and the UEA in seeking funding arrangements for the long-term establishment of the service for such a time as the bus improvement fund remains unallocated to this project or runs out."

## Motion – Private Rented Housing

The Lord Mayor announced that amendments to the motion (Motion 8(a) set out in the agenda papers) had been received from Councillor Jones and these had been circulated to members at the meeting. The amendments were as follows:

- Inserting the word “again” after the word “declare” in resolution 1)
- Inserting the words “as per the motion passed in June 2023” at the end of resolution 1)
- Inserting the words “once legal provision allows” at the end of resolution 7i)
- Inserting the words “continue to” after the words “endeavour to” in resolution 9a)
- Inserting the words “and continue to invest and develop the service tasked to deliver this” at the end of resolution 9a)
- Inserting the words “and within existing legislation” after the words “where appropriate” in resolution 9b)
- Inserting the words “and develop further appropriate” before the word “advice” in resolution 9c)
- Inserting the words “through ensuring the appropriate evidence base is developed and critical criteria met to legally and successfully deliver without challenge” before the words “a long-term ambition” in resolution 9d)
- Inserting the words “inappropriately and without the appropriate safeguards” after the words “Norwich City Council” in resolution 9e)
- Inserting the words “and other appropriate organisations” after the words “Acorn Union” in resolution 9g)
- Inserting the words “and tackle the scourge of landlordism in our city” at the end of resolution 9g)

Councillor Catt had indicated that he was willing to accept the amendments and with no other objections from any other member, these became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Catt moved and Councillor Haynes seconded the motion, as amended.

Following debate, it was:

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that:

“We are experiencing a housing crisis as a city and as a country. The lack of social housing and huge barriers to home ownership have continued to push people into a poorly regulated and unbalanced private rental market which is defined by instability, skyrocketing rents, and poor standards. Since 1980, things have only gotten worse for tenants in the private rented sector, and we are at a breaking point. This motion proposes actions that can be taken by this council to improve the local housing offer and recommends key changes that need to be made on a national level. While we have seen some encouraging things in the Renters Reform Bill, this piece of legislation needs significant improvement if we want it to make any difference at all and avoid making situations worse for some.

This council resolves to:

- (1) declare, again, a housing crisis in Norwich, as average rents have reached £1486 across the city, as per the motion passed in June 2023.
- (2) state its opposition to landlords refusing to let to renters in receipt of state support or who have children, which has been found to be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 following landmark cases fought by Shelter.
- (3) express concern about the government's plans to temporarily exempt from HMO licensing accommodation procured by home office contractors, creating a two-tier system with lower standards and enforcement, for asylum seeker accommodation. (Houses in Multiple Occupation (Asylum-Seeker Accommodation) (England) Regulations 2023.
- (4) acknowledge that the long-awaited Renters Reform Bill currently progressing through Parliament will bring some much-needed changes to the private rented sector, while expressing concern about loopholes in the Bill which may lead to 'back door' evictions by rent hike, and could be undermined by a significant lack of resource in local authorities and in the court system.
- (5) express grave concern that changes to the Housing Act 1996 proposed by the Renters Reform Bill remove the automatic right of renters to access prevention of homelessness services through their local authority as soon as a possession notice has been served.
- (6) ask group leaders to write to Norfolk Constabulary to:
  - (a) state the council's concerns about the number of unlawful evictions that occur without landlords being held legally accountable for them nationwide.
  - (b) urge the constabulary to put in place guidance for all officers attending an illegal eviction following Safer Renting principles and eviction law:
  - (c) encourage them to introduce training on the Prevention of Eviction Act for new and existing police officers.
- (7) ask group leaders to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities encouraging him to:
  - (a) enshrine a right to shelter and a right of access to adequate housing in UK law as is the case in many other countries.
  - (b) investigate and introduce rent controls with regulations around rent increases, as in the UK before the 1988 Housing Act.
  - (c) end the practice of section 21 evictions and investigate the establishment of life tenancies as seen across Europe.

- (d) extend the decent homes standard to the private rented sector and increase funding to local authorities for enforcement.
  - (e) take urgent action to provide legal aid to tenants in the private rented sector to take a rogue landlord to court.
  - (f) work with sector experts to develop a skills and capacity building strategy to tackle workforce challenges in regulatory and enforcement teams.
  - (g) follow the recommendations of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) by introducing a proportional property tax.
  - (h) introduce a scheme for landlords to pay national insurance in line with people in self-employment.
  - (i) introduce licensing systems and a requirement for planning permission for AirBnB's and short-term rental properties once legal provision allows.
  - (j) introduce a MOT-style licence system for all private rented properties, mandating all landlords to have met a minimum set of standards as assessed by an independent inspection with reviews required on a yearly basis, as proposed by Julian Rugg in his major review of the sector for the University of York
  - (k) urgently reduce housing insecurity by increasing the Local Housing Allowance in line with average rents.
  - (l) establish a right for private tenants to have pets in their properties by ending the use of blanket bans against pets in private rental properties.
  - (m) establish a compulsory and publicly accessible landlord register for landlords and letting agents, with the introduction of rent repayment orders if any fail to comply.
  - (n) increase police funding for teams dealing with criminal landlord behaviour especially in the shadow private rented sector.
  - (o) make Prevention of Eviction Act training mandatory for all new and existing police officers in England and Wales.
- (8) ask group leaders to write to the leaders of all political groups in the UK Parliament encouraging them to submit amendments to the Renters Reform Bill which:
- (a) increase notice periods for eviction from two months to four months, giving renters more time to find a new home;

- (b) tackle the unfair practices which present affordability barriers for renters trying to find a home such as asking for two or more months' rent in advance;
  - (c) follow the recommendations of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, which calls for the increase of the period at the start of a tenancy at which landlords can take possession of a property to sell or move close family members into from 3 months to 6 months, and the period at which they are prohibited from marketing or re-letting the property following taking possession using these grounds from 3 month to 6 months. This would prevent these new grounds for eviction from becoming a loophole to carry out no-fault evictions.
  - (d) introduce a specialist housing court to ensure that new tenancy reforms are not undermined by a lack of capacity in the court system.
  - (e) ensure that the right of renters to access prevention of homelessness services following a possession notice being served is upheld.
  - (f) ensure the government consults local authorities on what amendments are needed to the civil penalties regime and includes any necessary legislative changes in the proposed Renters Reform Bill; and
  - (g) takes action to ensure courts require offenders to pay costs to local authorities that reflect the actual cost of the enforcement action when local authorities choose to prosecute.
- (9) ask cabinet to:
- (a) endeavour to continue to inspect and investigate potential category 1 and category 2 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) in all privately rented properties where they have been reported and continue to invest and develop the service tasked to deliver this.
  - (b) add names of landlords to the rogue landlord register that was introduced in 2018 under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 where appropriate and within existing legislation, publish an online form on the Norwich City Council website where tenants can report rogue landlords quickly and easily.
  - (c) publish and develop further appropriate advice on the Norwich City Council website about the rights of renters under UK eviction law, including for those in the shadow private rented sector with no recourse to public funds, who are typically immigrants who do not hold settled status and are often subjected to illegal evictions by rogue landlords.
  - (d) fulfil, through ensuring the appropriate evidence base is developed and critical criteria met to legally and successfully deliver without challenge a long-term ambition to licence all private rented properties in Norwich, including those that fall outside of mandatory HMO licensing, requiring landlords to sign-up to a code of conduct.

- (e) agree that guardianships – where residents are licensees with fewer rights than tenants – will not be used or supported by Norwich City Council inappropriately or without appropriate safeguards and write to Norfolk County Council to urge them to do the same.
- (f) support the introduction of a registration scheme and separate use class for short-term lets, as was consulted on by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 2023.
- (g) arrange meetings of the cabinet member, shadow cabinet member(s) for Housing and Safer Communities and relevant officers with Shelter and Acorn Union and other appropriate organisations to discuss how the council can better work with these organisations to improve conditions for renters in Norwich and tackle the scourge of landlordism in our city.
- (h) commit to consulting on increasing council tax on second homes using powers due to come to local authorities in April 2025 as party of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.
- (i) consider initiating the process to end the use of HMOs as AirBnBs or other short-term lets through HMO licensing.

(As more than 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. Members agreed to take the following agenda items as unopposed business: Item 4, Minutes; Item 6, Constitution Update - Statutory Officers; Item 7, Update to 2023-24 Capital Programme. Councillor Jones opposed Motion 8(f) on the agenda papers, Councillor Fulton-McAlister opposed Motion 8(e) on the agenda papers, and Councillor Stonard opposed Motion 8(d) on the agenda papers, so therefore these items were debated.)

(The council meeting adjourned for a 10 minute break. Councillors Davis, Stutely, Francis, Padda and Osborn had left the meeting at this point. The meeting was then reconvened. The Lord Mayor agreed to take motion 8(f) first as the movers and seconders of the other two motions had not yet returned at the time that the meeting reconvened.)

### **Motion – OneNorwich Practices Collapse**

(Councillors Packer and Stonard had declared an interest in this item. Councillor Stonard elected to leave the meeting during the discussion of the motion and did not take part in the debate or any votes relating to this item.)

In the absence of Councillor Osborn to second the motion, the Lord Mayor accepted that it could be seconded by Councillor Catt.

Councillor Galvin moved and Councillor Catt seconded the motion as set out in the agenda pages 8(f) on the agenda papers as follows:

“(1) This council notes:

- (a) OneNorwich Practices carry out a series of key functions within our city, including but not limited to: GP services for over 10,000 registered residents; the city's seven day a week 7am-9pm walk-in service (average 250 appointments a day); programs to help address health inequalities such as asthma in schools; lymphoedema services; vulnerable adult services; and refugee, migrant and asylum seeker services.
  - (b) Altogether these provide an estimated minimum of 120,000 essential patient visits a year.
  - (c) A joint statement was issued on the 23rd of October by OneNorwich Practices and the NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board to transition staff and services to other providers in the system over the coming months, and then close down the organisation.
  - (d) This announcement came as a shock to hardworking staff, as well as the many patients who rely on the services.
  - (e) The service looks likely to close in January, potentially around one of the peaks of illness during the year.
- (2) This council resolves to:
- (a) Ask Norfolk County Council to present an urgent report assessing the impact the transition will have on the health landscape and risk to patients in Norwich, and setting out steps that the council will take to engage with partners to minimise risk to patients, including vulnerable service users.
  - (b) Write to local MPs, NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to:
    - (i) Register its concern over the closure, and manner in which the OneNorwich Practices closure has been announced and the impact on staff and patients, including some of the city's most vulnerable service users.
    - (ii) Request an urgent inquiry into the circumstances and causes of this sudden collapse, including governance, management and financial issues; an evaluation of the service and the management of any conflicts of interest in the reletting of the contracts to providers so that an understanding of what has gone so wrong within will enable a stable future for these vital services.
    - (iii) Ensure that scrutiny regarding transparency and conflict of interest take place to ensure bids for future delivery are fair and in the public interest.

Debate ensued.

Councillor Hampton moved and Councillor Jones seconded a procedural motion to move to the vote without further debate. On being put to the vote with 17 members voting in favour and 15 against, it was:

**RESOLVED** to move to the vote.

**RESOLVED** with 15 members voting in favour of the motion, and 17 members voting against, the motion was rejected.

(Councillors Everett and Oliver left the meeting at this point.)

(Councillor Stonard was readmitted to the meeting.)

### **Motion – Freedom from Fear Campaign**

Councillor Fulton-McAlister moved and Councillor Giles seconded the motion as set out in the agenda papers at 8(d).

Following debate, it was:

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that:

This Council notes:

- 1) That Usdaw (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) runs an annual Respect For Shopworkers Week as part of their Freedom From Fear campaign.
- 2) That this is held in the build-up to the busy Christmas period, at a period of particular stress for retail workers, encouraging customers to 'Keep Your Cool'.
- 3) The campaign seeks to highlight the abuse, threats, and violence that workers suffer whilst simply going about their jobs.
- 4) That as part of this campaign Usdaw also surveys thousands of their members in an annual Freedom from Fear Survey.
- 5) This survey shows that during 2022, 7 in 10 shopworkers experienced verbal abuse, 49% were threatened by a customer and nearly 8% shopworkers were assaulted over the year, a marked increase on pre-pandemic levels.
- 6) Excluding pandemic-affected years, the results from 2022's survey show higher levels of violence and abuse than ever before.
- 7) This rise is being driven by the significant rise in retail crime and theft from organised gangs. Nearly a third of incidents against shopworkers are triggered by shoplifting.
- 8) The British Retail Consortium and the Association of Convenience Stores have both also noted rising abuse, threats and violence against shopworkers.

This Council believes:

- 9) Violent crime, threats and abuse are very real hazards for retail workers and the harassment of staff by customers is an all-too-common event.
- 10) That rising retail crime from organised gangs is driving this upward trend in violence, abuse, and threats against retail workers.
- 11) Abuse is not part of the job. Workers should never have to face abuse, threats or violence when doing their jobs.
- 12) Employers have a legal and moral obligation to make the working environment as safe as possible for employees. Staff should be given the support of management and appropriate training on how to deal with incidents.
- 13) Employers should take every possible step to protect staff, have a robust reporting procedure in place and always take complaints of harassment seriously.
- 14) Trade union recognition and strong workplace organising makes the workplace safer for staff.

This Council **RESOLVES**:

- (1) To publicly support Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign and retail workers in the area with a statement of support and by posting on council social media platforms using relevant hashtags and to encourage individual councillors to do the same.
- (2) To encourage individual councillors to engage with retail stores in their ward, talk to shopworkers and listen to their experiences.
- (3) To encourage individual councillors to work closely with their neighbourhood policing teams, to identify patrol areas and explore measures to deter retail crime.
- (4) To use links with local police forces and Police Crime Commissioners to ensure retail crime is always treated seriously, incidents are routinely responded to and the often-severe impact on victims is appropriately acknowledged, whilst encouraging strong coordination with local retailers.
- (5) To support initiatives or schemes in the area by police that dedicated to tackling organised crime and repeat and prolific offenders, especially in stores with a high level of incidents.
- (6) To support initiatives encouraging the rehabilitation of retail-crime offenders.
- (7) To use links with local businesses and retail stores to make sure proper workplace procedures are in place, including robust reporting mechanisms, and that front-line staff are appropriately supported, trained, and told not to engage shoplifters for their own safety.

## Motion – Autumn Statement

Councillor Kendrick moved and Councillor Stonard seconded the motion as set out in the agenda papers at 8(e).

Following debate, it was:

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that:

“Following the Autumn Statement, analysis reveals the devastating cut in government funding to Norwich City Council. In 2010, under Labour, Norwich received £14.11m a year in government funding for local services – the equivalent of £20.58m in today’s prices. Yet today, after years of cuts – and the devastating inflation brought on when the Conservatives crashed the British economy – we receive just £6.70m, a cut of 67%.

Even after the Conservatives have forced up council tax in our area by 22%, that still leaves Norwich with a total spending power reduction of 49% – whilst at the same time, places like Wokingham in the South East have been cut by just 2%.

Council resolves:

(1) to note: -

(a) Under the Conservatives, Norwich has taken a battering. Low growth, stagnant wages, high prices and failing public services have been the story of the last 13 years. Over the last 12 months, inflation unleashed with the reckless mini budget has deepened the cost-of-living crisis, pushing many Norwich families beyond breaking point.

(b) Despite this, the Conservative government refuses to give Norwich a fair deal. New analysis above reveals the staggering cuts successive chancellors have inflicted in Norwich.

(2) In the light of these figures, council asks the Leader to write to the Chancellor and demand he offer a fair deal for Norwich. Our city must not be hit harder than other parts of the country, particularly given that the current Prime Minister has talked about taking money away from urban areas to hand to Conservative heartlands – that must stop.

## 6. Minutes

(This item was taken as unopposed business.)

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 26 September 2023 and 27 October 2023.

## **7. Constitution Update: Statutory Officers**

(This item was taken as unopposed business.)

**RESOLVED** to adopt the Constitution amendments as included at Appendix 1.

## **8. Update to the 2023/24 Capital Programme**

(This item was taken as unopposed business.)

**RESOLVED** to approve the following changes to the 2023/24 Capital Programme:

- (1) the removal of £6.250m of budgets from the 2023/24 General Fund Capital Programme;
- (2) the removal of £4.306m of budgets from the 2023/24 HRA Capital Programme.

(The Lord Mayor closed the meeting.)

LORD MAYOR

## Appendix A



### Council

28 November 2023

### Questions to cabinet members

#### Question 1

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

“Given the recent rise in burglary and crime in general can the cabinet member discuss the benefits of the Norwich Community Safety Partnership approach to tackle this?”

**Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

“The Safer Norwich Partnership Board provides an important link to the Norfolk County Community Safety Partnership by focussing on issues that are pertinent to residents including issues like burglary and neighbourhood crime. The core membership of the board is from a spectrum of community safety leaders including myself as chair, senior officer leads from within the council and wider partners such as the Police, Norfolk Police, Probation and the Police and Crime Commissioner Office representatives; to name but a few. This ensures that we can tackle issues at a local level realising that these challenges cannot be solved in isolation but by collaborating. The work of the board will be to look at the following priorities during the life of the strategy:

- To reduce neighbourhood crime and ASB and increase residents’ feelings of safety.
- To reduce the incidence and impact of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- To reduce harm, vulnerability and violence related to substance and alcohol misuse.”

(Councillor Thomas (Va) confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.)

#### Question 2

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

“Last month the immigration minister Robert Jenrick announced that fifty hotels will be closed to asylum seekers by January next year. Representing a

ward where the Home Office has used a hotel for this purpose, I am also aware that here in Norwich we have already seen funding support from government collapse by 67% since 2010 and runaway inflation after the Conservatives crashed the economy which has hit us hard. I am also aware of the huge demand for housing across the country – including here in Norwich. While shifting asylum seekers out of expensive hotels is long overdue, will the Leader agree that there needs to be a joint and funded approach nationally, regionally, and locally to manage the move to ensure areas like Norwich don't bear an unfair burden?"

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

"Currently there are no plans to close any of the hotels in Norwich following the immigration minister's announcement. Officers within the Council are working with representatives from the Home Office, the regional strategic migration partnership and locally with other district and county colleagues to understand, highlight and problem solve issues caused by increased pressures on our services including housing.

Our own housing options team using government funding has recently funded a specialist housing adviser to help bridge the gap when people are given refugee status helping them access practical support, and housing. We are collaborating with our partners at the national, regional, and local levels to balance the responsibilities and resources of our city, while also providing a safe haven for people fleeing conflict. We have also reached out to our partners in the voluntary and charitable sector to see what gaps we can fill locally together."

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

**Question 3**

**Councillor Peek to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

"Rising poverty in my ward and in our city due to over a decade of stagnant growth and wages not rising with inflation has left ever more working people living in significant hardship. With prices continuing to rise, the Real Living Wage has never been more important in ensure that workers have enough to get by. Earlier this month, Norwich City Council as a Real Living Wage employer, celebrated Living Wage week. Can the cabinet member comment on the work this council does to lead the local Real Living Wage campaign and the benefits secured through this?"

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

"The city council has been a strong advocate of the Real Living Wage for many years. We are proud to be working for low paid workers in the city and can trace this back over the years from the Anti-Poverty Strategy in the early 90s, the Financial Inclusion work from 2008 and work completed to become a Living Wage employer in 2012.

In 2022, the Norwich Living Wage Action Group was recognised by the Living Wage Foundation for its plan to make Norwich a Living Wage City. The Action Group leading the campaign includes Aviva, Broadland Housing, Future Projects and representatives from local SMEs and the voluntary sector. The three-year plan sets out how the group will work to increase awareness and accreditation across the city. We are fortunate to have Real Living Wage employers across multiple sectors but there is much to do. The group reached the target of 80 employers accredited in year one, meaning more than 1,100 workers in the city have already received a pay rise that meets the Real Living Wage, and the aim is to reach 140 accredited organisations by year three. This is a real challenge in a time of such economic uncertainty for many businesses.

The campaign will continue to raise awareness of the blight of insecure, low paid employment and will encourage employers to become accredited and ultimately ensure employees in Norwich are paid a fair wage. The recent Living Wage Week provided an opportunity to emphasise the importance of paying a Real Living Wage and, this year, the Action Group's communications team ensured that we got our message heard by as many people as possible through radio interviews and media articles."

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Peek commented on the benefits of the campaign for a Living Wage to thousands of workers and asked how this could be extended further. Councillor Giles referred to the many employees who did not have guaranteed hours. The focus of the campaign going forward would be to encourage employers to provide "Living Hours" alongside the campaign for a Real Living Wage.)

#### **Question 4**

#### **Councillor Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

"More than 1,000 swimming pools have closed in England since 2010, with another 1,500 at risk due to financial pressures according to Swim England. A report highlights that the most deprived areas have lost three times more pools than the richest areas. In contrast, I was pleased to see that the contract for the city council owned Riverside Leisure Centre has been extended with the positive services it offers but also the payment of the Real Living Wage honoured too. Can the cabinet member comment on the benefits of this contract renewal will bring this city and its citizens?"

#### **Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

"I am delighted that the city council has been able to renew our contract for Riverside with Places Leisure; it is an extremely popular destination and brings considerable health and well-being benefits to the city and its citizens.

Data from November 2023 states that, over the previous year, Riverside Leisure Centre offered social value of over £2.5m, with an average of £116 per participant. This is measured by impacts around physical and mental health, subjective wellbeing, educational attainment and reduced crime.

Riverside Leisure Centre offers a range of swimming opportunities, including group lessons for 14 local schools, swim school, family, club and open swimming. Go4Less pricing includes junior swimming for £1 which has been maintained for the last 10 years and free swimming is offered to children receiving free school meals over holiday periods as part of the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme for Norwich.

The Centre also offers classes linked to Cotman Housing, exercise referral in the form of Cardiac Club and Lung Club, an Age UK class, a Dementia Café, and is part of the countywide Active NoW referral scheme to support better health. All asylum seekers and Ukrainian refugees are offered a free 3-month membership to help them settle into the city.

Payment of the Real Living Wage has been in place since 2013 and has enabled Places Leisure to develop and retain an excellent team.”

(Councillor Fulton-McAlister, by way of a supplementary question, asked the cabinet member to comment further on how the contract renewal would offer stability of service and new opportunities for this asset. Councillor Giles replied that there was a lack of affordable opportunities for activities enabling parents to bond with their children, and offering sensory child development. In this context the provision of activities in our local authority owned leisure centres illustrates the important role local authorities continue to have in the sport and leisure sector. The new five-year contract with Places to Leisure to manage the Riverside Leisure Centre would ensure that affordable activities remain available for local families.)

## **Question 5**

**Councillor Mike Sands to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

“Representing a ward which contains a significant number of constituents who work in retail, I am aware of the increasing epidemic of violence against shop workers due to several factors. USDAW, the trade union for retail staff, has campaigned significantly against this through their Freedom from Fear campaign which I strongly support and regularly encourage constituents who work in retail to join. Can the cabinet member comment on the steps taken to protect both traders and visitors of the much-loved Norwich Market in light of recent increases in theft and intimidation?”

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

“We are aware of increased concerns of traders regarding theft and antisocial behaviour on the market. We provide security staff during the Market's hours of operation to combat this.

We have considered the use of CCTV, but the layout of the market would make this challenging. As an alternative, we are investigating a new reporting system which links with the police and other businesses within the city, that would allow them to notify each other if a suspected offender is in the area. We are liaising with Norwich BID to implement this system, and to also improve access to local police officers.

This Labour-led administration supports the right of all workers on the Market to safe working conditions. I would like to thank USDAW for this campaign, and encourage workers on the Market to join a trade union.”

(Councillor Sands (M) confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.)

## **Question 6**

### **Councillor Packer to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:**

“The issue of tackling the abuses in the private rented sector has been debated and discussed many times in the chamber. Residents in my ward, who rent privately, regularly contact me concerning their fear of revenge eviction if they complain about the conditions in which they live, together with ever increasing and unsustainable rents. I was therefore appalled to read that late last month in a letter to Conservative backbenchers, Michael Gove declared the government will “reform the courts before we abolish Section 21”. Can the cabinet member for social housing comment on the likely impact of this delay upon Norwich?”

### **Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

“Michael Gove’s comments suggest that the protection for private renters that will come from the abolition of the Section 21 notice in the Private Renters Reform Bill will be delayed.

Last year saw a 50% rise in the number of Section 21 notices served across England. Since the Bill was introduced in parliament, our homelessness service has seen a significant increase in presentations from households who have been served notices by landlords who want their properties back to either increase rent or sell before the Bill comes into law.

If the Bill is delayed, we are likely to see this trend continue, with more Section 21 notices being served on private tenants, leading to more households in housing need and increased pressure on already stretched homelessness services. Any delay will also allow landlords to continue serving notice without justification and those who fear a retaliatory eviction will remain in fear of reporting disrepair.

Mr Gove’s comments are ill-timed and ill-conceived and will only cause further difficulty for those renting in the private sector.”

(In reply to Councillor Packer’s supplementary question, Councillor Jones referred to Councillor Catt’s motion – Private Rented Housing, which would be considered later in the meeting and said that the government had delayed introducing reforms since 2019 and this presented a real challenge to over 22 per cent of residents in Norwich who were in private rented accommodation. There needed to be real reform as private renters were the least protected amidst rising prices and the council would do as much as it could until there was a government that brought about real reform and supported private renters.)

## Question 7

**Councillor Driver to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

“I was pleased to read that the opportunity to refresh and develop a new city council corporate plan, to help steer the priorities and objectives of the council, is being actively undertaken. I am aware that the previous plan, together with the City Vision Partnership and Covid-19 Recovery Plan have helped our council to importantly build and maintain relationships with critical partners to further enhance and improve Norwich. This is ever more important at a time of diminishing resources and the difficulties of a dual system of local government responsibility. Can the Leader comment on the consultation and the hoped objectives which can be achieved from this exercise?”

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

“Through the Norwich 2040 City Vision we have set out, with our partners, our ambitions for our fine city. But we know that, after the Covid 19 pandemic and given the ongoing cost of living crisis, things have got harder for many in our city.

As a city council we are determined to do all we can to enable a bright future for our city. Our corporate plan is the way in which we can set out how we will do that, and so it is critical that this is informed by listening to the needs of our residents, partners, and businesses.

The new corporate plan is being co-created through a series of citywide engagement activities with colleagues, residents, partners, voluntary groups and organisations, and our business community. Activities include a survey, on-street engagement, workshops, interviews, and focus group sessions.

Doing things this way means we create a shared understanding of our vision, aims and priorities. It allows us to better understand the opportunities and challenges for the city, and crucially, how we can work together with partners to respond to these whilst creating an organisation that will become adaptable and flexible, as the city around us changes. I would encourage everyone to get involved in sharing their views to inform this important plan.”

(Councillor Driver confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.)

## Question 8

**Councillor Maguire to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:**

“Representing a ward which has felt the impacts of rising crime and anti social behaviour since particularly 2015, and the advent of County Line drug activity, I am aware of the significant importance of neighbourhood policing and strong multi-agency working to enhance community safety and peace of mind. The loss of services which work together to better respond and reduce crime has been a grievous blow to our city. As part of the enhancement, investment, and development of the council's anti-social behaviour team, would the cabinet

member for social housing consider developing a new Community Warden service?"

**Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

"It is clear from resident surveys undertaken through our Safer Neighbourhoods Initiative and feedback to members that residents do appreciate a visible policing and community safety presence in their neighbourhoods.

I am pleased to confirm that we have been successful in securing funding through the Safer Streets Fund to pilot a Safe Streets Warden initiative comprising three full-time posts. The service will provide that visible reassuring presence, encouraging and supporting residents to report their concerns.

The project will also help strengthen links with local communities and support further collaborative activity between the council, residents, police and other partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and increase residents' feelings of safety.

We look forward to final written confirmation from the Home Office of the grant allocation for 2024/25 to enable a speedy roll out of this exciting new initiative".

(Councillor Maguire confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.)

**Question 9**

**Councillor Carrington to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

"I was pleased that this council joined in the campaign to save our Norwich rail ticket office with the Leader speaking and supporting this publicly. Supporting all actions which protect and enhance public transport is vital for our city, and the proposed closure of the ticket office was always the thin edge of the wedge to reduce the rail service still further. Will the leader congratulate the RMT union, local trade unionists and all those members of the community who responded and led the campaign to save the ticket office and comment on the importance to Norwich of better rail infrastructure to the city?"

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

"Thank you, Councillor Carrington. I would be happy to support this. It is clear to me that over the last year the RMT has been campaigning against the DfT managed train companies' plans for wholesale ticket office closures and outcome of this has been the largest ever response to a government consultation. What an amazing achievement and on 31 October 2023 the Tory government announced the plans had been dropped. This is a resounding victory for the union's campaign and a win for passengers, community groups and rail workers alike.

An effective rail network, which moves freight from our roads to rail, could play a significant role in carbon reduction but also ensure cities like Norwich gain from the economic advantages good public transport can offer. I call for there to be an urgent summit with the government, train operating companies, disabled people, community organisations and passenger groups to agree a different route for the rail network that guarantees the future of our ticket offices, like in Norwich, and stations staff jobs to delivers a safe, secure, and accessible service that puts passengers before profit. With a Labour government, which hopefully we shall have next year, I look forward to a steady renationalisation of the railways and enhancement of the Norwich services.”

(In reply to Councillor Carrington’s supplementary question, Councillor Stonard confirmed that he would join with her in congratulating the RMT for this exceptional campaign against ticket closures and its success was also due to the participation from members of the public. He would continue to lobby for better rail services to Norwich to enhance existing services. This was important everywhere. Train services were an important part of carbon reduction to reduce the use of private vehicles, and high-quality, affordable, public transport was part of that. He looked forward to the steady renationalisation of the railways.)

#### **Question 10**

**Councillor Kidman to ask the cabinet member for wellbeing and culture the following question:**

“I am proud of the work of this City Council, despite the enormous impact of cuts since 2010 to still advance a cultural offer within the city. Attaining the National Centre for Writing and Norwich becoming England’s first UNESCO City of Literature in 2012 is good recognition of this. Over the summer I was pleased to see the next chapter of the City of Stories being implemented in Norwich with the introduction of a new trail of permanent book benches, made using stone, metal and wood, in eight locations which have been positively welcomed and remarked upon by my constituents. Can the cabinet member comment on how the cultural strategy of the council is helping to lead such improvements to Norwich including what residents could possibly look forward to in the months ahead?”

**Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for wellbeing and culture's response:**

“The book benches are an excellent example of a collaborative project between Norwich City Council, Norwich BID, and the National Centre for Writing, University of East Anglia, and Norfolk County Council. Many of the 8 unique benches are inscribed with authors or stories connected to the city and the benches encourage people to take time to talk and share stories while meeting friends, reading alone or enjoying a coffee.

As part of our 2040 City Vision partnership, the Creative City Compact has a mission to champion the role of culture, attract investment, and facilitate impactful collaboration and exchange across the cultural ecosystem of Norwich. Norwich City Council, together with input from key stakeholders, has developed an Action Plan for Culture which sets out how the council and its partners will contribute to the culture and creativity in Norwich. Over the next

18 months, the plan will take in redevelopment of The Halls, continued support for events, festivals and activities in public spaces and promoting an ambition to enable everyone to have access to culture and creativity. There is much to look forward to in 2024 including the council-led Lord Mayor's Weekend on the 6 and 7 July and something for everyone in a series of events taking place in the city centre and our parks during the Spring and Summer."

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

## **Question 11**

### **Councillor Padda to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:**

"Earlier this month I saw that the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, propose new laws to restrict the use of tents by homeless people, arguing that many homeless individuals see it as a "lifestyle choice". As we approach winter can the cabinet member for housing and community safety comment on whether she believes this latest proposal is the most effective means of tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in our city?"

### **Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

"Our approach to dealing with rough sleeping in Norwich is more person focused and compassionate. Our services are focused on working with the client to understand their needs and wishes and ensure that they have the right provision and support in place to help get them off the streets.

Accordingly, the council has a specialist team dedicated to assisting rough sleepers, supports the Pathways Norwich outreach service and, with church partners, delivers a winter shelter from March to November in addition to the 500+ beds available through the city's hostel system.

We have to acknowledge that many of those sleeping on the streets have complex needs and may be entrenched in street activity, having previously experienced issues engaging with services. Accessing the winter shelter is often the first step toward building relationships with these clients and encouraging further engagement with the help and resources we have available.

Our approach is successful. The annual DLUHC (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) verified rough sleeper count shows a 30 percent decrease in rough sleepers in Norwich since 2021. This is the lowest figure for seven years and is testament to the ongoing efforts that the council and its partners are making to alleviate rough sleeping the in the city.

Our efforts to reduce rough sleeping are ongoing. We continually seek to develop our services for those in the greatest need and I have confidence that this commitment will ensure that we and our valued partners are able to provide the best possible support for rough sleepers in Norwich."

(In reply to Councillor Padda's supplementary question referred to the previous Home Secretary's comments on homelessness as a "lifestyle choice, and said that in Norwich the council had a more joined up approach, which included providing sustainable council houses and setting up multi-agency schemes to tackle homelessness and asked the cabinet member to comment further on what the council did differently. Councillor Jones said that the council strove to do its best and that she was proud of the Housing team, who were working towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation to increase support for people who experience domestic abuse, and part of making sure that all residents who were most vulnerable in our society were best supported and that no one should be without a home.)

## **Question 12**

**Councillor Lubbock to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

"I have received complaints from sheltered housing tenants in Eaton about the lack of care and maintenance of the green spaces around their homes.

Bushes are hacked back to the point of dying, hedges are trimmed on the sides but not the tops, left to grow even higher.

No weeding takes place so the weeds flourish and grow tall.

No new planting takes place once plants and bushes die, leaving large patches of bare earth.

The picture I paint is of an environment neglected and uncared for, giving tenants no sense of wellbeing.

Tenants wonder why the grounds maintenance around their homes is so badly managed with no ability to have any input into the process?"

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

"The grounds maintenance work is being carried out at present and is completed in line with industry horticultural practices.

Beds are maintained with weeds removed and shrubs pruned. Some shrub beds do have gaps and we will try to fill these in as and when budgets allow.

We have this week received two separate compliments about the grounds works in the Eaton and area, and also the following report via the sheltered housing support team.

'The tenants at Ryrie Court have asked me to say a huge Thank You to you for getting the gardening done and making the scheme look really lovely again and what a fantastic job the gardeners did.

'It really has made a huge difference, and they are all so very happy and talking about it.'"

(Councillor Lubbock said that she was pleased to learn that the grounds maintenance team had received compliments from the sheltered housing team, but should the residents of the sheltered housing scheme have any complaints about how their money had been spent, would the cabinet member welcome the feedback and learn from it to further improve the service. Councillor Giles confirmed that he would.)

### **Question 13**

**Councillor Francis to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

“Residents want to take pride in their local area, and there are many studies that show a link between the perception of how well an area is looked after and lower rates of crime, anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping etc. Myself and many of my colleagues have been inundated with concerns from residents about the state of their streets, whether that is overgrown verges, an abundance of litter or the lack of sweeping and deep street cleaning. On multiple occasions I have requested information on when specific streets will be receiving sweeps and deep cleans, but receive a holding answer that it is under review with no timescale for completion. Is the cabinet member able to tell me when this review will be complete and sent to ward councillors?”

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

“The council spends approximately £1.79m a year on keeping the streets of Norwich clean. This includes litter removal, emptying of litter bins, graffiti removal and clearance of fly tipping.

These services are under continuous review to ensure that they deliver quality services on behalf of the people of Norwich whilst delivering value for money in a highly challenging financial climate.

We aim to have the current review completed in spring 2024. We will be consulting with stakeholders, including councillors, on our proposals once the review has been completed to ensure that these services continue to tackle the issues that Councillor Francis has raised.”

(Councillor Francis, referred to the leader of the council's response to her question and said that she appreciated the challenging financial climate under which the council was operating in, but considered that stating that the process was under review was scant consolation for residents, particularly for residents of Lavengro Road who regularly reported incidents of dog fouling, litter and other hazards. By way of a supplementary question, she asked what could be said to residents to assure them that they were receiving value for money from their council tax. Councillor Stonard said that the situation was under review and that it was intended to improve the service over time and residents should be reassured that the council was committed to do this.)

### **Question 14**

**Councillor Champion to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

“The £100k LOVE Norwich campaign to clean up the city started a year ago with an event on 20 November 2022. 11 months later we asked what success indicators have been collected, how has it been assessed, what elements have been successful for the long term and should be ramped up, which events have been held and what has been delivered. We did not receive answers apart from being told that ‘over the autumn’ the Council is looking to ‘ramp up’ the LOVE Norwich campaign city wide ‘but we are working through the details of the programme at the moment and no decisions have been taken on approaches at present.’ The website has not been updated since the launch. Meanwhile the city is still a mess. What metrics are in place to ensure confidence of timely, value for money outcomes for local residents from this project?”

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

“Through Love Norwich a large number of workstreams continue to address the challenges that the city experiences with environmental antisocial behaviour.

73 enforcement processes have been completed by officers over the last year. The issues addressed range from dog fouling, fly tipping, fly posting and business waste.

We have identified fly tipping hotspots across the city and are about to invest most of the £100K Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative funding to provide CCTV cameras at these locations to deter and detect fly tippers. We are also reviewing the frequency of waste collections at these locations and the number and type of bins that are provided there.

We have improved collaborative working across the council, and services such as Housing, Community Enablement and Environment Services are working much more closely with colleagues in NCSL. This will deliver improvements, particularly within our council-owned housing estates.”

(In reply to Councillor Champion’s supplementary question which reiterated his original question, Councillor Stonard said that a public meeting was not a suitable forum to provide the level of detail requested and therefore he would provide a written response on the metrics used to measure outcomes.)

**Question 15**

**Councillor Catt to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:**

“Norwich prides itself on its rich history of social housing in the city, giving thousands more opportunities and being one of the most important steps in getting closer to social justice in the UK. Therefore, we all want to see our social housing stock cherished and looked after so that tenants can live in affordable, safe and comfortable homes. However, we have seen a staggering 260% increase in mould complaints in our social housing stock. We have all been told that an accelerated process for damp and mould exists but for residents in my ward, who have been hospitalised or put on medication

due to mouldy properties, the council seems to have turned a blind eye. What steps will the council take to resolve the level of complaints in this area?"

**Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

"Norwich City Council has taken significant steps to address these concerns and has devised an enhanced process aimed at promptly handling instances of damp and mould reported by residents.

Every reported case of damp or mould undergoes an immediate mould wash procedure to mitigate any health risks associated with mould spores. Following reports on mould washes, and independent damp survey is then conducted to identify underlying issues and specify necessary remedial works.

The protocol aims to expedite the identification and resolution of persistent or challenging cases, prioritising the well-being of our residents."

(Councillor Catt commented on that residents had been hospitalised or on medication due to mould and damp in their homes and was aware of the process but considered that this was an issue that was only going to get worse, and referred to a recent report from the Housing Ombudsman of poorly performing landlords of which Norwich City Council had a maladministration rate of 100 per cent. Was the council looking to review the process and what else would it be doing? Councillor Jones confirmed that the council would review the process and was something she had already under discussion. From speaking to other housing colleagues, this was not the only council experiencing an increase in reports of mould and damp. This could be due to an increase in awareness of the issue, and she would fully encourage residents to report it, and the council needed to ensure that it was dealt with quickly and robustly.)

**Question 16**

**Councillor Young to ask the cabinet member for climate change the following question:**

"Solar energy is a growth area, which is important to meet decarbonisation targets and combat fuel poverty. I have heard from a number of residents who are keen to get panels, but have been left confused and have come away with mixed messages from their enquiries to City Hall. It is surprising that there is not an easy to find area on our website where residents can find out the rules on solar for them. Please could the cabinet member confirm that the council will review its communications processes and website regarding where solar panels are allowed on city homes and buildings, ensuring they are clear and customer friendly?"

**Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change's response:**

"Supporting the people of Norwich to better understand how they can reduce their own environmental impact, and their energy costs, is a key element of our ambitious response to the environmental emergency and to the cost of living crisis.

Initiatives such as our Solar Together scheme, a group buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage, which guides residents through the process, helping them to secure the best possible price with trusted organisations, have been hugely positive over several years.

We have plans in place to hold more events in the coming months to provide an opportunity for residents to talk directly to council colleagues, to understand what they can do to reduce their carbon footprint and their energy bills, and receive trusted advice.

I am pleased to confirm that we will look again at the information we currently provide around solar panels to ensure it is clear for our residents, and I thank Councillor Young for her question.”

(In reply to Councillor Young’s supplementary question, Councillor Hampton confirmed that she would work with IT and website colleagues to ensure that all boxes were ticked in relation to affordability and accessibility, and that the information was available.)

### **Question 17**

**Councillor Hoechner to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

“The Island Community Group at West Pottergate/Douro Place have done excellent work setting up a community garden, creating a welcoming space that invites in neighbours as well as wildlife. The group has acquired several fruit trees; however, it has not received permission from the council to plant these in the soil. Having been kept in pots for several months, several of the trees have declined or even died. Would the cabinet member please commit to exploring the possibility of granting permission for planting these trees in the soil of the community garden?”

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

“We are happy to support community initiatives. Our housing estates and community enabling teams are in contact with the group about how best to manage this area on housing land. We have recently supported this group by offering raised planters and a community notice board to bring more attention to their good work. Specific individual sites need assessing and maintaining for the future which we need to ensure is both sustainable so that as many local neighbours and residents are engaged with such community initiatives. Our estate team leader has already made contact and given advice about where the trees may be planted.”

(Councillor Hoechner by way of a supplementary question stressed the importance of increasing tree cover in response to climate change, and asked that the cabinet member ensured that residents and community groups were given responses about the planting of these trees as soon as possible to minimise the risk of the trees dying of neglect. Councillor Giles said that he was disappointed that in this case permission had not progressed at the pace the community had desired. A streamlined process had been introduced to assist community groups to take over the maintenance of green spaces like this one. In terms of the administration’s

commitment to tree planting, 2,000 trees would be planted on HRA land over the coming months and the council had also been successful with a government grant for tree planting and would provide Councillor Hoechner with the details.)

### **Question 18**

#### **Councillor Fox to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:**

“In answer to a question in September full council, the cabinet member said that orders had now been raised for the initial purchase and installation of fire doors, and that the programme would commence in October. Councillor enquiries a few days later told me the programme was still on hold. Further enquiries in October told me that the programme was being put together and would be shared when complete. Meanwhile, residents across Norwich are still waiting for new fire doors, which should be seen as an essential in a property. Can the cabinet member please give me some clarity on what is happening with the fire door programme including assurances that work will commence shortly?”

#### **Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

“Fire door surveys have commenced; Winchester and Normandie towers being prioritised. Enabling works relating to the door replacement are being discussed, including asbestos coating removal to the communal areas and the transition to secured post boxes at Ground Floor lobby areas to further enhance the resilience of the new fire door sets. We have appointed a contractor from a specialist framework to undertake initial works on Winchester and Normandie and will be tendering the main programme works in early December, to commence that programme in early February.”

(In reply to Councillor Fox's supplementary question and her concern about the risk to lives from the delay, Councillor Jones said she would provide the detail outside the meeting and explained that it was important that the door replacements and associated products were of the highest standard and that the contractors were of the appropriately qualified and trained to fit them. There had been excessive demand and delays across the country which was one of the reasons for the delay.)

### **Question 19**

#### **Councillor Haynes to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:**

“I have made multiple suggestions to the estate aesthetics programme, but have seen all but one not receive any form of response. This would give the impression of high demand on the programme. Instead, £200,000 is set to be removed from the estate aesthetics budget, which is disappointing to see given the work that many estates in my ward could do with to improve safety, accessibility, appearance, and overall pride in the estate. Where is this money going?”

**Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

“This programme is set to run for 5 years. The current budget is £750,000, reducing to £500,000 in year 2, £250,000 in year 3 and £200,000 for each of the final two years. As part of the new procurement programme, much of this work will be picked up through validation surveys of existing assets and through consultation regarding additional works, which where affordable will be identified and undertaken to maximise efficiencies of whole estate investment works programmes.”

(Councillor Haynes by way of a supplementary question referred to lack of information for ward members and asked how she could ensure that residents in tower blocks benefited from the scheme. Councillor Jones said that she would provide an update to Councillor Haynes outside the meeting.)

**Question 20**

**Councillor Schmierer to ask the cabinet member for wellbeing and culture the following question:**

“The city council does not have a publicly available list of statues and sculptures in Norwich, which can be used as a free public art trail as in other cities. We have suggested to officers that this is rectified, and they agreed it could be part of the Action Plan for Culture and hosted on our website. Does the cabinet member agree?”

**Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for wellbeing and culture's response:**

“The council developed the action plan for Culture in collaboration with our partners within the Creative City Compact, as a steppingstone towards a full Cultural Strategy for Norwich in 2025.

To inform that strategy work is underway to establish a cultural needs analysis. This will help identify the city's strengths and where there are gaps in our cultural and creative offer, enabling the Council and Compact to better understand the demand for, and impact of, particular actions, and ensure we are using the creative resources available to us across the city to deliver the greatest impact for Norwich.

A decision on whether we would wish to take forward Councillor Schmierer's suggestion will be made within that framework.”

(Councillor Schmierer confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question but looked forward to an update on the strategy in due course.)

**Question 21**

**Councillor Worley to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

“At the September full Council meeting, my motion to explore a trial of a four-day working week for Council staff passed with unanimous, cross-party support. Could the leader or relevant cabinet member please update council on what steps have been taken to plan and/or identify opportunities for this

trial to take place including a draft timeframe for when we expect this to take place?”

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

“I think that it is important to remind ourselves of the motion that was agreed at Council in September as I don't want us to forget the broad nature of it. I note that Councillor Worley wishes to focus on the four-day week element which is disappointing considering that the motion was about so much more than this. The Green Party seem to be overly focussed on this single aspect that they put forwards in the motion – it is clearly an agenda that they wholeheartedly support despite having no evidence as to how it might impact residents. Anyhow, to remind ourselves and provide the context, it was to:

- (1) continue to provide exemplar practices regarding flexible working arrangements throughout the different levels of the organisation, including stipulating flexibility in job adverts;
- (2) extend its longstanding work with partners on the living wage to support flexible working; and finally,
- (3) explore the benefits of a reduced working week at full pay, if based on evidence this would ensure the performance and value of residents' services were improved, and initiate discussions within the council and with partners, including trade unions, about the potential of this future model.

Firstly, for the avoidance of doubt and to correct Councillor Worley's question, the motion that was agreed at last month's council meeting does not state anywhere that 'we will explore carrying out a trial'.

And for absolute clarity and to avoid any further misrepresentation, nowhere in the motion does it state that there is an undertaking that 'we will be introducing a 4-day week'.

It very clearly states that this would need to be explored in the round and with a solid basis of evidence that ensured that performance and value for resident's services were improved.

Councillor Worley, you will also be aware from the extensive national reporting on the matter that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has been very vocal on the matter, to the extent where they have issued non statutory guidance on this. The Secretary for State has clearly stated in this guidance their belief that a reduced working week with no reduction in pay is unlikely to meet the statutory requirement to the Best Value Duty and although the terms and conditions which apply to our workforce is a matter for the council, we are however mindful of our statutory duties and as with all such matters will need to give this due consideration.

Finally, I would like to add that Norwich City Council are already very much an exemplar in terms of the flexible working arrangements within our workforce – we have a broad range of different work patterns in place already that are

designed to meet the needs of our residents and support our workforce. As just a few examples, we have compressed working arrangements, term time and job share arrangements and annualised hours. Hybrid working has also been positively received by the workforce. All of this is carried out with our drive to put residents needs at the heart of what we do and deliver excellent services to them. We have an extremely dedicated and hard-working team of officers here at Norwich City Council who deliver across the whole of our city night and day. I would like to pass on mine and Cabinet's personal thanks to them for the tremendous job that they are doing and the significant contribution to the city that they make. Maybe colleagues from across the chamber would like to join me in that vote of thanks."

(As Councillor Worley was absent from the meeting there was no supplementary question.)

## **Question 22**

**Councillor Osborn to ask the cabinet member for resources the following question:**

"Can you provide details of the due diligence process the city council undertook for recipients of both phase 1 and phase 2 of the covid small businesses grants?"

**Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources' response:**

"As has been discussed at audit committee on more than one occasion, when the government first launched the business grant scheme, the requirements and guidance from central government was to pay the grants quickly. The pressure was on Local Authorities to pay all eligible businesses without delay, and this council followed this directive. No applications or prepayment checks were initially required under central government rules. Post payment assurance checks would be supported by the government and were carried out by the council.

Norwich City Council did one payment run to qualifying businesses where bank details were held but for future payment runs pre-payment checks were introduced, to reduce the possibility of false or fraudulent bank account details being used.

An online form was created to support verification that the claimant was the liable party and that the bank account details were correct. The government monitored the payments and reported weekly as to how effective councils were in paying the grants.

Businesses did not have to apply for the grants, as they were entitled to receive the funds by virtue of being in receipt of small business rate relief and the team managing the grants had to contact them, some several times, to provide their details. The risk of erroneous details being acquired was recognised and as a result pre and post payment checks were introduced by the government on subsequent grant schemes and fraud monitoring became a requirement.

The vast majority of fraud/incorrectly paid cases stemmed from the first payment run that had not been subject to prepayment checks. The council is required to recover these payments and is currently in the process of doing so. In cases where recovery is unsuccessful by the council the cases will be passed back to central government to continue this process.”

(Councillor Kendrick, in reply to Councillor Osborn’s supplementary question regarding the payment of £10k to Norwich Labour Group under the business support grants scheme and pointed out that this was just one of the hundreds of payments to other political groups and organisations within the rules of the scheme and was a legitimate payment, pointing out also that Caroline Lucas MP had claimed £17k to for her support staff. He considered that criticism of the team was unfair as it had been efficient in getting out the payments at a difficult time.)

### **Question 23**

**Councillor Galvin to ask the cabinet member for wellbeing and culture the following question:**

“A joint statement was issued on the 23 October by OneNorwich Practices and the NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, announcing their intention to transition staff and services to other providers, and then close down the organisation due to financial difficulties. Altogether these services provide an estimated minimum of 120,000 essential patient visits a year. This announcement came as a shock to hardworking staff, as well as the many patients who rely on the services. The service looks likely to close or be transferring provider in January, potentially around one of the peak periods of illness during the year. How has the council assessed the impact of this sudden closure on its own services?”

**Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for wellbeing and culture's response:**

“I note Councillor Galvin in addition to this question you have submitted a motion to council which looks to the county council as the responsible body for public health and health scrutiny to review this matter further.

I do not wish to prejudice myself in advance of the motion to be presented to council this evening.”

(Councillor Galvin said that she had spoken to the Monitoring Officer and understood that there was no prejudice to the cabinet member voting on the motion by answering her question. Therefore, her supplementary question, was to ask the cabinet member to reply to her original question about what the city council was doing to address the impact of its services following the collapse of OneNorwich Practices. Councillor Jones, replied on behalf of the cabinet, and said that she understood that OneNorwich Practices was transitioning to a new identified provider, and therefore was satisfied that this provider would be commissioned to provide all of the existing services.)

### **Question 24**

**Councillor Calvert to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

“The city has a number of barriers on footways and cycleways owned by the city council (rather than highways) that prevent access or full use for people with various disabilities. Will the council introduce a policy, compliant with the public sector equality duty, for their timely removal?”

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

“The council is committed to meet its obligations under the Equalities Act. It is sometimes necessary to install barriers at the entrance to land owned by the city council or on paths across our land. This can be to prevent grazing animals escaping, block incursions by motorised vehicles or slow children emerging into a dangerous highway environment. When installing new barriers to our natural areas we follow good practice such as installing disabled-friendly kissing gate systems with weighted self-closing mechanisms following liaison with groups representing people with disabilities. However, there may be barriers that were installed in the past and do not meet current standards of good practice. We do not have an inventory of these, but we are happy to respond to requests for their removal. For example, the barrier on Hellesdon Road on the path from Lusher Rise will soon be removed.

We are also currently auditing all our play areas with regards to accessibility. Sometimes more comprehensive interventions are required than just removing barriers. The project currently under construction at Ketts Heights that is funded by the Greater Norwich Growth Board involves rebuilding the entrance steps and providing a ramped access allowing this wonderful space to be enjoyed by people with restricted mobility. This work demonstrates that there is no need for a specific policy to be introduced.”

(In reply to Councillor Calvert’s supplementary question relating to the use of barriers being discriminatory to users of mobility vehicles, requiring them to take a diversion from Valpy Avenue to Sloughbottom Park, Councillor Giles undertook to investigate this and provide a reply outside the meeting.)

**Question 25**

**Councillor Price to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety the following question:**

“OneNorwich Practices provides healthcare services for homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers – groups that the city council has a duty to support. The closure of OneNorwich could mean that members of these groups turn to city council for support. What assessment has been done on the impact that the closure of OneNorwich could have on staff capacity and resource within city council teams working with these groups?”

**Councillor Jones, the deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety's response:**

“Councillor Price I refer you back to the previous response to Councillor Galvin, but I would like to add some words of reassurance about our continued work to provide services to some of the most vulnerable within our communities by saying that: the city council will continue to provide vital services to individuals who present as homeless, as well as the work it does

to prevent homelessness and support some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

As Norfolk County Council has responsibility for public health and health scrutiny, any questions about the impacts of this important service need to be taken up with relevant county council colleagues or those responsible for commissioning the services of OneNorwich Practices.”

(In reply to Councillor Price’s supplementary question requesting an impact assessment on the closure of OneNorwich Practices on vulnerable groups, Councillor Jones referred to her previous responses and said that she was confident that the transition to the new services would provide the same level of service and outcomes.)

### **Question 26**

**Councillor Vivien Thomas to ask the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion the following question:**

“I was thrilled to hear that this Labour led city council has been successful in securing over £7m to invest in the Mile Cross Health, Wellbeing and Economic Activity bid which was submitted previously to the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities. Can the cabinet member comment further on the types of improvements this will help to deliver?”

**Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for communities and social inclusion's response:**

“The announcement on Monday that our Norwich North Levelling Up Fund bid has been successful is excellent news. This will contribute to one of the council’s wider ambitions of supporting more residents to live active and healthier lives linked to better health, safety, wellbeing, and social mobility”.

The original bid for funding was submitted in July 2022. Following Monday’s announcement about the successful bid, details of what the money will deliver will need to be revisited with our partners to ensure that all the projects are still financially viable, deliverable and relevant. The project is set to deliver a linked set of community facilities in Sloughbottom Park including new and significantly improved sports and play areas. This will include a new 3G football pitch and changing facilities, wider recreational facilities and infrastructure improvements. The scheme represents a substantial investment in the Mile Cross area.”

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

**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 27**

**Councillor Hoechner to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:**

“We recently had national recycling week in October 2023, with the city council putting out some nice social media posts promoting this. However, the recent corporate performance report shows that recycling rates are below target and have been stagnant for over a year. Comparable councils such as Colchester and Cambridge consistently see their recycling rates above 50%. Given that a review of the Biffa contract has taken place and that a new fleet will be commissioned for 2027, and given the ongoing review into the council’s waste strategy, will the cabinet member commit to exploring schemes to recycle more materials kerbside? For example, the Podback scheme would allow residents to recycle coffee pods. Furthermore, many local governments in Wales run kerbside collections of disposable nappies to send these to be recycled, and Bristol City Council recently ran a nappy recycling trial scheme.”

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

“Norwich City Council offers a class leading range of recycling services for its residents, including weekly food waste collections, garden waste collections, and kerbside collection of material such as glass, textiles and waste electrical equipment. We are well placed to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by the Environment Act 2021 and the government’s proposals to deliver Simpler Recycling

The council’s recycling rates have not changed over the last few years. In this, we are similar to many councils nationally and locally, and the latest published national recycling rate for 2021 is the same as it was in 2015. Compared with other local authorities in predominantly urban areas, with similar populations and levels of deprivation, our performance is in the top 25%. We are working hard to develop a new waste strategy that will help deliver the council’s environmental commitments.

Although the government has delayed the introduction of new legislation to introduce extended producer responsibility for packaging, and a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, we are committed to improving our services and recycling rates over the next 12 to 18 months. This will be done through a range of interventions, from redesigned collection services to improved engagement and enforcement.

There are currently no proposals to add to the wide range of materials that we currently collect, but would encourage residents to dispose of their coffee pods and disposable nappies responsibly.”

(In reply to Councillor Hoechner’s supplementary question, Councillor Stonard said that he was confident that the council would be able to comply with the new regulations on recycling, working in partnership with the other councils in Norfolk. Whilst not being complacent, it should be noted that several other councils’ rates of recycling had also plateaued, including the Green Party led council at Brighton and Hove.)

**Appendix B****Lord Mayor's Announcements –****Full List of Events attended in the period 27 September to 28 November 2023**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
28 September	RAF Marham Annual Reception at RAF Marham
30 September	Black History Month launch event at The Forum
30 September	Shrieval Launch at City Hall
4 October	Meeting with American visitors
4 October	UEA Court at The Enterprise Centre
5 October	Eaton Park Miniature Railway Cheque Presentation at City Hall
5 October	Norwich Institute for Language Education Visit and Presentation at Delta House
6 October	Centre Stage at Norwich Theatre Playhouse
9 October	Rotary Clubs of Norwich Wrap Up Project at The Halls
11 October	Soul Church Social Supermarket Visit
11 October	Presentation of British Empire Medals at The Norfolk Club
12 October	Vision Norfolk visit at Vision Norfolk Bradbury Activity Centre
14 October	Edith Cavell Commemoration in Norwich Cathedral Grounds
15 October	Stories from the Quarter at National Centre for Writing
15 October	Norfolk and Norwich Novi Sad Association annual lunch at George Hotel
17 October	Private Viewing of Love is the Meaning at St Stephen's Church
18 October	Opening of the Original Norwich Charity Christmas Card Shop at St Peter Mancroft Church
20 October	Norwich Works Exhibition at Norwich Castle
28 October	Norwich Beer Festival at The Halls
31 October	Unveiling of portrait of past Lord Mayor at City Hall
1 November	City Club Annual Dinner at Blackfriars
3 November	Norfolk Arts Awards Ceremony at Pier Gardens in Gorleston-on-Sea
5 November	Ukraine Symphony Orchestra & pre-reception at Norwich Theatre Royal
6 November	Launch of Living Wage Week at City Hall
6 November	Norwich Film Festival Launch at National Centre for Writing
7 November	Leeway visit
7 November	Lads Club tour at Norwich Lads Amateur Boxing Club
9 November	A Celebration of Hope at St Stephens Church
11 November	Armistice Day at St Peter Mancroft Church
12 November	South African Memorial service
12 November	Remembrance Sunday at City Hall and Norwich Cathedral
16 November	Sprowston Dementia Friendly Community Event with Norfolk and Norwich Koblenz Friendship Association celebrating German Advent at Sprowston Diamond Centre
16 November	Meeting with the founders of the Joe Dix Foundation at City Hall
16 November	Festive Switch-on at City Hall

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
17 November	JTL Norwich Training Centre opening at the JTL Training Centre
17 November	St John's House 7 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary
25 November	UEA Sync the City event at The King's Centre
26 November	Special Service to mark the 150 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the Christ Church