



NORWICH
City Council

Council

30 November 2021

Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 1

Councillor Champion to ask the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion the following question:

“I’m glad the council has reaffirmed its commitment to UK100. I understand that this means the council has ‘set ambitious Net Zero targets for greenhouse emissions of 2030 for council operations and 2045 for areawide emissions at the latest’. Therefore, will the council publish a clear plan showing how these targets will be reached?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion’s response:

“The council was one of the first to benchmark its carbon footprint in 2007, and has reduced its emissions by 71.1 % since then through a series of ambitious Carbon Management Programmes. Work is underway on our next carbon management programme to take us to our 2030 target and will cover scope 1-3 emissions sources.

Developing a plan for the city will fall within the scope of the independent Norwich Climate Commission, with City Vision partners working towards the commission’s recommendations as appropriate. However, it is already clear that to achieve Net Zero by 2045 national policy, funding and regulatory frameworks must be revised and co-ordinated to enable a faster transition to a low carbon society. Regrettably presently the UK Net Zero target year is 2050.”

Question 2

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

“I understand that Local Nature Recovery Strategies will map the most valuable existing habitat for nature and map specific proposals for improving habitat for wildlife. We must protect and improve these habitats and their natural states, such as being dark at night. Will the cabinet member agree to work with volunteers from Norwich Greener Spaces, who have been mapping wildlife in Norwich, to identify, protect and enhance very local biodiversity corridors, as well as other local groups that have produced similar data?”

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

“Nature Recovery Networks (NRN) are a commitment in the government’s 25 Year Environment Plan and are also established by the Environment Act 2021 which recently received Royal Assent. A key part of delivery of the NRN at a local level will be the use of mapping and data to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). The details of what LNRS must do or contain are not yet known and the government is yet to publish guidance and best practice advice to aid in their production. But I would certainly hope that locally the scope for utilising the vast amount of expertise and goodwill that exists within the voluntary sector is maximised.”

Question 3

Councillor Galvin to ask the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion the following question:

“I was pleased to see the council tweet during COP26. However, these tweets focused on personal actions and ignored: the crisis; the need for system change; the relevance of COP26 and how residents can engage to make real change, putting pressure on decision makers at a high level. The council suggested personal actions to help reduce emissions including things like recycling. Recycling is important, but research suggests that focusing on environmental behaviours that don’t significantly contribute to tackling climate change, while being important for other reasons, risks negative spill over, rebound effects and a false impression of the scale of the problem. A councillor enquiry response told me the council does not have a climate change communication strategy. Will the cabinet member commit to developing a climate change communication strategy which makes sure that messaging is in line with the extensive research on climate messaging?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion’s response:

“I am glad you agree on the importance of communicating to citizens on climate change. If you would like to share the research you mentioned, our environmental and communications teams would be happy to review it.

The council’s Environmental Strategy 2020 – 2025 includes information on how the council will engage and communicate, including that the council will:

- carry out a range of work to engage and communicate with residents, voluntary and community organisations, businesses, academic institutions and other statutory bodies on the progression of the environmental strategy.
- utilise the latest research and approaches in community engagement and environmental psychology to inform communications activity
- evaluate the response and outcomes accordingly.

As set out in the update report to cabinet in October, the council is taking stock of environmental response and will consider any communication aspects as part of that work.”

Question 4

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

“I am very concerned that insufficient action has been taken by cabinet in the past to deter fly tippers. As it’s inefficient for the council to ignore residents’ reports of people illegally dumping waste and, recognising that the council could usefully issue fixed penalty notices or seek to educate the perpetrators, will the current cabinet member commit to taking some action to deter fly-tipping in the city?”

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

“The council is aware of the impact that fly tipping is having on our neighbourhoods. A Task and Finish Group has been established by the council’s scrutiny committee to examine this problem and propose solutions to address it.

The Task and Finish Group is awaiting a report and recommendations from officers and will be reporting its conclusions to the scrutiny committee in due course. We will consider further possible actions when the report is produced.”

Question 5

Councillor Bogelein to ask the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods the following question:

“In recent weeks, temporary event notices have been granted for a number of locations throughout the city, some of them in residential areas. These licences were for alcohol and music entertainment until 2am. While I fully understand the legislation behind TENs and that only the police or public protection can object, I was surprised that public protection did not anticipate problems with licences until 2am in residential areas, especially after the numerous problems we have had with these licences in the city centre. Other temporary licences in the past have been restricted to an earlier time to prevent the negative effect on neighbours. Can the cabinet member explain how they are planning to strengthen the scrutiny by the public protection team of these TENs licences, so the action is not only reactive in terms of working with organisers once problems arise, but proactively anticipating amenity issues?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods’ response:

“Norwich City Council receives approximately 30 temporary event notices (TENs) every month. The system of TENs is intended as a light touch process under the Licensing Act 2003, and many operators successfully undertake activities without causing significant disturbance to surrounding properties.

Following a recent peer review of the licensing service, consideration is being given to resourcing and operating procedures of the entire service. This review will consider the approach to TENs as well as the resourcing of the public protection team.”

Question 6

Councillor Youssef to ask the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods the following question:

“I understand that the Night-time Economy Adviser working for Bristol City Council has developed a guide for venues on how to respond to suspected drink spiking. People are encouraged to report spiking, venues are encouraged to support police investigations, and hundreds of testing kits are being rolled out to bars, pubs and clubs. Given recently-reported incidents of spiking in Norwich, what plans are there for this council to take similar action to discourage the spiking of drinks, or needle spiking in the city?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods' response:

“There has been an increase in reports of spiking across the country and the city over the past few months. Norfolk Constabulary are the lead agency on the prevention of crime and are working closely with venues on how to respond to suspected spiking incidents. This work is being carried out in conjunction with the Late-Night Norwich forum which includes night-time economy businesses, security staff, support services such as the SOS Bus, the Police and city council officers.

Norfolk Constabulary are carrying out investigations and are closely monitoring patterns of reported incidents. The advice being provided to premises in safeguarding victims is to encourage reporting of incidents, use of lidded vessels for drinks, advice on searching customers and support to obtain evidence. The police will act against individuals as necessary and if issues are found with the management of particular premises, then there are powers for enforcement against licensed premises.”

Question 7

Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion the following question:

“The draft Transport for Norwich Strategy says in some locations outside the City Centre Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) such as “Wroxham Road/ Ring Road, Sprowston and Reepham Road, Hellesdon”, nitrogen dioxide (NO_x) levels are near to where an AQMA would have to be considered. Poor air quality there has not been picked up by monitoring stations at Castle Meadow and Lakenfields. New WHO guidelines recommend halving the annual average exposure to PM_{2.5} and cutting by three quarters the annual average limit for NO_x. In view of this new information, will the city council install additional air pollution monitoring equipment across the whole city in particular along primary routes and outside schools?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion’s response:

“We work with Norfolk County to tackle air pollution arising from traffic. The locations that Councillor Carlo quotes from the Transport Strategy are in Broadland District. Within the city council’s area our monitoring is concentrated on the city centre Air Quality Management Area supported by the background monitoring stations. In addition, diffusion tubes have been installed outside the AQMA where traffic congestion or planned development coincides with residential areas where housing is close to the carriageway. These locations are kept under review and most recently resulted in tubes being installed on Bracondale, Hall Road, Heigham Street and St Stephens Road. We need to be mindful of the cost of the equipment and staff time when locating monitoring equipment. We will also be supporting the county’s work on School Streets by monitoring the air quality improvement that we expect to result from traffic restrictions in the vicinity of the selected schools.”

Question 8

Councillor Schmierer to ask the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods the following question:

“Major new housebuilding initiatives at Anglia Square and Norwich East will see thousands of new properties built in the city. Does the cabinet member agree that the council should look to follow the example set by other European cities, most notably Amsterdam or Berlin in tackling the rise of build/buy-to-let property magnates? Amsterdam was the first city to take advantage of a law introduced by the Dutch government last month, ruling that anyone who buys a home under €512,000 must live in it for at least four years, with the hope that the move will open up the housing market to more domestic buyers and owner occupiers. Only newly-purchased properties, not apartments which are already being rented out, will be affected. Such a policy could have similar benefits for the people of Norwich who, through no fault of their own, are struggling to get onto the property ladder.”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods’ response:

“There is much the UK can learn from continental Europe about how it plans for development and manages its housing stock, often delivering better quality homes at more affordable prices to residents across a range of tenures. Whereas here the cost of decent quality homes for owner occupation and private rented accommodation is unaffordable to many.

I doubt whether the UK government would introduce the legislation similar to that used in Amsterdam. However, if they did, I would be happy to consider using these powers, although do note that the buy-to-let market does currently meet a housing need. I would want to sure that it did not negatively impact on availability of private rented accommodation, raising prices if supply did not meet demand.

At present I believe our focus must be on improved protection for private renters, both in terms of quality and safety of accommodation and security of tenure.”

Question 9

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

“Dog fouling is frequently a problem on The Green on St Leonard’s Road. I understand that this is within the area of a dog fouling PSPO. It would be helpful if a sign were put up to discourage owners from letting their dogs foul on the grass. It would also be helpful if negligent dog owners received fixed penalty notices, in accordance with the PSPO. Will the council take either of these actions to help residents take care of their shared space?”

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

“The Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for dog fouling In Norwich was implemented in May of this year. Effective signage is being finalised to raise awareness of the PSPO and the fines payable for failing to follow its directions. We are also developing an enforcement approach that will support the objectives of the PSPO, and this approach will include identifying and targeting areas that are most affected by inconsiderate dog owners allowing their dogs to foul.”

Question 10

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

“In June, full council passed a motion on reducing harmful advertising in Norwich. In October, a planning application was submitted for 9 illuminated advertising hoardings on Heigham Street that could impact on the quality of life for residents nearby, yet the planning portal did not allow the public to submit comments on the application. More recently plans have been submitted for 3-metre high "BT Street Hubs" that would mean large, brightly-lit digital advertising screens being erected in various locations in the city. Can the cabinet member tell me whether, following the motion in June, the council is intending to review planning policy in order to address concerns about the harmful impact of illuminated advertising and to ensure that residents are able to present their views?”

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

“The council motion of June concerned the subject of advertising and locations near schools.

It remains the council's intention to review planning policies as per the resolution, i.e., to ensure that, where possible, adverts are not sited near schools. This will be done through a review of all development management policies, which will start next year.

In the meantime, the council will continue to apply its existing policies to assess advert applications. These do allow for the impact on residents' amenity through issues such as illumination to be considered”

Question 11

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

“I was of course concerned to hear of our housing compliance issues and there are many councillors that are naturally invested in the issues as council tenants themselves. We rightly self-reported ourselves to the social housing regulator. Can the cabinet member for social housing tell me what has been put in place to drive the necessary improvement plan through?”

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

“We have developed a comprehensive compliance improvement plan and supporting the plan will be a risk register, trackers, and a performance dashboard. Actions will be agreed and allocated for ownership by a new compliance team working with colleagues from asset management. The compliance team will be led by a new head of asset management and a new senior compliance and building safety officer.

A Health and Safety Compliance Board, comprising of members of the administration and senior officers will have oversight of, and drive delivery of the compliance improvement plan.

The regulator has confirmed it has the level of assurance needed in the plans we have put in place to not take statutory enforcement action. We will report progress to the Regulator monthly and to cabinet quarterly.

Our aim is to work with the Regulator of Social Housing to return to a fully compliant position within 12 – 18 months.”

Question 12

Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for health and wellbeing the following question:

“West Earlham wood remains a beautiful asset nestling between the wards in this city. In recent years I have been deeply impressed by the work of the Friends of West Earlham Wood group and the efforts of the council to support them. With new S106 money identified for it, can the cabinet member for health and wellbeing comment on the number of new trees this funding will deliver for this valued green space?”

Councillor Packer, the cabinet member for health and wellbeing’s response:

“Bunkers Hill is one of many areas of woodland managed by the council. Recent works have been informed by an ecological survey and are aimed at increasing its biodiversity.

The woodland has thinned, removing approximately 70 sycamores which have a low biodiversity value. 900 trees (sweet chestnut, oak, beech, hornbeam) were planted to improve the woodland structure and biodiversity. Planting of a further 2,000 trees (Hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, spindle, holly) has started around the woodland edge.

The Friends of West Earlham Woods and the Trust for Conservation volunteers have played an important role in improving the woodland, giving more than 793 hours of their time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for.”

Question 13

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

“I note that some veterans were displeased with the lack of a formal parade at Remembrance Day this year due to the Covid-19 restrictions and safety measures which the council had agreed to earlier in the year. I have seen certain comments indicating that this is due to the council not caring about veterans or the importance of remembrance. Can the leader confirm, once again, that this is not the case and that any restrictions permitting, a full remembrance service and parade will be organised next year?”

Councillor Waters, the leader’s response:

“As you say in your own motion later on the agenda, “this council supports our Armed Forces, forces families and veterans living in city”. I was saddened to hear that some people felt the decision not to organise a parade was due to lack of care. To the contrary, the decision to hold a smaller, dignified wreath laying ceremony and Cathedral Service was made in the best interests of protecting public health. The news of a new, possibly more virulent, strain of COVID, requiring a return to the public health precautions, like wearing face masks, reminds us that the pandemic is not over.

On the basis that COVID is under control, it is our intention to organise a full remembrance service and parade next year.”

Question 14

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

“Tackling homelessness through building safe, secure housing and support has been a cornerstone ambition of this administration for generations. I am aware that the cabinet member visited the development of new homes at Webster Court which seem a great example of how the council are looking at ambitious and creative ways of commissioning housing development projects. Can the cabinet member for social housing comment on progress with the scheme and the difference it will make?”

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

“I can confirm that the six flats will be complete and ready before Christmas. People have already been identified with personalised packages of support to help them transition and settle into their new homes. This housing will change people’s lives by giving them somewhere safe, secure, and warm with the support they need to live independently.

The modular scheme is a brilliant example of off-site constructed homes that can be constructed and delivered on-site at pace to help solve our pressing need for affordable housing quickly. These homes could not have been delivered without the strong partnerships we have fostered with Broadland Housing Association and the local voluntary sector. We are grateful for the support of our partners to make this happen.”

Question 15

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

“Many constituents in my ward of Crome do not earn the real Living Wage and live with the associated poverty and pressures which come with this. As a proud Living Wage council can the leader comment on the success of the Norwich Living Wage campaign during this month and the differences it has delivered to raising pay in our city since starting?”

Councillor Waters, the leaders’s response:

“I’m pleased to say that the campaign for a ‘Real’ Living Wage, calculated each year on the cost of living, is going from strength to strength.

There are now 53 accredited living wage employers in Norwich; 16 accredited in 2021 (the largest annual increase to date). This covers 7,368 employees, including 802 uplifted to the living wage when their employer accredited (66 of these from the 16 new accreditations this year).

We have greatly benefited from the support and expertise of the Living Wage Foundation. Work started earlier this year on Norwich becoming accredited as a Living Wage City. A steering group has been formed to draw up an action plan to significantly grow the number of employers paying the Living Wage.

Our submission will be made to the Living Wage Foundation in May 2022. Our ambition is to make the real living wage the expected norm in Norwich.”

Question 16

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

“The lack of good quality, well paid jobs remain a problem for many constituents in my ward, so I was particularly pleased to see the opening, which the Leader attended, of the new Digi-Tech factory thanks partly to this council winning Town Fund investment towards it. Can the leader comment on the opportunities this investment might offer this city?”

Councillor Waters, the leader’s response:

“I was massively impressed by the new Digi-Tech factory when I attended its opening. It is an inspiring building and the facilities it offers should equip the young people of the Norwich with the skills they require to thrive in the modern labour market.

It is, we believe, the first completed towns fund project in the country and is the first of eight projects set out in our investment plan which is designed not only to support skills development but also to drive regeneration and development, providing new business locations and promoting better use of underused sites.

Time doesn’t allow me to list all that this may achieve but I look forward to attending several further opening events in the coming years.”

Question 17

Councillor Manning to ask the cabinet member for health and wellbeing the following question:

“Representing Lakenham Ward I was pleased to visit the two newly refurbished tennis courts at Lakenham Recreation Ground. The new courts which are hard surfaced and floodlit, make them accessible throughout the year and for all weather conditions. I know from talking to my constituents that they will be much used and valued by the community. Can the cabinet member for health and wellbeing comment on the investment made and difference this will deliver for east Norwich and our wider city?”

Councillor Packer, the cabinet member for health and wellbeing’s response:

“I am pleased that we have been able to build further on the success of Norwich Parks Tennis since its inception at Eaton Park in 2012, expanding the benefits to residents at Waterloo Park, Harford Park and now this current phase delivering quality facilities at Lakenham Recreation Ground and Heigham Park.

The city’s residents will benefit from the provision high quality facilities, available all year round, for extended hours, at cost to users of £35 per household per year which represents excellent value for money.

Norwich Park Tennis will not only deliver for existing players but aims to be a catalyst for getting more people active and making tennis accessible for all. As you point out the new courts at Lakenham are well place to serve existing residents and also future residents of East Norwich”

Question 18

Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion the following question:

“Now that COP26 has finished can the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion give her comments on whether the actions agreed at the conference go far enough?”

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion’s response:

“COP26 was largely a disappointment. It delivered modest progress – at absolute best – when what we need is a transformational leap. It falls short of delivering the practical measures urgently required to limit warming to 1.5C, with analysis of the pledges to come out of Glasgow having shown we’re on track to hit a disastrous 2.4C. There remains a dangerous level of ambiguity on countries’ responsibilities to align their targets to 1.5C, and the watering down of commitments to keep fossil fuels in the ground is unacceptable.

Norwich will continue to show local leadership in tackling the climate crisis. But COP has once again demonstrated that the government is failing to match our ambition - and failing to treat this like the emergency it is.”

Question 19

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

“Has there been a policy change in the way the city council’s civil enforcement officers have been deployed?”

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

“The council’s Civil Parking Enforcement staff provide parking enforcement on behalf of the Norfolk Parking Partnership. Our Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) are required to enforce parking regulations fairly, lawfully and without discrimination. They are deployed to ensure that enforcement is proportionate to the problems caused by the parking.

There has been no change in policy with regards to the way in which these officers have been deployed, although a recent increase in staff turnover resulted in a temporary reduction in the number of officers available to carry out enforcement duties. We have recently recruited four new CEOs, and are reviewing the service to ensure that it continues to meet our residents’ needs”

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 20

Councillor Bogelein to ask the chair of scrutiny committee the following question:

“The scrutiny committee has the crucial function, in this council, of ensuring that checks and balances are in place and that cabinet decisions, as well as the work of the council, can be adequately scrutinised. Part of this overview and scrutiny should be carried out by vital task and finish groups which can help inform council policy going forward and scrutinise areas that are of particular importance to residents and members. In your opinion, as chair of scrutiny, does the scrutiny committee receive the resources it requires to carry out adequate scrutiny, in order to support the council in improving services for residents?”

Councillor Wright, the chair of scrutiny's response:

“Thank you for highlighting the important work we, as a scrutiny committee undertake. There are a number of examples of excellent working between council officers and the committee, such as our last meeting exploring the council's work on social inclusion.

In principle, the committee is supported by a lead executive director, head of legal and procurement, the democratic and electoral services manager, democratic services team leader and the scrutiny officer as well as officers from the service areas we are scrutinising.

I am aware that there have been some recent challenges in officer and member working in relation to the select committee dealing with the issue of communal bins and fly tipping. I have been assured by officers that they are very happy to work with myself and members of the select committee to understand what went wrong and how we might be able to work more effectively in future.”

Question 21

Councillor Haynes to ask the chair of scrutiny committee the following question:

“A discussion at the end of the scrutiny committee meeting on 18th November demonstrated that members of the committee did not have a clear understanding of how the council’s constitution applies to the scrutiny committee and the setting of the scrutiny work programme. Members were unaware that TOPIC forms and recommendations from the scrutiny committee to cabinet were included in the phrase, ‘motion or amendment in similar terms to, or which has the same effect as, one that has been rejected at a meeting of council’ at point 101 of part three in the council’s constitution. Would the chair of scrutiny support training for councillors so that they can understand such meanings?”

Councillor Wright, the chair of scrutiny’s response:

“There will, in any constitution, be areas where interpretations will need to be made and I am sure the Monitoring Officer and Councillor Kendrick, chair of the constitution working party, will be happy to listen if members feel that the constitution, which went through a thorough review this year can be improved to assist clarification. If members feel that training would assist their understanding, then I am happy to add my support for it, and would be happy to add this to the annual training for scrutiny committee members.”

Question 22

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

“On 26 July, I reported a missing communal blue bin in West Pottergate and was assured it would be replaced. It took until 9 November and several follow-ups from me until the bin was finally replaced. This is not the first time there have been delays in delivery of communal bins - for example, there have been delays in fulfilling a request for additional recycling bins at Blazer Court and at Leather House on St George's Street (which are not council-owned). Can the cabinet member tell me what action she is taking to ensure that the contractors are held to account for delivering bins on time and to the right location?”

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

“As part of our ongoing contract management arrangements, the Council has regular oversight meetings with our waste collection contractor. Issues such as those raised by Councillor Osborn are highlighted, and remedies sought. Where a remedial action has not been carried out, then this would be escalated both within the council and contractor

With regards to the specific issue at West Pottergate, the delay was caused by the lack of availability of bins from our supplier, which has since been addressed.”