



**NORWICH**  
City Council

## **Council**

**26 January 2021**

### **Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees**

#### **Question 1**

**Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment the following question:**

“I am seeking clarity over which local authority, the city or the county, is responsible for keeping pavements clear of bins. This matter is especially relevant in terraced areas. The combination of narrow pavements and bins and vehicles on the footpaths forces pedestrians with pushchairs and wheelchairs into the road.

The background is that a resident complained about a large number of bins being stored on the pavement in a small street with narrow pavements. I visited the street well outside of bin collection day and counted 21 bins on the pavement. The city council responded that action would be taken only if there was a health and safety problem. This seemed to represent a change of policy because for a number of years the city council had kept pavements clear of bins. I contacted the city council portfolio holder who responded:

*“As part of the highway, what happens on the pavement is not in the control of Norwich City Council. Norfolk County Council are the Highway Authority. Should obstruction be suggested then, as with other parts of the highway, you might contact the Police.”*

I checked with the county council who replied.

*“The county council can take action to deal with obstructions, as resources and other priorities permit. However, the transitory nature of obstructions such as wheelie bins makes it an extremely difficult issue to keep on top of. I recall that the city council’s neighbourhood team/citywide services did some excellent work a few years ago dealing with problem wheelie bin areas, and I would suggest that that sort of local neighbourhood approach is probably the most effective”.*

It was still unclear whether the city or county was responsible and so I wrote to the county council’s executive director of Community and Environmental Services. He clarified that the city council has responsibility for keeping bins

off pavements under section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, where waste collection authorities (such as Norwich City Council) can issue notices to people who do not comply with the restrictions that the authority has imposed on the use of such bins.

I went back to the city council's portfolio holder who described the county council's words as ambiguous and said that he would read the Environmental Protection Act and get back to me. This was on 23 November. Surely, this matter was discussed at the time when the highways responsibilities passed to the county council and so please could the portfolio holder advise whether it is the city council who is responsible and if that is the case, please could the city council neighbourhood team resume its work on keeping terrace streets clear of bins?"

**Councillor Maguire, the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment's response:**

"The council regularly takes responsibility for bins that are causing an inconvenience or obstruction as a result of not being returned to within the boundary of the property. However, it is clear from the responses received from the county council that there is some ambiguity surrounding the principle responsibility for obstructions on the Highway, and it was this that I was attempting to clarify with the county, in their role as Highway Authority.

The issue of bins on streets does arise from time-to-time in a city with an historic network of terraced houses, many with restricted access to the rear, limited front-garden space and fronting on to narrow pavements. It is for precisely this reason that the council includes clear guidance for residents in waste and recycling literature and on the council's website, where the following information is displayed on the Bins and Recycling landing-page –

"Wheelie bins or bags are collected from the edge of your property.

- Make sure your bin is out by 6am on your collection day, but no earlier than 6pm the evening before
- After your collection, please return your bin to the inside of your property boundary by 9am the next morning."

It is reasonable to allow this time-frame for residents with busy lives and who may not always be available to set-out or take-in a bin immediately before or after collection. In the overwhelming majority of cases where bins are out before or after these times it will be due to unforeseen circumstances for the resident, or else they simply forgot, and the situation is soon rectified.

Where there is a longer-term nuisance created by bins remaining on pavements this should be reported via the online form on the website. The online forms are always the most effective reporting tool as they allow for a more immediate response and they also provide critical data on the type, frequency and locations of neighbourhood issues. This information then informs the effective future planning of services and resources.

Council officers continue to respond to such nuisances, following the principle that education and advice are more effective than enforcement processes. Officers will advise residents by letter if their bin has been reported as causing a nuisance by its continued presence on the pavement, which will usually resolve the issue. On rare occasions a visit to the property may be necessary, to speak to the resident and ensure that the bin is returned. To put this in perspective, such actions amounted to fewer than 1% of the issues dealt by the area management team in 2019-2020.

These duties now sit with the new citywide services team, formed in December of last year, but the reporting principle for bins on streets - via the online form - remains the most effective method of contact."

## Question 2

### **Councillor Youssef to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion the following question:**

“I have noticed that when applying for various council services, residents are given different choices of title to select from. For example, when applying for an allotment, you could choose from Dr, Miss, Mr, Mrs or Ms, but when applying for a garden waste bin, residents are offered a wider selection: Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Cllr, Dr, Rev, Prof. Neither list includes the gender-neutral title Mx, and my recent councillor enquiry elicited a response stating that the council does not have enough officer resource to add this title to the list. However, this omission discriminates against non-binary people. Will the cabinet member agree to consider equalities and safeguarding factors and include Mx in all lists of titles produced by the council, or, better still, to allow people to write in their own choices of title?”

### **Councillor Davis, the cabinet member for social inclusion’s response:**

“To be clear, the councillor was not told that there was not resource to amend forms, but that it would require significant amount of officer time to ensure that the multitude of existing web and paper forms which have been developed over the years using different software were all consistent with this change, and that, given current resource challenges, a timescale for doing this could not be provided to the councillor.

As a Labour administration, we have a proven commitment to equality and believe that this is best pursued through ensuring that we tackle inequality root and branch, not through token gestures. The council takes its Public Sector Equality Duty very seriously and seeks to eliminate discrimination across all protected characteristics. In order to do so, the language that we use and the way that we gather data can be key, and we are constantly evolving this in line with best practice.

So for all new online forms, the council does not include a title field, and has not done so for the last couple of years. As existing forms require updating for other purposes, where they have a title field, we include a free-text field to allow respondents to self-select a preferred title. But, again, given the level of officer time involved, no timeline can be given to amend the title fields in all existing forms. This will be undertaken as part of a wider approach to data collection within our Public Sector Equality Duty and GDPR requirements, to ensure that we are not missing opportunities to eliminate discrimination and advance opportunity for all people with protected characteristics, not just non-binary people.”

### **Question 3**

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

“I was pleased to hear that Norwich Labour Party recently voted to actively campaign against the Norwich Western Link Road, following the strong and principled policy which Norwich Green Party and its councillors have followed for some years. Councillor Stonard has previously said, in this chamber, that the cabinet could accept the building of this road if it were mitigated by investment in other types of transport and benefitted the local economy. What he appears to have consistently failed to grasp is that a road of this type, built through sensitive wildlife sites, including the home of rare mammals such as Barbastelle bats, cannot be mitigated against. The Green Party has always understood this and it seems that Labour Party members are now following their lead. Is the cabinet ready to follow yet, and if so, when will they take action against this harmful road?”

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

“Councillor Price will benefit from now being aware of my detailed answer to a very similar question which was put to me by former Green Councillor Galvin at cabinet last week. This answer is included in the minutes of that meeting and he is free to read it at his leisure. It responds to all his points raised.”

#### Question 4

#### **Councillor Osborn to ask the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment the following question:**

“During the last year, residents at Ebenezer Place have repeatedly reported antisocial behaviour, including faeces and drug paraphernalia in stairwells and noise disruption, as well as crime including knife-crime. The residents received a process number which they quoted each time when reporting repeated anti-social behaviour (ASB). Yet they heard nothing at all from the council’s antisocial behaviour team. Residents in Clifton Street, Barnards Yard, Ber Street, and across the city centre have experienced the same lack of communication. This lack of response has been raised through various channels, including by residents themselves and through enquiries by councillors through the Civica process.

The city council’s Antisocial Behaviour Policy – which was due for review in June 2019 – sets out minimum service standards. It states:

“We produce service standards so every customer is clear about the level of service they can expect to receive from us.

“We will:

- contact the complainant within five days working to acknowledge their complaint (If immediate action is required we will discuss this at the time of the call and if it is more appropriate for this to be from the police).
- provide regular updates with the steps we are taking to deal with the complaint. We will do this by letter, email, phone, or by visiting or via the noise app
- explain what support we and other agencies can offer for example mediation and tenancy support.”

Furthermore, the ASB policy makes clear that as a member of the county community safety partnership, the city council has committed to the following in relation to ASB:

- “Listen to me [the resident], take me seriously.
- Take action to address the problem.
- Try to prevent this happening again.
- Tell me what you have done.”

Does the cabinet member acknowledge that the council has failed to meet the standards of respect and responsiveness required by its own ASB policy and

is he able to provide reassurance to residents that the aspirations of the policy will be met in future?"

**Councillor Maguire, the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment's response:**

"Thank you for your question which gives me an opportunity to talk about some of the work of this council in addressing antisocial behaviour (ASB) including our Neighbourhood Safety Strategy which led to the purchase of a new CCTV system, purchase of four demountable CCTVs, appointment of a neighbourhood safety officer and the setting aside of £50,000 to promote resident-driven neighbourhood safety initiatives. For fuller details I refer you to the cabinet report nearly two years ago. All of this is in addition to the new structure for addressing antisocial behaviour.

I address your specific question:

I can confirm that the council's antisocial behaviour teams have responded to all reports of ASB and crime by the residents at the locations identified.

**Ebenezer Place**

Response times met council policy requirements in all but two cases, these fell outside service standard of five working days, by two and three working days. One case remains open. Regular updates were provided during case management, in line with council policy, and continue to be on the open case.

Advice has also been provided to residents to call the police if drug related activity occurs, or if there are reports of knife crime, as police hold the powers to deal with these matters. If offending individuals could be identified, there may be action that council officers can take forward, but so far individuals have not been identified.

The council's safer neighbourhoods coordinator has visited Ebenezer Place with the council's estates team and spoken to residents about various improvements that could be explored. As a result, broken fencing has been replaced and improvements are planned to the lighting and overgrown green space to make it a more welcoming space for residents to use. The council will also consider Ebenezer Place for inclusion in its programme of secure door entry system installation.

**Barnard's Yard**

The council's safer neighbourhoods coordinator has visited Barnard's Yard and spoken with residents on many occasions and has undertaken a raft of interventions, many of which are ongoing, including:

- Regular resident engagement;
- Coordination of communication between council officers, residents and police;
- Location review with senior officers in the council's Housing department;
- Installation of redeployable CCTV;
- Commissioned an assessment for improving security at the location.

And as I understand it, Councillor Osborn had a meeting scheduled at Barnard's Yard with the council's head of housing last Friday evening (22 January) to discuss potential options at the location.

### **Clifton Street and Ber St**

Where complaints have been reported, they have been responded to.

In addition, the council's safer neighbourhoods coordinator has been working with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk) to secure Home Office funding for secure door entry systems for Clifton Close and Midland Walk in Norwich. Residents at Midland Walk will have shed doors replaced with more secure doors and secure door entry systems are to be installed within flat blocks at both locations. Residents should be receiving communication about this in the next few weeks, if they have not already.

Ber Street is also recognised as a priority location for the council's secure door entry system programme. This has been discussed with residents and, following a visit, the safer neighbourhoods coordinator also raised issues with contractors in relation to improvements to the communal windows, which are now on the programme to be replaced. Work to improve the area around the sheds at Ber St and cut back growth to increase natural surveillance will also be undertaken. These works will be progressed as swiftly as possible within the wider council improvement programme, however some delays are being experienced as a result of the impact of the pandemic.

The council's ASB policy is due for review, and will be formally reviewed this year. The early intervention and community safety manager has assured me that there are no significant updates or changes to policy and process, therefore the current policy is still fit for purpose at this time."



## Question 5

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

“I’m sure that, like me, the cabinet member has been concerned to hear that a recent report commissioned by the LGA and social housing groups found that council house waiting lists in England are set to double to 2 million this year. The council’s HRA capital programme budget over the next five years is £71,273,000. Therefore, after the initial planned delivery of approximately 350 new homes in the first phase, the council will only be able to deliver between 50-75 dwellings per annum thereafter. The council house waiting lists in the Gold and Silver bands are currently running at around 1000 and are highly likely to increase dramatically. In the light of this, would Councillor Harris join me in writing to the Secretary of State to explain that the council needs to be able to provide more homes than this for Norwich residents, but cannot without changes to funding and the constraints imposed by his government?

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

“Thank you for your question.

Our housing options team have worked incredibly hard in the pandemic to continue to assist anyone facing difficulty with their housing situation. We recognise that we have yet to see the full impact of the pandemic on the individuals and families which is likely to mean increased demand for assistance with housing and support.

In its strategy *Covid-19: A Blueprint for Recovery*, the council has set out an overview of its initial response to the virus and the priority themes and actions which will frame the city’s recovery. These include a range of actions under the themes; supporting the most vulnerable, and Housing, regeneration and development.

This council has a proud recent history in delivering new social rented homes for the residents of Norwich and last year cabinet have approved a further three site: Mile Cross depot, Three Score phase 3, and Argyle Street, to be taken forward to deliver approximately 330-380 homes.

In July, cabinet approved a report on future housing commissioning that laid out the details of the financial capacity that the council has for the delivery of new council homes. The council has to demonstrate that overall borrowing of the council for both the HRA and General Fund is affordable, prudent and sustainable under CIPFA’s Prudential Code.

This means that although the government removed the HRA borrowing cap in 2018, and the council may now determine how much it will borrow to fund HRA capital expenditure, we have to balance this with our ambitions in the General Fund, and those in the councils Housing Strategy – Fit for the Future which describes our primary ambitions:

- Meeting housing need – delivering new homes
- Maintaining and improving condition of existing housing stock
- Improving the use and management of our existing housing stock
- Improving our neighbourhoods

We cannot deliver all of the homes ourselves to meet the housing need on our waiting list.

It should be noted that a number of government policies in recent years have reduced our capacity to deliver against our ambitions. The 4 year 1% rent cut alone removed over £200m from our 30-year business plan, which would have gone a long way to supporting new homes.

About the LGA report, *Building Post Pandemic Prosperity*, this is welcomed and whilst the findings are concerning, they are not particularly surprising. The report makes a number of recommendations to central government including freedoms and flexibilities in the use of retained RTB receipts that would certainly assist us in delivering more council homes.

This report also recognises that council's alone do not have the capacity and resources to deliver all of the 100,000 affordable homes annually and need assistance from central government, along with registered providers.

It also shows that 49% of new affordable homes were delivered through the planning system and that changes proposed in the planning white paper will reduce this amount putting further strain on delivery.

In order to increase the delivery of social rented housing in the city alongside our own programme, cabinet has also approved the continuation of our work with local registered providers. This will be done through the procurement of a partner for a 5-year period and by providing grants to local partners from our retained RTB receipts. Officers are working with procurement on the best way to deliver this partnership and hope to be able to launch this exercise in the coming weeks.

The government did carry out a consultation in October 2018 to consider giving local authorities some freedoms and flexibilities around spending RTB receipts including extending the period to 5 years and allowing 50% of a project cost to be funded.

In our response to the consultation, we requested for the removal of all restrictions around the use of RTB receipts so we can get on and build the homes that the residents of Norwich need.

We have lobbied central government on a number of occasions to seek freedoms and flexibilities around the use of retained RTB receipts both before and since the consultation.

In the last 2 years, we have met with housing ministers, written letters to the Secretary of State and the Director General's at MHCLG, and we are an active member of ARCH who has also lobbied government.

In fact, we are still awaiting a response to a letter that the chief executive wrote in November to the Director General for Housing and Planning, which we understand has now been passed to the Director for Social Housing.

I believe that local authorities are best placed to understand the needs of our communities and allowing us to make decisions over our financial resources, without government red tape, means that we can plan more strategically and deliver greater numbers of new council homes.

I am more than happy to continue to lobby government and welcome the support of the Green Party in this"

## Question 6

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

“In December, the Committee on Climate Change published its Sixth Carbon Budget Report which provides ministers with advice on the legal limit for UK net emissions of greenhouse gases during the period 2033-2037. It also sets the pathway to Net Zero by 2050 at least. The committee advises that airport capacity should only expand if there are corresponding restrictions elsewhere in the UK (i.e. no net expansion). It recommends that UK aviation needs to achieve net zero by 2050, with the Department for Transport setting a clear trajectory for achieving this goal. In an accompanying report on Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget, the authors state that local authorities in their planning role have an influence over airport expansion which can affect transport emissions and that refusal to grant permission to expand an airport might be necessary to constrain passenger numbers in line with the requirements of the sector trajectory. Does the cabinet member have a plan for ensuring that Norwich City Council, as the planning authority, contributes to net zero emissions by 2050?”

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

“Clearly the council has demonstrated on several occasions that tackling the climate change challenge is hugely important to us. We have recognised the climate emergency, produced our environment strategy with a first priority to “work with partners, through the Norwich 2040 City Vision, to develop a citywide response to climate change to reduce the city's carbon dioxide emissions”, reduced our own carbon emissions every year since 2008, and set a challenging target of becoming a net zero council by 2030.

Through the planning process we can only contribute towards delivering net emissions and only to the extent that is allowed for by government. Continuing deregulation of the planning system certainly doesn't help this. The emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan that is shortly to be published for consultation contains a climate change statement that shows how the plan will contribute to achieving zero greenhouse gas emissions through:

1. Locating development so that new housing will be close to every-day services and jobs (mainly established through policies 1 and 7 of the plan).
2. Ensuring development are sustainably designed (mainly established in policies 2 and 3 of the plan) to:
  - (a) deliver the highest viable energy and water efficiency by setting standards development must meet. Reducing the need to generate

energy and use water in new development will assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions;

- (b) reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car and secure the highest possible share of trips made by sustainable travel, including walking and cycling (active travel) and public transport. This will be achieved by providing local services and facilities and designing new developments to make active travel the first choice for most residents;
- (c) provide flexibility to include existing and new technologies as they emerge, such as high quality broadband, to reduce emissions;
- (d) make green infrastructure integral – new development will be required to contribute to improved and linked habitats and to provide at least 10% “biodiversity net gain.”

3. Promoting improvements to the energy grid, the development of local, renewable and low carbon energy networks to serve major new developments and an increase in free standing renewable energy generation, such as solar farms.

Overall, the plan's target is to reduce per capita emissions to contribute to meeting the national target to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. But the extent that the planning system will be able to contribute to these aspirations will be very much determined by how many tools the government allow us to deliver this through the forthcoming planning legislation.

Aviation is perhaps a good case in point of a matter that clearly needs a national and indeed inter-national approach to controlling emissions rather than local action at a particular airport. Through its adoption of the Norwich Airport masterplan in October 2019, the city council sought to encourage Norwich Airport to do what it can to address emissions through producing a surface access strategy, travel plan and assessment of its environmental impacts. But as the masterplan itself notes, there is little to be gained in one airport being limited in the number of flights it can provide if the outcome of this is local residents having to travel further to access airports to fly to destinations. Addressing aviation emissions really does require co-ordinated action at the national level.”

## Question 7

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

“In December, Croydon Council had to issue its second Section 114 notice effectively declaring itself bankrupt and in so doing had to stop all but essential spending while asking the government for a £150m bailout.

We know that significant cuts in central government support for local authorities have caused problems across the country. The pandemic undoubtedly exacerbated these underlying problems, which, in the case of Croydon, largely concerned ongoing financial pressures on adult and children's services, commercial property failures, and mismanagement of council-owned companies established by the local authority.

Indeed, concerning the latter two, a damning report by Croydon Borough Council's auditors, Grant Thornton, stated:

*“The Council has increased the level of borrowing significantly in recent years ... and used the borrowing to invest in companies it established and to purchase investment properties. The strategy for investing in properties was approved at Full Council using guillotine procedures meaning there was insufficient time to discuss and challenge the strategy and the first purchase was made two months prior to approving the strategy. The Council's approach to borrowing and investments has exposed the Council and future generations of taxpayers to significant financial risk. There has not been appropriate governance over the significant capital spending and the strategy to finance that spending.*

*The Council established a number of companies including wholly-owned and part-owned companies. The Council's governance and oversight of the companies shows insufficient rigor and control. Despite heavy investment from the Council, the Council has not yet received any significant return.*

*There has been collective corporate blindness to both the seriousness of the financial position and the urgency with which actions needed to be taken.”*

While I appreciate that Norwich is a lower tier council and not responsible for services like social care, there are still significant similarities. Given that this council has also invested heavily in commercial properties and seen financial problems with its wholly-owned company, NRL; can the cabinet reassure Norwich residents and members here that this council will not end up issuing a Section 114 notice?”

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

“Financial governance has always been a high priority for this council and both members and officers ensure the appropriate time, resource and oversight is given to our statutory requirements.

There are several key activities throughout the year where we review the finances of the council namely, the budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy preparation, the in-year financial monitoring reports and finally the preparation of the statement of accounts. Norwich City Council's wholly owned companies are fully embedded within the council's governance and reporting structures with six monthly reporting through to cabinet.

A Section 114 notice would need to be considered where a council is unable to set or maintain a balanced budget.

The process of balancing the budget is a complex and continuous activity. Despite the financial challenges this year, the general fund is not forecasting to need to draw down on general reserves in either this year or next financial year. Whilst there remain financial risks, these will continue to be monitored as part of the council's corporate risk processes and financial reporting.

As part of the budget setting process, Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 places specific responsibilities on the chief finance officer to report on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of proposed financial reserves when the council is considering its budget requirement. The council is required to have regard to this statement when it sets the budget.

The chief finance officer has confirmed that the February budget papers will be making a positive statement addressing these legislative requirements.

The council does continue to have financial challenges over the medium term though which have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. The council has again though responded in a timely manner prioritising services and reviewing the financial decisions within the 2020-21 budget to mitigate any potential, unplanned draw on general reserves. The short term government grants have supported the council address the challenges but it will be important that a longer term, more sustainable approach is provided to local government to ensure that the medium term projections are supported by sustainable funding sources.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), which is dedicated to public financial management provides policy and guidance information to local government. Below is the link to CIPFA's website which

provide guidance on managing budgets, S114 notices and has been updating this guidance during the Covid-19 pandemic:

<https://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/reports/balancing-local-authority-budgets-briefing>

In preparing the statement of accounts the code requires that the accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position of the council and Norwich City Council's accounts are prepared on the basis that the council is a going concern. In line with the code, suitable accounting policies have been applied, and where necessary, prudent judgements and estimates have been made.

The 2019/20 statement of accounts are available here, with Note 48 providing the going concern assessment:

[https://www.norwich.gov.uk/downloads/file/7102/statement\\_of\\_accounts\\_audited\\_year\\_ending\\_march\\_2020](https://www.norwich.gov.uk/downloads/file/7102/statement_of_accounts_audited_year_ending_march_2020)



## **Question 8**

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

“I was very pleased to hear of the local Labour Party voting for a motion in favour of proportional representation earlier this month. Given that the Green Group has proposed motions to this council to support a move to PR in local elections, and that the Labour Group has consistently voted against these, I wonder if now is a good time to ask the Leader of the Council if he would support Norwich offering to be a pilot city for proportional representation?”

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

“The Labour Party nationally, has not taken a position in favour of proportional representation, I am sure that the motion from the Norwich Labour Party will be referred upwards for consideration but at present it does not reflect the position of the national party.

I should remind members that ten years ago, we had a referendum to change the voting system which the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats campaigned for a Yes vote but the people of Norwich and the country as a whole rejected that.”

## Question 9

### **Councillor McCartney-Gray to ask the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment the following question:**

“I am aware that on 8 January, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote to all local authorities, including this one, informing them that he ‘expected’ but did not instruct the provision of accommodation for rough sleepers during this third national pandemic. This is contrary to the previous ‘everyone in’ approach which this council successfully adopted.

As mentioned in my question last year, I have been greatly impressed by the significant work and effort of this council to house rough sleepers before, during and after the pandemic outbreak last year. The current public health situation is extremely serious, with those sleeping rough at higher risk than almost any other group. Nobody should spend winter on the streets, especially during the hardest period of this pandemic. Nationally and locally Labour has called on the government to make sure everyone has a safe, Covid-secure place to stay this winter but even before this most recent crisis rough sleeping was a shameful sign of government failure. Ten years of Tory Government meant we went into this year with more than twice as many rough sleepers as in 2010.

The recent government announcement on rough sleeping falls short of demanding local authorities house every rough sleeper and provides just £10m nationally to assist with this significant and important piece of work. Given the seriousness of this can the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment update members on the steps this council has been taking to respond to this?”

### **Councillor Maguire, the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment’s response:**

“This Labour council has a proud record of providing assistance to the most vulnerable and supporting rough sleepers has been a key commitment this year.

I’m pleased to advise that our work to support rough sleepers never stopped and, alongside our fantastic partnerships most notably in the Pathways service, we continue to provide accommodation to all rough sleepers in Norwich over winter and this offer will remain open until March at the earliest.

In line with government requirements, the accommodation is Covid safe and clients undertake a Covid assessment and temperature test prior to placement. A rapid assessment of need is carried out for everyone that we

accommodate and we ensure that everyone brought in has their health needs addressed, is registered with a GP and is factored into local area vaccination plans.

In addition to accommodation, we have focused on improving daytime support, making sure that clients have access to food, clothing, medical services, washing facilities and support workers to talk to that they can access during the day.

Many of the client group are long term rough sleepers who have become entrenched in a street lifestyle, have complex issues and may have struggled to work with support services previously. As such, we take the opportunity to work with the client to understand their needs and wishes and ensure that they have the right support in place to help keep them off the streets. Regular meetings are then held with partners and providers to source bespoke accommodation outcomes for each client.

This partnership led, person-centred approach is yielding positive results and of the 40 rough sleeper clients who have used the provision since November, 15 have already been found settled accommodation.

While these remain difficult times, our efforts to reduce rough sleeping are tireless and 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 are able to provide the best possible support for rough sleepers in Norwich.”

## Question 10

**Councillor Erin Fulton-McAlister to ask the leader of the council the following question:**

“Now that the Brexit ‘deal’ has passed can the Leader comment from both his work on the LEP itself and wider responsibility for economic development, on any impacts already emerging from Brexit in our city?”

**Councillor Waters, the leader’s response:**

“Thank you for this timely question. Covid-19, naturally still dominates the headlines, but the consequences of the trading relationship agreed between the EU and the UK on Christmas Eve 2020, is moving up the inside track fast as an issue of public interest and concern.

The consequences of the Brexit referenda result in 2016, have been part of everyone’s thinking over the past four years. Speculation as to what kind of deal and what kind of impact have been central to a number of organisations and groupings which the city council has membership. Among them, the Key Cities Group; Fast Growth Cities, Centre for Cities; New Anglia LEP; East of England Local Government Association; our relationships with regional trades unions; local businesses in Norwich, including the Business Improvement District and Chamber of Commerce and so on.

The situation is now less opaque but it’s difficult, at the moment, to gauge the detailed impact on specific business sectors and businesses across the city. That narrative is still unfolding, and councillors will have seen daily coverage of the impact of some of the thousands of pages of regulations that have or will be coming into force this year, now that we are outside the Customs Union and the single market. The impact will be particularly hard on smaller, exporting enterprises which are being seriously burdened by the high costs of the thin deal Boris Johnson rushed through Parliament at the end of 2020. It is reported that British companies are being told by the British government that the way to survive is to lay off British workers and transfer their jobs to the EU! In the local context it is estimated that the deal which has been secured will see a reduction in the GDP of Norfolk and Suffolk of approximately 4% by 2030.

In short it is not turning out to be the “cakeist treaty” which the Prime Minister promised.

I can assure council that we will be monitoring very closely the impact of the Brexit deal on the city, its residents and businesses, which in the next few months will become very much clearer.”

## **Question 11**

**Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion the following question:**

“I was pleased to read that the cabinet member for social inclusion roundly condemned this government in the Evening News for the paucity of food boxes provided to families on low income during this third lockdown, contrasting them with the support she and others have provided from the foodbank organised in NR2 as volunteers. As government continues to fail to provide the safety net so urgently required during this national pandemic, would the cabinet member remind council of the key measures this council undertakes as part of its social inclusion strategy?”

**Councillor Davis, the cabinet member for social inclusion's response:**

“Social inclusion runs through the council's corporate plan and therefore informs our core service delivery, whether that being ensuring that our vulnerable residents receive full support to pay their council tax, by preventing families and individuals from becoming homeless, or by providing high quality community and open space facilities across the city. In addition to this, we are proud of our work over recent years to reduce inequalities in the city in a number of ways: by working with communities in specific neighbourhoods to address long-standing patterns of deprivation; by building on our long-term commitment to the Living Wage, through the partnership of the Norwich Good Economy Commission; and by bringing together and funding Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector partnerships to tackle rough sleeping and to provide access to much needed social welfare advice. We have maintained progress on all these projects even whilst we responded to the very real crises around access to food, accommodation and medicine that the Covid-19 crisis brought about, through the work of the Norwich Community hub and our wider response as reported in our Covid-19 Recovery Blueprint update to cabinet in December 2020.”

## Question 12

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

“As we emerge out of this pandemic the importance of securing new housing and employment for this city will be pivotal as part of its wider recovery. Regenerating east Norwich, particularly since the Colman site’s sad closure, remains a key strategic ambition for this council. Now, as part of the success of this council in securing £25m for the Towns Deal, can the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth explain how the purchase of the soon to be vacated Carrow House building will assist us further in opening up the site as a conduit for wider regeneration in east Norwich?”

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

“Securing funding through the Towns’ Fund has provided a major opportunity to accelerate the regeneration of East Norwich to create a new high-quality urban quarter. Towns’ Fund monies will support the development of a comprehensive masterplan for this important growth area of the city, enabling the city council and partners to ensure that the new urban quarter becomes a high-quality and highly sustainable addition to the city, not only regenerating this area of Norwich but delivering benefits to the wider city.

The East Norwich development area itself is approximately 50Ha and is comprised of sites including the Carrow Works, Carrow House, the Deal Ground the Utilities site. This is a nationally significant development area, with the potential to deliver a major extension to the city centre - up to 4,000 new homes and 100,000 sq. metres of new employment space, accommodating up to 6,000 new jobs - and act as a catalyst for regeneration of both East Norwich and the wider city.

A new partnership has been established - the East Norwich Partnership – to steer preparation of a masterplan for this area that will unlock development on these sites and deliver sustainable regeneration. The partnership is led by Norwich City Council with representation from key public and private sector partners including Homes England, Network Rail, and the landowners of the three sites. It will ensure there is thorough engagement process allowing communities to influence the preparation of the masterplan.

Alongside the development of the Masterplan, and subject to the Towns Deal monies being received, we are purchasing Carrow House. We are hopeful the purchase will be completed during the summer once operational use by the county council has ceased.

As you are aware Carrow House itself is an important Grade II listed building (the former home of the Colman family) with a more recent office building attached. It is set within attractive grounds and overlooks and has good links to the Carrow Works site.

The detailed business case for the purchase is still being worked up but it is intended to refurbish and repurpose the building to serve as office accommodation whilst the masterplanning for the wider site is being done.

The long term use of the site will depend on the outcome of the masterplan but through taking ownership of the site we aim to assist with the regeneration of the wider site and provide it with further impetus. We hope that the purchase will give the city council more scope to influence the wider regeneration area ensuring objectives for sustainable and inclusive growth are met, reduce possibilities of competing private sector landowners not engaging with the masterplan process or seeking to establish ransom positions, ensure good sustainable access routes can be delivered to support the wider redevelopment, safeguard the long term future of important heritage assets and provide valuable meanwhile space to attract new business to Norwich as part of our recovery from Covid.”

### **Question 13**

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

“The city council undertook to write to voters to offer them a postal vote at this May’s local election. Can the cabinet member for resources comment on how successful has the response been?”

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

“The response so far has been very successful. The elections team have received an additional 10,000 applications for the elections in May. We now have nearly 30,000 postal voters in Norwich out of an electorate of nearly 100,000. The electoral registration officer will be writing to all households in February to let everybody know their voting status. Again we will be asking residents who have not yet signed up, to get in touch and to emphasise the option to vote by post.

Although it is important to give people this choice, the returning officer and his team are of course working hard to make sure that all our polling stations will be safe in May for those who choose to vote in person”



## Question 14

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

“Expanding the number of electrical charging points in the city, to promote the expansion of electric cars, has long been a priority for this Labour council. Can the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth comment on the positive opportunities available to expand this further through our partnership with the Charge Collective project and UK Power Network?”

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

“Thanks for the question about Charge Collective.

The aim of the project is to ensure that everyone has the confidence to switch to electric vehicles (EV), regardless of where they live or what parking space they have, and that no citizen is left behind as we transition towards the electrification of travel.

By sharing data and expertise, the local authorities (Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council) will help UK Power Networks to identify 45 plus EV charging locations in Norwich’s urban core. The locations have been selected to support citizens with no off street parking provision. (eg a terraced street or streets with flats) as homes with parking spaces can access charging via a simple free fuse upgrade and a subsidised external EV charging plug.

UKPN will offer discounts to access the grid in these locations to encourage a commercial provider to supply EV charging services. The councils are using their knowledge to identify the most suitable locations which would benefit from this substantial investment.

Charge Collective will develop a new framework to assess how much of a discount, to connect to the electricity network, is required to encourage charge point installers to invest in areas where the market is struggling to deliver today. It will be a model that could be scaled up across the country if successful.

A procurement exercise will be completed this financial year (2020-2021). If successful a rollout would take place over 2021-23. If unsuccessful, valuable lessons would have been learnt which would inform further future EV charging programmes.

So hopefully charge collective will deliver 45 plus new on street charging units (fast-rapid) which will complement the existing growing provision in the city. Not including gyms, car dealerships and hotels there are over 50 public EV charging sockets in Norwich already.”

**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 39 of appendix 1 of the council's constitution.**

**Question 15**

**Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment the following question:**

“Norwich City Council introduced a policy of providing single-use blue plastic bags to householders in 2014 on the grounds that they allow fortnightly recycling collections to city centre properties lacking room for storing wheelie bins. This also applies to some terraced properties. Previously, the council provided fabric bags for storing recyclables. The council provides 900 properties with blue plastic bags and in 2019-20, Biffa handed out 527 rolls of blue bags which is a substantial number. In reply to a question, the city council says that the bags “are sent for recovery to produce heat and electricity”, in other words incineration. The Committee on Climate Change and the Sixth Carbon Budget Report notes that carbon emissions from use of waste for power and heat (mostly energy from waste incineration plants) have doubled since 2013, with more local authority waste in England now incinerated for energy than recycled or composted. Norfolk sends some of its waste to the energy from waste facility near Ipswich. This plant is one of the four largest point-source emitters of carbon dioxide emissions in Norfolk and Suffolk according to the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. Using single -use plastic bags to collect recyclables and then burning the bags creates carbon emissions which undermines the objective of recycling to protect the environment. Will the city council's portfolio holder review the policy of using single-use plastic bags for recyclables and adopt a solution which helps to meet net zero carbon?”

**Councillor Maguire, the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment's response:**

“Councillor Price will be aware that this council is a Waste Collection Authority (WCA) and as such provides for the collection of waste and recycling from domestic properties in the city. The Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) is Norfolk County Council. It is the legal responsibility of WCAs to deliver their collected waste in accordance with the instructions of the WDA. It is the responsibility of the WDA to arrange for the lawful disposal of all collected waste.

At present the county council has contracts in place which provide for the disposal of collected household waste into energy from waste facilities. Whilst WCAs can make representation to their WDA, the letting of household waste

disposal contracts for Norfolk is a matter for the county council and it determines how waste is treated after collection.

The blue plastic bags are predominantly provided for city centre properties that do not have sufficient space to accommodate wheeled bins. Collections from such properties were previously provided using hessian reusable bags, however this service was unsustainable because:

- Once the collection was made the empty bags would be returned to the collection point, invariably on the pavement. Any breeze or wind would move the bags away from the point of collection, and strong winds would remove them to other parts of the street, into shrubs and trees and often into the road, where they became a traffic hazard
- In addition to bags lost due to the weather, empty hessian sacks proved to be attractive to passers-by and many were regularly removed to be used for shopping or storage by others.

The result was that the council faced a significant and continual cost for replacing the sacks from many properties on a weekly basis. Whilst the use of the plastic bags is not ideal it is the only cost-effective way to allow up to 900 household to participate in Norwich's kerbside recycling service.

Officers in the new citywide services team will be progressing dozens of waste and recycling initiatives and projects in the coming years, and we will continue to review all aspects of the service offered to residents in the city centre. As soon as an effective and affordable alternative is identified, we will act to implement it."