



COUNCIL

7.30 p.m. – 10.30 p.m.

21 October 2008

Present: Councillor Hooke (Lord Mayor), Councillors Arthur, Banham, Bearman, Blakeway, Brociek-Coulton, Cannell, Collishaw, Divers, Driver, Dylan, Fairbairn, George, Gledhill, Holmes, Jago, Jeraj, Little(A), Little(S), Llewellyn, Lubbock, Makoff, Morphew, Morrey, Offord, Ramsay, Sands, Stephenson, Watkins, and Wright

Apologies: Councillor Wyatt

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor announced that since the last meeting he had attended the following

- the Lord Mayor's Ball at the Holiday Inn
- Rotary District Conference
- hosted a visit from the Mayor of Dezda, Malawi
- a Novi Saad Association lunch with special guest, the Acting Ambassador from the Serbian Embassy, London
- Citizens Advice Bureau AGM of which he is President
- the Britain and Norwich in Bloom Awards at the Assembly House
- the showing of a film by pupils from Earlham High School focusing on two local Earlham ladies and their war time experiences
- the Mental Health Alliance at The Forum
- a showing of a film at Wymondham Ex Services Club which was the story of Vernon Castle, a dancer who grew up in Norwich and was very popular in the early 1900. The film was a collaboration by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and was attended by the daughter of Fred Astaire. The Lord Mayor was supporting the possibility of erecting a plaque on the site of the Nelson Hotel, where the pub stored where Vernon Castle grew up.

The Lord Mayor reminded members that the Lord Mayor's quiz in aid of The Lord Mayor's charity would be held on 19 November, 2008 at 7.00 p.m. at St Andrew's Hall.

The Lord Mayor said that he was sure all members were aware that, the preceding week had been Local Democracy Week. The Council always arranged activities during this annual event to promote local democracy with young people and this year was no exception. Councillors attended all of the youth clubs that were being held during the week to chat to the young people, tell them what the Council does, answer their questions and listen to their views.

Displayed in the Council Chamber at this meeting were some of the worksheets the young people had prepared in advance on what they thought a Councillor looked like and what Councillors got up to and, if the Council had £5000 available to spend in their area, how the young people thought it would best be spent. The Lord Mayor said that these sheets were very good and encouraged all members to have a look.

A summary of all the suggestions made by the young people would be available on the Councillors intranet very soon. The Lord Mayor would like to record the Council's appreciation of the young people themselves for welcoming Councillors into their clubs; the Norfolk County Council Youth Service for the work they did with the young people in advance and on the night and, of course, to all the Councillors who took part.

2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Sorrel Jones to the Leader of the Council:-

'I am asking in relation to the proposed development of Norwich airport.

Firstly, I am a little unclear as to how exactly this motion will manifest itself in terms of developments at the airport, will we see creation of employment? Increased air traffic? Will more airlines use the airport and will more passengers come through it in the future?

Additionally, I would like to know in what way the proposal is affected by the U.K.'s obligations relating to the reduction of Carbon dioxide emissions.

Finally, is airport expansion in general economically sound in the long-term? I am concerned that factors such as fuel prices, and the recent problems experienced by airlines and airports in attracting enough passengers to generate profit.'

Christopher Keene to the Leader of the Council:-

'If the motion on the agenda is passed it will encourage tourists to engage in behaviour which will result in the death of millions, if not billions, of people in the future by expanding Norwich airport?

Our balance of payments would be made worse and it would harm Norfolk's tourist industry by encouraging people to spend their money abroad instead of at home.

Does the Leader of the Council agree?'

Mark Champion to the Leader of the Council:-

'Approximately how much is the City Council's share in Norwich Airport currently worth, and what income did this share generate in the last financial year?'

Jennifer Parkhouse to the Leader of the Council:-

"I understand that a motion is on the agenda for this evening's meeting asking the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport asking how the Government can help regional airports such as Norwich and write to the Managing Director of Norwich International Airport to offer the support of the Council to consider the best

way of helping the future development of Norwich International Airport. On behalf of Norwich and Norfolk Friends of the Earth, I have a question for the Leader of the Council:

After much trawling of Norwich City Council's website, I eventually found a page under the heading of Council Services entitled Climate Change. To quote just one or two lines, it is stated that "The global challenge of climate change is significant and requires a 'decarbonisation' of the economy and a move away from the use of fossil fuels" also that "The government has set challenging targets to reduce carbon emissions by at least 60% by 2050". The IT people will now need to change that to 80% by 2050, following last week's announcement by the Government.

Although I found no mention of it on the website, I believe the City Council has a Climate Change Panel and I hope the issue of further development and expansion of Norwich Airport will appear on its agenda, if it hasn't already.

My question is, how can the Council possibly endorse this motion with its direct and obvious links with accelerating climate change and making it surely impossible for the Government to reach its target, remembering that this region will be one of the first and most adversely areas affected by rising sea levels?"

Kerry Lane to the Leader of the Council:-

'Is the opportunity cost of developing the airport being fully considered, would the benefits not be greater if the money was spent on developing our rail links instead, so not contributing too much to our carbon emissions while increasing Norwich's competitiveness?'

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council's reply:-

'As I have had five questions lodged on broadly the same topic I hope the questioners will forgive me for providing a composite answer. I hope this may give them more information and a wider perspective as well as addressing the specific issues their individual questions raise.

The airport is now 80% owned by Omniport with the remaining 20% of shares owned by the County Council (12%) and City Council (8%). In response to Mark Champion, the value of our shares is shown in our accounts at £824,000, although I must stress that is the 'book' value rather than a market price. No dividend was paid last year. The sale of the airport some years ago was driven by the need to invest to an extent the council's could not afford and part of the sale terms was an agreement by Omniport to invest in the airport development. They have exceeded that agreement. The councils have not invested any money in the airport since the sale and there are no plans to do so.

I would never predict the outcome of a discussion in Council but I hope that Council will agree with the sentiments of the motion before us tonight. The motion suggests broad support for the development of the airport, but those with concerns about the impact of the airport often make the mistake of narrowly focussing on passenger flights.

Whilst Norwich International Airport is an important interchange for leisure travel it also serves a very important service to business and educational institutions. It adds to accessibility and to the reputation of the city. Keeping the UEA developing as a world class university is helped by ease of access, businesses on the Norwich Research Park and the fifty or so companies with their world headquarters in Norwich might be less inclined to be here if there was no airport.

In fact the presence of the airport directly supports in the region of 2000 jobs. Aircraft maintenance supports many jobs with one employer alone having more than 400 employees. These jobs are in engineering – an industry where there are few jobs available in the area. So these jobs take on an added imperative.

To get the aircraft serviced they have to arrive and depart and of course an airfield is essential for that. There are a number of other businesses whose existence is dependent on the airfield and have nothing to do with tourism. The question that asks about generation of passengers sufficient to make a profit needs to appreciate that passengers per se are far from the whole story. More passengers and better use of existing flights would increase revenue, but so would further flights for non passenger related business purposes.

Maintaining a safe and compliant airfield is expensive as CAA quite properly keeps increasing the demands for safety improvements. There is a programme of work for the airport to comply with recent changes that will cost approaching £1m. Airports get their income from landing and take off fees as well as income from passenger spending in shops and concessions, rental of land and buildings on the airport and various other commercial activities. No matter how many flights take off and land the requirements for safety will be the same. That therefore means that in order to make the investment and make it viable there have to be sufficient aircraft movements. No aircraft no income - no income no airfield, and so no airfield and no jobs. Inward flights clearly do add to the business of the hospitality industry and I would like to see that increase.

As well as the threat to the 2,000 directly reliant jobs there is a multiplier effect and it is a conservative estimate to say that a further two or three times as many jobs depend on the money spent by those employed by or as a result of the airport. So in total in the region of 7,000 jobs are affected by the success of the airport plus an impossible to equate number of jobs that are influenced by the reputation of the city enhanced by ease of access through the airport.

I am not disputing the importance of flying to climate change, but I do know that the way to encourage people to change their behaviour is not by threatening the jobs, prosperity and reputation of the city. Whatever solution is to be found will have to be done with people and not to them.

Failure to support the development of the airport will jeopardise the economy and skill base of the city and this could not be a more inopportune moment. So the first concerns are to support airport development in order to protect where we are at the moment.

Sorrel Jones asks how the proposed development will manifest itself. It is difficult to be precise at this time. A masterplan for the airport has been in development for some time and it will be easier to predict when that work has been done. As the

airport is a commercial organisation it is not possible to reveal things that are commercially sensitive and as a minority shareholder the Council cannot dictate the commercial development of the airport business. As the planning authority for part of the airport site we act as the regulatory body. As a minority shareholder and as we are charged with trying to ensure the prosperity of the people of the city we have a wider view and influence.

However, taken with the rest of this answer I think it is clear that the major thrust is job protection and job creation. How airlines use the airport is a matter between the airport operators and the airlines. Clearly the airport has within its current size and planning permission considerable capacity to take more passengers and there have been no suggestions for significant expansion. The terminal has been recently completely revamped and can accommodate more passengers should the demand be there.

I rather get the impression that somebody has been encouraging those who have put down questions to believe that this motion would open a floodgate of expansion fuelled by Council coffers. If so then they have been deliberately misled. The motion asks for letters to the minister asking how they can help regional airports and to the managing director offering support, which we are already giving and have done for a very long time.

The balance between the economic interests of the city and the need to combat climate change is bound to be subject to fierce debate and I welcome that. To get people onside and help them to understand the reasons why they need to change their behaviour requires a dialogue and not threats. Some of the wording in the questions such as that from Christopher Keene will simply alienate those who we need to win support from.

The Climate Change Panel of the Council has no remit as Jennifer Parkhouse surmises. Their terms of reference relate to the Council's own processes and is essentially an internal mechanism for looking at our own impact and what we can do about it.

To reassure Kerry Lane, the two priorities being argued for most prominently as transport infrastructure improvements are improvements to the London to Norwich train line and the dualling of the final part of the A11 that Council discussed at its meeting last month. It is important that we make the best of all the transport access options to the city and promote clear alternatives to car use. We are not the transport authority for the area, but we use our influence and have taken a strong lead on, for instance, bus services. In my role as Chair of Regional Cities East I have been pushing the rail line improvements to the top of the agenda.

The majority of the members of this Council take their responsibilities both for the economic well being and climate change very seriously and work hard to deal with the inherent conflict that sometimes occurs between them. The airport is a critical factor in the economic well being of the city and we should continue to help it develop whilst staying mindful of the negative aspects.

Our preferred option is to work with government and the airport to encourage sustainable growth that can benefit the city, and to do this we need to be in a position of influence. We believe that the opportunity for the Council to influence the

airport to give more sustainable benefits is enhanced by taking a supportive stance, and that is reflected in the motion.

I hope I have covered all of the points in the questions. It is clear that if there is not investment and improvement in the airport it would ultimately become unviable. All the questioners have the opportunity to ask a supplementary question. Can I invite them in doing so to make it clear whether they would like to see Norwich airport close?’

Sorrel Jones said that the Leader talked about jobs at the University in his reply and asked, as a supplementary question, why efforts could not be concentrated on creating more jobs looking into renewable energy. **Steve Morphew** said that any new jobs would be welcome but not as a replacement for Airport jobs.

Mark Champion said, in response to the Leader of the Council's question, that he would not like to see the Airport close. However, according to CAA data the value of all airports had reduced and he queried why the Council did not review its investments and put more toward local transport. **Steve Morphew** said that the Council was continually reviewing its investments. The Council was not willing to dispose of this investment and would continue to support Norwich Airport.

Jennifer Parkhouse asked, as a supplementary question, how the Council could possibly have a Climate Change Panel whilst also promoting Norwich Airport as this was a nonsense. **Steve Morphew** disagreed. He said that the Climate Change Panel was not set up for that purpose. It was set up to ensure that the internal operation of the Council took into account environmental matters as far as possible. There was no suggestion that Norwich Airport would expand and that new runways would be built and suggested that all those expressing concern should keep a sense of proportion.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 30 September 2008, subject to paragraph 2 under question 15 of the appendix being amended to read "Councillor A Little asked a supplementary question, not Councillor Wright".

4. QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Lord Mayor advised members that 16 questions, including one urgent question, had been received of which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of Appendix 1 of the Council's Constitution. The questions were as follows:-

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| Question 1 | Councillors Samir Jeraj, Mary Cannell and Joyce Divers to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on the Council's financial investments. |
| Question 2 | Councillors Rupert Read to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on promoting cycling. |
| Question 3 | Councillors Tom Llewellyn to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on new planning legislation. |

- Question 4** Councillor Bob Gledhill to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services on multi-occupation wheelie bins.
- Question 5** Councillor Janet Bearman to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services on Bulky items.
- Question 6** Councillor John Wyatt to the Leader of the Council on the Speciality Market.
- Question 7** Councillor Evelyn Collishaw to the Executive Member for Resources and Governance on empty retail space.
- Question 8** Councillor Antony Little to the Leader of the Council on location of betting shops.
- Question 9** Councillor Niki George to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on adoption of housing areas.
- Question 10** Councillor John Fisher to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance regarding the Councils new telephone number.
- Question 11** Councillor Brian Watkins to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on the Council representation on the Citizens Advice Services' Board.
- Question 12** Councillor David Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services on drain cleaning.
- Question 13** Councillor Rosalind Wright to the Leader of the Council on business rate relief hardship fund.
- Question 14** Councillor Judith Lubbock to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on new council homes project.
- Question 15** Councillor Roy Blower to the Leader of the Council on Gurkha rights.
- Question 16** Councillor Antony Little to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on help for small businesses.

(Details of the questions and replies together with any supplementary questions and replies are attached at Appendix A to these minutes).

5. NORTHERN CITY CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN

Councillor Morrey moved and Councillor Morphew seconded the recommendations as set in the report of the Executive, including an amendment recommended by officers that the following wording, which was included in the attached Executive report, be added as a second recommendation –

“That the Director of Regeneration be delegated the power, if he thinks fit, to make technical changes to the document arising from the proposals or recommendations of a consultant employed to ensure that the plan meets the tests of the soundness required for Local Development Framework documents.”

With no member objecting, this amendment became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Holmes moved and Councillor Read seconded, the following amendment –

“To add, after... Secretary of State, the following –

“...with the exception of removing the gyratory system referred to in Policy MV1: Sustainable Transport and replacing it with the previously considered transport option that included part–pedestrianisation of St Augustines Street.”

With 13 voting in favour and 23 against, the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED, with 23 voting for, none against and 13 abstentions, -

- (1) to approve the northern city centre area action plan for consultation and subsequent submission of the draft plan to the Secretary of State;
- (2) to delegate to the Director of Regeneration, the power, if he thinks fit, to make technical changes to the document arising from the proposals or recommendations of a consultant employed to ensure that the plan meets the tests of soundness required for Local Development Framework documents.

6. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Councillor Driver moved and Councillor Ramsay seconded the recommendations motion as set in the report of the Constitution Working Party.

RESOLVED to adopt -

- (1) the revised Code of Governance, Appendix 20A of the Constitution;
- (2) (on the casting vote of the Chair) the procedures for the appointment of substitute members for committees and to amend Appendix 1 of the Constitution.

2 hours having passed since the start of the meeting, the Lord Mayor asked if any of the remaining items could be taken as unopposed business. Members agreed that item 7 below be taken as unopposed.

7. MOTION – MOBILITY BENEFITS FOR BLIND RESIDENTS OF NORWICH

“Council notes:

- Norfolk has 2565 registered blind residents, 80% of whom are Old Age Pensioners. This is the third highest total in the East of England.
- That blind people in Norwich experience significant barriers to independent mobility

- That blind people are often isolated and find it difficult to access basic services without mobility assistance, which is especially isolating in Norwich with many services located in the city centre
- That many blind residents in Norwich find it difficult to access Shops, Supermarkets, Doctors, Dentists and Community facilities and centres
- Our blind residents find it difficult to access many Council Services ranging from housing to voting without mobility support and face additional costs as a result, such as using taxis or private hire vehicles.

This Council Further Notes:

- That blind people are not entitled to the higher rate mobility component of disability living allowance
- Loss of usable sight clearly causes significant independent mobility problems and incurs significant additional and unmet costs

This Council Resolves to support the blind residents of Norwich by:

1. asking the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions, the Rt Hon. James Purnell MP, expressing these concerns
2. asking the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council to write to Dr Ian Gibson and Charles Clarke asking that they sign up to EDM number 1982
3. supporting the Royal National Institute of Blind People's (RNIB) campaign on securing the higher rate mobility component of DLA for blind people."

8. MOTION – NORWICH AIRPORT

Councillor A Little, moved and Councillor Fisher seconded the motion as set out on the agenda. Councillor A Little indicated that he was happy to accept the amendment moved by Councillor Watkins, to delete the word "development" from the second bullet point under "this Council believes:" and to replace the word "development" in resolution (2) with the word "viability".

With no member objecting, the amendment became part of the substantive motion.

RESOLVED, following a recorded vote, with 23 members voting in favour (Councillors Arthur, Banham, Blakeway, Blower, Bradford, Bremner, Cannell, Collishaw, Divers, Driver, Fairbairn, Fisher, George, Gerhawi, Lay, Little(A), Lubbock, Morphey, Morrey, Sands, Waters, Watkins and Wright) and 13 voting against (Councillors Bearman, Dylan, Gledhill, Holmes, Jago, Jeraj, Little(S), Llewellyn, Makoff, Offord, Ramsay, Read and Stephenson) with no abstentions –

“That Council notes:

- FlyBe has cancelled winter flights to some destinations during 08-09, and the subsequent loss of around 700 passengers (EDP, 23rd September 2008)
- The comments made by the Chief Operating Office of FlyBe saying that Norwich was finding attracting customers to Norwich Airport difficult because of the expansion of Stansted Airport (EDP, 16th September 2008)
- That the government has now given the go-ahead for the expansion of Stansted Airport (BBC, 9th October 2008)

This Council Believes:

- That Norwich International Airport is an important employer and a transport gateway that is vital for the City and for the region.
- That the Council, both as a shareholder and through its leadership role, should support the future of the airport.
- That Norwich International Airport faces great challenges as a result of Stansted’s future expansion.

This Council Resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to:

1. write to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask how the Government can now help regional airports such as Norwich.
2. write to the Managing Director of Norwich International Airport to offer the support of the City Council and then to consider the best way of helping the future viability of Norwich International Airport.”

3 hours having passed since the start of the meeting, members voted unanimously to adjourn immediately. The remaining business to be considered at the next Council meeting.

CHAIR

APPENDIX A

Questions to Executive Members and Chairs of Committees

Question 1

Councillor Samir Jeraj to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

'Given the current global economic situation, could more be done to ensure that Norwich City Council's investments and reserves are safe?'

Councillor Mary Cannell to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

'Could the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance explain what steps have been taken to protect the Council's financial position during the current banking crisis? '

Councillor Joyce Divers to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

'In view of the current economic crisis and its impact on councils and their investments, would the Executive Member list where the Council has investments and does he feel it would be wise to review these investments?'

Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-

'Can I thank colleagues for raising this issue in Full Council It allows me to reassure Councillors, and the citizens of Norwich that the City Council does not have any investments in Icelandic Banks. At any one time we will have between £30 and £50 million pounds invested and the interest received makes a contribution to our revenue budgets. In the last financial year, for example, the Council received £3,100,000 from such investments.

The Council is prudent in its investment strategy and spreads its investments across top rated institutions to spread the risk. Our investments are currently spread across 24 different financial institutions and we normally do not invest more than 5% of our funds in any one financial institution. Where the Council invests changes constantly but I can confirm that at present the investments are all in English Financial Institutions.'

Councillor Jeraj asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Council would be supporting the Local Government Association's call for an inquiry. **Councillor Waters** said that it would. However, he pointed out that if the Icelandic Banks had a Triple A rating at the time the investments were made it would be difficult to criticise. He said this highlighted the need for increased regulation in the financial sector to a similar level as the regulation for Local Government to ensure that it was open and transparent.

Councillor Cannell asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Executive member could give assurance that the rumour that Local Government Review would be postponed because of the credit crisis was not correct. **Councillor Waters** said the Council was a prudent and cautious Local Authority and therefore its financial assumptions for the preferred "doughnut" option were accurate and could be validated. He was confident that the credit crisis would have no effect and that Local Government Review would press ahead. He emphasised that a Greater Norwich Local Authority would be much better equipped to deal with a global financial crisis.

Councillor Divers asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Council would be informed there were problems with the English Financial Institutions in which the Council's Funds were invested. **Councillor Waters** gave assurance that the Council would not expose itself by putting "all its eggs in one basket" and the investments would continue to be monitored on a weekly basis.

Question 2

Councillor Rupert Read to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-

'Research commissioned by Transport for London in 2003 showed that following cycling training most people cycle more confidently, more regularly and over greater distances. Does the Council have any plans to promote cycling by supporting cycling training?'

Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-

'I support compulsory training for cyclists for the reasons you mention and also to try and get all cyclists to understand that there is a highway code that has to be obeyed by all road users including themselves.

The lead on this type of training would normally fall on a highway/education authority which locally is Norfolk County Council. At present the County Council has a wide ranging training programme for children aimed at years 4 and 6. They estimate that this year some 5000 Year 6 children will be trained with on-road skills and at this level the amount of training available is comfortably meeting demand from schools.

The County Council do not have an adult cycle training programme. This is simply because there is no evidence of demand. Where cyclists do ask for help it is usually either to do with mechanical issues or route guidance. The latter is provided in a number of ways and, in particular, through the development of company travel plans. In addition the City and County Councils have jointly published a map with recommended cycle routes in the City to assist cyclists in finding a route.

I would expect a Unitary Norwich Council to develop a plan for cycling training and to publicise it to try and get every cyclist to participate.'

Councillor Read disagreed that there was no demand for adult cycling training and asked whether, if provided with evidence, the Executive Member would take up the matter with Norfolk County Council. **Councillor Morrey** reminded Councillor Read that this was not a function delegated to the City Council. He would willingly pass any information on but pointed out that Green Group members could also pass it on themselves.

Question 3

Councillor Tom Llewellyn to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-

'When will the Council advertise to the public the new planning legislation regarding the paving of front gardens?'

Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-

'Officers have prepared an article on the national changes to Permitted Development Rights in relation to paving over gardens to go in the November issue of Citizen Magazine. In addition, an informal policy to guide local implementation of the policy change has been prepared and will be taken to Executive for consideration on 12 November 2008.'

Question 4

Councillor Bob Gledhill to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-

'The Council has recently been delivering black wheelie bins for residual waste to households in phase three of the alternate weekly collection scheme and it will soon be delivering blue wheelie bins for recycling to the same households. Residents and Green Councillors have been surprised that for houses divided into flats one black bin has been provided per flat without the residents having been asked whether they want that many. On many roads in the city this has resulted in front gardens being full of wheelie bins and residents are concerned that this problem will double when the blue bins are provided. Why haven't residents of houses of multiple occupation been consulted on how many bins they would like and can we be assured that they will be consulted before the blue bins are distributed?'

Councillor Brian Morrey's reply in the absence of Councillor Julie Brociek Coulton, Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-

'It is not always possible to contact every resident within HMO's and flats and experience shows that they are very unlikely to all agree on the same solution for waste and recycling issues. Solutions have to be devised according to the capacity of storage required for the number of dwellings. This capacity can be provided

through various sizes of bins and can result in individual standard 240 litre bins per dwelling, larger bulk bins or a combination of both.

Each location will require a solution based on experience of other similar situations, availability of suitable storage space and appropriate access for collection vehicles.

It is not always the case that such properties are given one bin per flat/bedsit though this is a workable and suitable solution in some cases. Officers have experience of properties where original solutions are later amended and developed over time – there are still changes ongoing from stages 1 and 2 – but also have experience of areas where residents are very keen on having their own bin rather than being asked to use shared facilities. There are also occasions where errors in data or in delivery have resulted in too many bins being delivered to some properties. These issues are resolved as soon as possible when they are brought to the attention of officers.

I have asked Officers to draw up a report on the situation with some suggested ways forward that the Waste Management Working Party can then consider and make recommendations to the Executive.'

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Gledhill, Councillor Morrey** confirmed that he was happy to ask officers whether it was possible to write to residents to ask them about their individual needs.

Question 5

Councillor Janet Bearman to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-

'Some items, such as radiators, can no longer be collected by the bulky item collection service. What advice are residents being given regarding what to do with these items?'

Councillor Brian Morrey's reply in the absence of Councillor Julie Brociek Coulton, Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-

'Residents are encouraged to think about re-use in the first instance – can the item you are disposing of be used by someone else? If so, a local charity such as the Norfolk Homemakers Project or the Freecycle service may be an option.

The bulky items service provided by the Council is for the collection of up to 3 items and for a charge of £15. The collection is available for items such as furniture and mattresses – things that you would normally take with you when moving house. It does not include items such as radiators, building waste or garden waste. For fridges and freezers the City Council provides a free collection service from domestic households.

Where items are not suitable for the bulky items service residents are advised that they should take them to the household waste recycling centre on Swanton Road. Alternatively it may be worth examining the small ads in local papers or contacting reclamation yards. Yellow pages will have details of local companies who may be willing to collect waste unsuitable for the Council's service.'

Councillor Bearman asked, as a supplementary question, when the rules had changed as she believed bulky items included radiators. **Councillor Morrey** said that the regulations were “murky” and he would ask officers to check.

Question 6

Councillor John Wyatt to the Leader of the Council:-

‘I am sure that the Leader will have seen the story in the EDP (headline of “City Hall blamed in food clash row”, 11 October 2008) in which the City Council was blamed for scheduling two events at the same time – the Speciality Market and the Norfolk Food Fair. Does the Leader think it is fair to blame the City Council for this and what considerations do the Council take into account when granting permission for large scale but similar events to go ahead?’

Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council’s reply:-

‘The Speciality Market has been operating in Norwich for many years and is an established event. It happens at the same time each year and we publicise the dates well in advance. This is the 3rd year of the Food Festival and it has never clashed before because it normally occurs later in the month. Organisations are entitled to run events on their own premises without seeking permission from the council, and indeed this is what VisitNorwich did with the Food Festival. It was after all held on private land.

Norwich City Council is the major public funder of VisitNorwich and so supports the Food Festival, so we were a little surprised to hear that despite our continued support we were being criticised in this way.

The Speciality Market is extremely popular and brings thousands of people into Norwich. I am sure in the end both complementary events capitalised on the increased footfall in the City over that weekend.’

Question 7

Councillor Evelyn Collishaw to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

‘Does the Executive Member have any details on how many square feet of:
(a) empty retail space and (b) empty office space there is currently in Norwich?’

Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance’s reply:-

‘There is only a broad view of availability within the Norwich area for a number of reasons. The first of these being that not all closed shops or offices are necessarily being marketed for sale or to let and hence do not appear in the figures. Some open for trading shops are on the market as the tenant seeks to dispose of their interest, perhaps because of relocation to an alternative unit in the City. The final key factor is that not all the stock potentially available is in a condition that makes it available for use in the short term.

Retail availability is traditionally by numbers of shop units available, rather than by floor space. This is because the sizes of shop units vary considerably and, therefore, a square feet figure does not determine whether there are a lot of small units available, or one or two large ones. The latest figure is that there are 60 shop units available in Norwich.

For office space there is about 210,000 square feet of prime space available and on the market. The office space available represents just under 10% of total stock.'

Councillor Collishaw asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Executive member considered the lack of information on empty retail and office space was satisfactory. **Councillor Waters** said that there was clearly movement in the market. However, many properties that appeared empty were waiting for the lease assignment this process to be complete. There was approximately 150,000 sq. ft. of retail space available in the City Centre. As well as the current available office space there was more office space coming onto the market soon. Norwich was performing reasonably well with less vacant space than many centres. However, the Council would continue to monitor the situation.

Question 8

Councillor Antony Little to the Leader of the Council:-

'Will the Leader of the Council contact Government Minister Gerry Sutcliffe MP to push for the case for local authorities to have the ability to decide on the location of betting shops?'

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council's reply:-

'Councillor A Little should be aware that we already have power to determine the location of betting shops under existing planning and gambling legislation. Subject to the Council's adopted Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 which was adopted by the Council on 28 November 2006, all applications for betting shops are decided on the basis of:

- any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission;
- any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;
- the licensing objectives; and
- the Authority's statement of licensing policy.'

Councillor A Little said that betting shops were a problem in certain areas and the guidance did not allow the feelings of communities to influence decisions. There were strict guidelines which did not allow Councillors to refuse applications for betting shops in inappropriate locations. Would the Leader of the Council join other Leaders through the Local Government Association to encourage change to allow this. **Councillor Morpew** said his instinct was to support this but he would need to look into the matter further.

Question 9

Councillor Niki George to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-

'Does the Council have a policy on how long it will give developers before action is taken to force them to bring new housing areas up to an adoptable standard?'

Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-

'The City Council does not have an express policy on how long it will give developers to bring a new road up to adoptable standard - it depends on the individual circumstances of each case.

It may be helpful if I may give you a brief overview of the adoption process. When a new road is to be built the developer will enter into what is called a Section 38 agreement with the City Council. The developer submits plans of the proposed new road and a bond to cover the cost of building that road. Once the City Council is satisfied that the road has been built to an adoptable standard an interim certificate of adoption is issued and 90% of that bond is refunded. If after a year there have been no problems or defects with the road the remainder of the bond is released, a final adoption certificate is issued and the road becomes public highway.

The bond is in place so that if the developer goes into liquidation the City Council will be able to complete the road. In very exceptional circumstances, if the developer has made it clear that they have no intention of completing the works; the Council may use the bond to fund the necessary works.

Most developers are keen to have their roads adopted as soon as possible because until the final certificate has been issued they remain legally liable for the road.

I am assuming Councillor George has the on-going situation at Draper Way and Weatherby Close in Bowthorpe in mind when asking this question. This development has yet to have the interim certificate issued due to problems with the street lighting and weed growth. City Council officers met with the developers last month to agree the work that is required to bring the Close up to an adoptable standard and they are confident that the work will be undertaken within the next few months. If Councillor George meant the above two areas of Bowthorpe when asking his question it would have been helpful if he had asked directly then I may have been able to deal with it more fully in my answer.'

Question 10

Councillor John Fisher to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

'Now the new council telephone number has been in use for nearly 4 months, can the Executive Member give us an update on how this is working? Can he say why the service to the public has not improved as residents still contact me to complain at not being able to reach City Hall staff.

Why is the new councillor dedicated number not provided with an answering service, given the occasions when it isn't answered? In terms of improving excellence what has the change in telephone numbers achieved?'

Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-

Since 1 July when the new number went live the service delivered to callers has been significantly improved with average waiting times for July of 1 minute 33 seconds, August of 1 minute 48 seconds and September of 1 minute 37 seconds. Information available from our new system shows that more people are able to get through to our Customer Service Advisors the first time they call. At peak times between 9 a.m. and 12 noon people may experience longer delays, but we also know that there are times during the day that people do not wait at all.

As part of the overall telephone improvement programme the Customer Contact Team are looking at ways in which they can resource more effectively the peaks around service requests. We continue to recruit staff to work at times and days of peak workload and have extended the total lunch period to ensure we have the minimum number of staff having a break at any one time. We have a modular training programme designed to support the new telephony system which enables new team members to be operational much faster than in the past and ensures that they are trained to deal specifically with calls on the busiest lines. We are also looking to provide queue messages and the choice to leave a message if you do not want to wait, to speak to an advisor or to self serve.

The councillor hotline number of 212613 is not a dedicated line just for councillors but is used by other internal customers. The hotline which was set up from 1 July 2008 is a 'pilot'. Councillors have been given access to this so for emergency enquiries they can call the Customer Contact Service direct. Councillors should put normal enquiries through the e-mail procedure. As somebody calling this hotline would generally want someone to deal with an issue quickly, this number is covered at all times between 8am – 6pm. We will also set up Voicemail as a back-up. We know from feedback received that the level of service in the past has not been of the standard we would expect. However, procedures have been tightened up to ensure that a member of the Customer Contact Team is answering this line at all times. Any problems or feedback that could help us improve the service we provide would be appreciated.

The change in telephone number has achieved significant improvements in our ability to answer more calls than before, improve average waiting times, increase the percentage of calls answered without transferring and enabled staff to be trained on specific service areas to ensure that requests get to the right person first time who has the knowledge and skills to deal with that enquiry.

The performance data for the first two quarters of this year are given below –

	Q1 – Apr – Jun (Pre new number)	Q2 – Jul – Sept (new Number live)
Calls answered by advisor	47%	83%
Calls answered within 120 seconds	65%	71%
Ave answer delay	114 secs	101 secs

Councillor Fisher asked, as a supplementary question, whether there could be a dedicated line for Councillors with an answer phone. **Councillor Waters** said that **Councillors** should recognise that this was always work in progress and he welcomed feedback on suggested improvements which would be considered.

Question 11

Councillor Brian Watkins to the Leader of the Council:-

‘Would the Leader explain what support the Council gives the Norwich Citizens Advice Bureau and, in the light of this support, why the Council has no representation on the CAB Board?’

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council’s reply:-

‘The City Council gives the CAB £55,216 per year. We do not make it a stipulation of any grant that we have a member on the board and nor would we want to as that would be inappropriate. Councillor Watkins, along with all Group Leaders, was consulted on the list of which councillor sits on which organisation and that list came to Council on 22 July 2008. Why didn’t you mention it then?’

Councillor Watkins asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Leader of the Council, with the benefit of hindsight, considered it would be appropriate to have a representative on the CAB. If not a member could the Council have an officer appointed on the Board. **Councillor Morpew** said the lack of representation was not a reflection on the work of the CAB. He paid tribute to the work of that organisation. However, he had not heard an argument as to why it was so important to have someone on the Board. The Council was gradually rethinking its representation on outside bodies and he would be happy to discuss this with other Group Leaders as part of that discussion.

Question 12

Councillor David Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-

‘Could the Council review the system of cleaning street drains? It is noticeable that many street drains are full of grit and soil, and on every rainy day, it is easy to find drains that flood over and are not carrying the water away. Would it be possible to

have a special response unit of drain cleaners who can respond immediately to information rather than relying on the routine cleaning programme?’

Councillor Brian Morrey’s reply in the absence of Councillor Julie Brociek Coulton, Executive Member for Customer Care and Residents Services:-

‘The Contract specifies that the contractor should keep the gulleys free-flowing and, as such, CityCare do provide a response unit. Whenever gulleys are reported as blocked the routine cleaning programme is suspended so that the appropriate vehicle can attend to the problem gulley and clear the blockage. This should occur within 24 hours of the problem being reported.

Performance in this area is improving since control of the service switched to the dedicated Contract Management Team in Citizen Services. Amongst other improvements this change has led to CityCare replacing a vehicle that was subject to repeated mechanical failings and a backlog of programmed work is now being cleared. This is something that can be looked at when drawing up the specifications ready for the re-let of the contract’.

Councillor Fairbairn asked, as a supplementary question, whether it would be possible to have a small unit to tackle single emergencies. **Councillor Morrey** said no, not at the present time. It would be looked at as part of the re-let of the CityCare contract.

Question 13

Councillor Rosalind Wright to the Leader of the Council:-

‘Will the Leader join me in signing the Federation of Small Business petition ‘Keep Trade Local’ and, in the light of this, would he outline how the Council promotes its business rate relief hardship fund and what the take-up of this fund has been?’

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council’s reply:-

‘Norwich City Council works closely with FSB who are active members of Norwich Economy Round Table and City of Norwich Partnership.

The Council would strongly support the spirit of the Federation of Small Businesses campaign Keep Trade Local. This campaign has only recently been brought to the Council’s attention and it will require further exploration before I can give you an answer about whether it is appropriate for local authorities in general, and Norwich City Council in particular to become signatories.

What I can say is that supporting the local economy through encouraging local purchasing and procurement has been a key strand of the Council’s economic development activity for some time. It was a major component in the Council’s successful bid for Local Enterprise Growth Initiative funding.

This has resulted in support for Buy Local, a very successful campaign and membership organisation developed in partnership by the Federation of Small Businesses and other partners with support from the LEGI and council officers.

Through the LEGI programme, we have also commissioned a Local Procurement Initiative which has been running during 2008. 54 Norwich based businesses with over 200 employees were contacted and of these 29 agreed to provide information on the extent to which they put goods and services locally. Of these 23 were private sector organisations and 6 were public sector organisations. Discussions were held with them about their purchasing and procurement policies with advice offered about the ways in which they could place more of their business locally. Subsequently a workshop was held for purchasing and procurement officers to provide further information and support.

A report outlining this initiative "Doing Business in Norwich" was at the time placed in each Member Information Room and I have ensured that a fresh supply of reports have been distributed.

Norwich City Council's Head of Procurement has been involved in the development and scoping of this work and engaged in reviewing council policies in relation to purchasing and procurement.

Both small and large businesses have their part to play in keeping the local economy buoyant. While large businesses and public sector organisations may be constrained by legislation or company headquarters policy regarding how and where they purchase, most have the flexibility to place more of their purchasing within the local economy.

Small businesses are more likely to source and trade locally. Norwich is fortunate in having a wealth of small businesses, for instance in the independent retail sector.

The Buy Local and Procurement Initiatives are significant contributions to the FSB's campaign to Keep Trade Local. These have been designed to complement business to business activity undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce and local purchasing initiatives such as Produced in Norfolk.

All this work is based on what the New Economics Foundation calls the 'local multiplier effect'. A pound coming into the economy can be spent elsewhere and lost to the economy immediately or it can circulate within local businesses a number of times, multiplying the benefit of that pound each time it is spent. This is the driving principle behind the City Council's work on local purchasing and procurement, which is so vital to keeping the life blood of the local economy flowing.

Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 allows the Council to consider granting hardship relief to business ratepayers. The criteria for the grant of such relief are as follows: -

- the ratepayer would sustain hardship if the authority did not do so; and
- it is reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of persons liable to pay council tax set by it.

The scheme is not promoted but if businesses enquire about support they will be advised this is available. We receive very few applications for this.'

Question 14

Councillor Judith Lubbock to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

'In a 'Revenue Budget Monitoring 08/09' report to the Executive on 17 September there is a statement 'New council homes project on hold'.

Please could the Executive Member explain which project to build new council homes is on hold and why and what expenditure has been spent on this project?'

(The statement can be found in table 2 entitled General Fund, under heading Strategic Housing.)

Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-

'I would like to thank Councillor Lubbock for her question. The language in the 'Revenue Budget Monitoring report' is rather more passive in tone than intended. The facts are as follows:

On 19 July 2007, Norwich City Council received confirmation from the Housing Corporation that we had pre-qualified for the 2008 -11 National Affordable Housing Programme.

This meant that Norwich City Council is among the approximately 108 organisations in the Country eligible to bid for a share of the Housing Corporation's £8bn that it has to spend over the 2008-11 period on the construction of new affordable homes.

In order to gain a clearer picture of the different options available to achieve this Norwich City Council tendered for Legal and Financial advice and from this exercise Lawrence Graham solicitors and Tribal Treasury Services were appointed.

Lawrence Graham and Tribal Treasury Services have produced a report that showed how a potential Special Purpose Vehicle could be set-up to develop new council homes; however this only achieves some of the original aspirations for the project.

To this end officers are investigating further options as to how 'new council homes' could be delivered and, also, how Government are revising housing finance which should make the process easier.

The expenditure on the project to date stands at £17,500 for the consultant's time and report. The work to date on behalf of Norwich City Council has been carried out within existing officer resources.'

Councillor Lubbock asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Executive member considered spending £17.5k of tax payers money was money well spent for interpreting legislation. **Councillor Waters** said yes if it lead to more affordable housing for Norwich residents.

Question 15

Councillor Roy Blower to the Leader of the Council:-

'Reading Borough Council has written to all Councils asking them to support the Campaign for Gurkhas' rights.

In 2004 the Government changed immigration rules to allow Gurkhas who had served in the army for at least 4 years to settle in the UK with their families with full pension rights. However, this offer only extended to those that had been discharged after 1 July 1997. This has caused considerable hardship to Gurkhas and their families that have settled here having been discharged before then, as they have no right to remain in the UK.

Does the Leader of the Council agree that the Council should support the campaign to extend those rights to those Gurkhas that were discharged prior to 1 July 2007?'

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council's reply:-

'In recognition of the exceptional service that Gurkhas have given to the UK, I will write a letter of support to the Campaign for Gurkhas' rights and will also write to the Immigration Minister urging him to grant Gurkhas fast track eligibility for either the right to remain in the UK or citizenship.'

Question 16

Question relating to Urgent Matters (Appendix 1, Rule 12.3 (ii))

The following question relating to urgent matters was taken with the consent of the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance.

Councillor Antony Little to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

'In the light of the current economic situation, would the Leader of the Council consider Norwich City Council taking the lead as a "good payer" by reducing the time taken to pay its invoices from 30 days to 20 days as a temporary way of helping local businesses in difficult times?'

Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-

'This is a complex area and the Council pays a variety of businesses of differing sizes that will have differing levels of exposure to the "credit crunch". A blanket change to 20 days from 30 days will not necessary meet the desired outcome.

We have flexibility within the existing system and whilst 30 days are the standard terms some contracts do have reduced payments terms. Where a supplier may have difficulty with our 30 day payment terms we will negotiate reduced payment terms.

As part of the Councils wider strategy to ensure a vibrant local economy we constantly review payment terms to ensure that businesses are not disadvantaged. Any supplier who has difficulty with their existing terms should contact the Council and these terms will be reviewed.'

Councillor A Little said that the idea of cutting time for invoices to be paid was being pursued by the Local Government Association. He asked, as a supplementary question, what else the Council could do to help local small businesses. **Councillor Morphew** said that the definition of a small business was very wide. It was anything from 1/2 people up to 249 people! The Council already has a good approach to helping small businesses and recognised their cash flow issues. It has turned around invoices in less than 7 days in some special circumstances. The Council was continually looking at its operation to ensure that it did not hamper business and was looking at the use of purchasing cards that could allow a turn around of payment in 4 days.