



Council

29 September 2015

Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 1

Councillor Boswell to ask the leader of the council:

“Will the Leader provide a statement on the latest situation with respect to the Devolution Deal being discussed across the Norfolk and Suffolk area and how it will affect the existing political structures in the Greater Norwich area.”

Councillor Waters, leader of the council’s response:

“As Councillor Boswell knows, I, as leader of the city council, along with all of the other Norfolk leaders submitted an expression of interest to the government on 4 September 2015. Since then there have been a number of discussions with the leaders of Suffolk councils. It is still very early days and we have not at the time of writing, had any feedback from the government about which of our proposals might find favour with the government and which are likely to be ruled out of play.

In the areas where a devolution deal has been accepted and depending upon the nature of the deal agreed, councils have come together on an equal basis to form a combined authority. The combined authority has powers and resources vested in it by the government and it in turn devolves powers and resources to sub entities which could for example be a joint committee of a smaller number of councils.

The nature of the governance which would eventually be proposed would need to be appropriate to the area of service involved. For example, if skills money was devolved to the combined authority, it would be appropriate and desirable to devolve that to an area like greater Norwich so that the skills approaches would be tailored to the needs of businesses and individuals in the Greater Norwich area.

As I suggested earlier, it is very early days and feedback is needed from the government before more work is done on the details of a deal which would include the appropriate governance arrangements. Council would of course have every opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the components of any proposed detailed bid.

An elected Mayor is unlikely to be acceptable to this or any of the other councils in Norfolk.”

Question 2

Councillor Neale to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

“Could the cabinet member responsible for the Pink Pedalways project please explain why the funding assessment for the Avenues section was at least £200k short of what was required for this section?”

The original scheme, between Bluebell Road and Colman Road, had dedicated cycle lanes segregated from the full width road for motorised traffic with priority for cyclist at road junctions. The original scheme would have encouraged cyclist to use the route with speed and safety and bring us one small step closer to what is fairly standard western European cycling provision.

The scheme going forward is so diluted to a pale image of what was proposed it will be unlikely to meet the much heralded benefits envisaged.”

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

“The Pink Pedalway is only part of a fantastic series of positive improvements to the City's and Greater Norwich's Highways. There were improvements before this but the Pink Pedalway was Norwich at its best, always trying to get Government and other money in, to help the economy, help cyclist, help pedestrians, and even help vehicles, by improving safety, and the environment.

The original submission to the Department for Transport funding anticipated that we would require £850k to improve safety at the Colman Road / The Avenues junction, improve the cycling facilities along The Avenues between Bluebell Road and Recreation Road and enhance the verges on The Avenues between Bluebell Road and Colman Road. The budget figure in the funding application was an estimate, and was made before there had been any design work or public consultation on the scheme. This is often the case when challenge funding opportunities arise with very little time to put together an application.

At the time the bid was put together officers anticipated that improvements for cyclists on the section of The Avenues between Bluebell Road and Colman Road could be achieved by introducing a road closure, which would have meant that there would be no need to provide dedicated facilities for cyclists as traffic would be dramatically reduced. However it was clear from the public consultation that a road closure was unacceptable to local people, especially there were long periods during the day, and during the year, when there was little traffic. Furthermore, by this time First had introduced a frequent bus service along The Avenues.

For these reasons an option that catered for traffic had to be adopted, hence the hybrid cycle lane was proposed. This was put forward in good faith, however, it was only when numerous trial holes were dug and the detailed construction plans were drawn up that the true scale of the mitigation works required to prevent tree root damage and the consequent damage to tree

health was fully appreciated and that costs started to escalate to some £200,000 above budget.

Given this potential for affecting the trees, together with the escalating costs, it was decided that the tracks should be omitted. Furthermore, the proximity of the path to tree roots and difficulties in achieving a sufficient depth of construction would have resulted in the hybrid paths becoming an expensive maintenance liability due to damage caused by vehicle over-running and the tree roots.

Although we are all disappointed that it has not been possible to build the hybrid tracks I have to disagree that the scheme that is being implemented is a pale image of what was originally approved. The Colman Road junction – the worst site for cycle accidents in the city – has been made safer and more convenient for cyclists and pedestrians by providing a new pedestrian crossing, enlarged waiting boxes for cyclists and early start signals for cyclists. These signals are some of the first of their type in the country and we are considered as pioneers for introducing them.

The on carriageway cycle lanes on the main section of the Avenues are combined with raised tables and coloured markings at side routes. They give more visual priority for cyclists and pedestrians by slowing vehicles approaching The Avenues on the side roads. Previously a number of cyclists had been hit by cars emerging from George Borrow Road.

I am also delighted that after many years we have effective traffic calming on The Avenues with the introduction of the new sinusoidal speed humps, which are very effectively in slowing vehicles down.

Saying all that, I do acknowledge that we must learn lessons from The Avenues and the rest of Push the Pedalways; not least as the window available to spend such funds is so short given the level of expenditure involved. I am confident that as we move on to implementing the blue and yellow pedalways we shall be far more robust in ensuring that anything we consult on is affordable and deliverable so that we do not disappoint people by raising their expectations too high”

Question 3

Councillor Haynes to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

“At the full council meeting in June we received a public question on the issue of climate change and the upcoming international climate negotiations. We also unanimously passed a motion, which calls on the council to use its means of communication to create awareness for the COP21 (the climate negotiations in December). We are now at the end of September, the date of the climate negotiations is only two months away, the latest CITIZEN has gone out to households and so far, to my knowledge, there has been no mentioning of the COP21, let alone any serious attempt to create awareness. Even the council homepage has not been updated. Could the cabinet member for the environment please clarify, why the agreed actions have not been taken?”

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

"Our small environmental team is delivering the agreed costed work programme as set out in the Environmental strategy. This includes:

- Cosy City;
- Big Switch;
- Solar Together;
- Winter Wellbeing;

and a number of other tasks over the next few months. Most are practical carbon reduction activities. The council will also run another One Planet Norwich Event on the 12/13 March 2016.

All of these are of major importance to the people of the City, and I hope you agree, and would not want to stop these activities and the work on practical carbon reduction in the Council.

Because of these priorities it has not been possible to consider other requests for resources"

Question 4

Councillor Grahame to ask the leader of the council:

"Now that both the national leaders (Jeremy Corbyn and Natalie Bennett) of the two largest party groups in this chamber are opposed to the renewal of Trident, and the City is at least nominally a member of the Mayors for Peace initiative, will the Council formally endorse the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision?"

Councillor Waters, leader of the council's response:

"As Councillor Grahame will know, our Lord Mayors, throughout their term in office, are politically neutral.

What I can assure you of is that my colleagues, as part of a national Labour party debate, and I will be making our individual contributions on this important issue."

Question 5

Councillor Carlo to ask the leader of the council.

"If Norwich City Council had £10 million from the Community Infrastructure Levy to spend on community infrastructure in the City of Norwich, on what projects and measures would it spend the money?"

Councillor Waters, leader of the council's response:

"Your question is rather curiously framed as a hypothetical proposition. The council is already spending significant amounts of CIL income. I welcome your question because it provides me with an opportunity to summarise the benefits, over the past decade, which have flowed from the work undertaken by the Greater Norwich Growth Board and how CIL monies are invested.

The Greater Norwich area has a well-established and ambitious partnership, nearly 10 years old with a strong track record of joint working including the development and implementation of the Community Infrastructure levy (CiL). It is only one of 2 areas across the country to have agreed to pool CiL receipts across authorities. Greater Norwich has been identified as a main focus for growth in the East of England and the Greater Norwich Growth Board was established to oversee the delivery of the Greater Norwich City Deal which was agreed in December 2013. The city deal aims to accelerate growth in the area and provide the following outcomes:-

- 3,000 high value jobs by 2020 at the Norwich Research Park.
- 13,000 additional jobs across the Greater Norwich area by 2013 on top of joint core strategy targets
- Step change in housing delivery to 3,000 per annum by 2019
- 3,000 additional homes by 2026 in the North East growth triangle
- £100m additional private sector investment in business growth and
- £2.3bn additional private sector investment in housing

This programme is supported by strategic infrastructure investment of £440m to unlock housing growth and deliver the targets of 37,000 homes and 27,000 jobs by 2026. Delivery of the programme is supported by pooled CIL fund. The NDR is one of the priority infrastructure schemes that the Greater Norwich Authorities have agreed in delivering the growth in jobs and housing that has been identified in the City Deal

The infrastructure required to deliver growth to 2026 in greater Norwich is set out in the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP). This includes a range of projects in the City including green infrastructure, education, community facilities, and transportation including bus rapid transit, cycling and walking.

The CIL regulations require that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income is spent on infrastructure as defined by the Town and Country Planning Acts. In Norwich there are agreed processes for determining how CIL funding is spent.

In February 2014, the council approved the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) agreement and constitution. It also agreed to pool its CIL income (not including the neighbourhood element or the proportion retained to cover its administrative costs) across greater Norwich in an Infrastructure Investment Fund (IIF).

The spending of the IIF is currently agreed through a two stage process:

- the city council and other districts in greater Norwich each produce an annual business plan setting out projects (derived from the GNIP) on which funding from the IIF is required for the following financial year. The city's business plan is approved by cabinet and council;
- the 3 business plans are combined into an annual growth programme for greater Norwich which is approved by GNGB and subsequently the council's cabinet and council.

The current priorities, which are recommended for approval in the 2016-7-growth programme in the city, include contributions towards:

- public realm improvements in Golden Ball Street/ Westlegate
- the Heathgate element of the pink pedalway
- the completion of the pedestrian/ cycle link to complete the linkage from the city centre to the Deal Ground
- the Colney river crossing

The spending of the neighbourhood element of CIL that is retained by the city council is agreed through a process of engagement with local communities that was approved by the council in March 2014 and revised in July 2015. The projects on which funding is to be spent are also approved by the council. In 2015-6 funding was earmarked for projects including traffic calming at Britannia Road, improvements to the natural area at George Fox Way and provision of new street trees.”

Question 6

Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

“With the complexity and huge impact the Generation Park biomass burner will have on the future of the city, will the cabinet member support a call to the SoS for the planning application to be called in for a public enquiry to ensure that the right decision is made?”

And, Question 7

Councillor Brociek-Coulton to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

“With regards to Generation Park, it was recently suggested by Green Party councillors that the city council “do not have the necessary expertise to decide on a project of this complexity” and would prefer to defer such a decision to a planning inspector. Can the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development give his views on the importance of this local authority, through democratically elected members, deciding upon development and growth within Norwich?”

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response to both questions 6 and 7:

"As both questions from Councillors Price and Brociek-Coulton relate to the Generation Park proposals I will provide a single answer. However, before I do so I should stress that as there is a planning application currently being considered by both this authority and the Broads Authority, it is important the Council retains an open mind on the application at this stage and nothing I will say can indicate whether the application is likely to be approved or refused.

With regard to who should determine the application, it is a choice between the members of Norwich's and the BA's planning committees or the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Although the application is very significant in scale it is below the thresholds for national significance which would require its determination by the Secretary of State. As such it falls for the local planning authorities to determine unless the Secretary of State calls it in.

This is what local democracy is all about. Just because it is a large and complex application doesn't mean this responsibility should be shirked.

It is preferable that planning decisions affecting the people of Norwich are made by those who are democratically accountable to the people of Norwich. This will tend to maximise the weight that is given to views of local people through the consultation processes.

The Secretary of State can always "call-in" the application for determination. This is a judgement for him if he thinks the issues are of national importance. However, if the application is called in it will be determined via a public inquiry process rather than the relevant committees.

There are a number of key differences between Public Inquiry procedures and those associated with planning committees. It is far more difficult for the public to appear before public inquiries as they need to prepare proofs of evidence and subject themselves to cross examination. Because of this factor I am not convinced that the public inquiry process is any better than the standard planning process in terms of taking into account the views of local people. I think we should be making it as easy as possible for local people to have their say on the matters that affect them.

Finally, on the issue of expertise in order to deal with the issues, it is important to realise what the planning process is there to do. It is there to determine whether the proposed use is appropriate in the light of the development plan and other material planning considerations. Although material planning considerations can be broad ranging it is not the role of planning to set the precise levels of emissions that will be acceptable from facilities (it will require a permit from the Environment Agency before operation), set national energy policy or determine the merits of one technology over another. When it comes to expertise, extensive and detailed supporting material is required to be prepared to support the application, and this is subject to extensive consultation and checking. Where we do not possess the necessary expertise in-house to assess the material submitted we can and will commission expert advice to assist officers in dealing with the application."

Question 8

Councillor Sands (M) to ask the cabinet member for fairness and equality:

“Since the emergency budget in July, can the cabinet member for fairness and equality comment on its likely anticipated effects upon residents in Norwich?”

Councillor Thomas (Va), cabinet member for fairness and equality’s response:

“Since the emergency budget on 9 July, there has been increasing commentary on the overall impacts of the proposed changes to the welfare system.

The changes are many and varied and will impact on some of the poorest people in the country. The following is a summary of some of the main changes where residents will have money withdrawn that is currently paid to them. However, there are many others that will have an impact over time where for example new claimants will see a reduction in benefits or tax credits.

There will be a freeze on most working-age benefits, including tax credits and the Local Housing Allowance for 4 years from 2016-17.

From April 2016, the level of earnings at which a household’s tax credits and Universal Credit award starts to be withdrawn will be reduced from £6,420 to £3,850.

Support provided to families through tax credits will be limited to 2 children - any children born after April 2017 will not be eligible for further support

From April 2017, automatic entitlement to housing support for new claims in Universal Credit from 18-21 year olds who are out of work will be removed (exemptions will include vulnerable young people, those who may not be able to return home to live with their parents, and those who have been in work for 6 months prior to making a claim).

The cap on the total amount of benefits an out of work family can receive will be lowered from £26,000 to £20,000 outside of London.

Social housing tenants with household incomes of £30,000 and above outside of London will be required to “Pay to Stay”, by paying a market or near market rent for their accommodation.

A new *National Living Wage* (NLW) will be introduced for workers aged 25 and above, by introducing a new premium on top of the national minimum wage.

From April 2016, the new NLW will be set at £7.20 (a rise of 70p relative to the current NMW rate), and 50p above the NMW increase coming into effect in October 2015.

In this context of the council's approach to reduce the significant social financial and economic inequalities in the city, the impacts of the emergency budget are therefore best understood from how much money is being taken from some of the poorest people's pockets in Norwich.

Whilst the main headline was the announcement of a "national living wage" it is more accurately an increase in the national minimum wage and this will be by far offset from the significant changes to tax credits.

The changes that will vary from household to household and at this stage it is not totally clear what the full impacts will be. The complexity comes for those households whose income comes from a mixture of earnings and tax credits. However, the following is some examples of families who will lose money from the changes:

Numbers affected

- **11,000 families** were claiming tax credits in 2013-14 in Norwich, of which **7,400 were in work**.
- Approximately the third lowest-paid part-time resident workers (estimated to be 6,000 people) and lowest paid 10-20% of full time workers (estimated to be 3,500-7000 people) in Norwich earn less than £7.20/hour. It is not possible to say how many of those are over 25 and therefore will benefit from increase in National Minimum Wage (NMW).
- Approximately 100 households who are affected by the current benefit cap may be further affected by the new cap. An additional 500-700 households may come into scope for the new benefit cap, depending on their exact circumstances.
- Freezing of working-age benefits will affect all working age benefit claimants, which stood at **10,000 in May 2015**, as well as approximately **15,000 families claiming Child Benefit** (some of whom will be amongst the 10,000 working-age benefit claimants).
- The freeze of applicable amounts for HB and LHA for 4 years will impact on some of the around 18,000 claimants of those benefits in Norwich. Exact numbers are difficult to model. The estimated 2,700 tenants in private rented accommodation are more likely to be affected.
- The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimate that working-age benefits freeze means an average loss for families who are affected of £260 per year (or £280 per year for those in work).
- Those who are working and claiming tax credits will lose an average of just over £1,000 per year due to changes to work allowances (which equates to £7.4m in Norwich).
- Increase in national minimum wage will not compensate for tax credit changes (for example someone over 25 on current minimum wage

could be a partner of someone earning a large salary and still benefit from increase in NMW) – again check as some childless households on low incomes may benefit.

- Anyone already affected by the benefit cap will potentially lose a further £6,000 per year (at least up to the level of their HB), and those newly affected will lose varying amounts.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has indicated in its annual report published in July 2015, that nearly two-thirds of British children in poverty live in working families, which challenges the view that work is an automatic route out of poverty.

The IFS also indicates that:

- child poverty and inequality are set to rise as a consequence of the planned tax and benefit cuts
- recent declines in income inequality will be reversed,
- current static child poverty rates will begin to increase

The IFS research also states that:

- the planned rise in the minimum wage will be counter-balanced by cuts to benefits and tax credits, pushing up absolute poverty figures
- the top 1% of earners increased their share of household income from 5.7% in 1990 to 8.4% in 2007-08 and 8.3% in 2013-14
- Disabled people, lone parents and social housing renters all appeared to be hit by rising material deprivation, meaning that they were more likely than others to struggle with the cost of basic goods and services.

The changes from the already implemented welfare reform changes have taken considerable money out of the Norwich economy. By summer 2013 it is estimated that this figure was £11,000,000. Whilst it is too early to indicate what the impacts will be from the emergency budget, it is clear that more money will be lost from the economy.

In summary, the increasing levels of employment have masked increasing problems of in-work poverty something that has been a recurring issue in Norwich. Whilst the planned increase in the minimum wage will help, many low-income working families will still find themselves worse off due to tax-credit changes.”

Question 9

Councillor Bremner to ask the cabinet member for fairness and equality:

“Householders and businesses are once again getting the chance to save money on their energy bills this winter with the city council’s sixth tranche of Norwich Big Switch and Save. Can the cabinet member for fairness and equality comment on the impact and achievements Switch and Save has made since being first introduced?”

Councillor Thomas (Va), cabinet member for fairness and equality's response:

"Thank you for your timely question. With winter approaching our citizens will be thinking about energy bills and considering their affordability. Thankfully we are helping our citizens reduce their fuel bills via the switch and save.

We are currently running the sixth round of our successful collective energy switching scheme. Through the power of collective purchasing we work to secure the lowest energy prices for our registrants, therefore helping to reduce the cost of energy and offset rising energy prices. The previous round of Big Switch and Save has delivered average savings of £221 a year per household. This was a better saving than those available on online comparison websites.

In the last five tranches overall 9879 people registered for the Switch and Save. Norwich has repeatedly had the highest national conversion rates, with 1250 switchers in total. Overall the average saving per household is £180. This means Norwich residents have saved a total of £225,036.

If all residents took up the offered savings a total of at least £1,778,220 would be saved on energy bills by Norwich residents.

Norwich City Council has engaged with fuel poor households to ensure that they are aware of the Switch and Save. In tranche three we asked the residents questions to identify whether they belonged to an affordable warmth group. The results showed that two thirds of registrants belonged to one of these groups.

In addition to this, the small fee we receive from the Switch and Save goes back into affordable warmth work. This has been invaluable for vulnerable residents, as it has provided urgent heating need for them in the winter."

Question 10

Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:

"Figures announced by Department for Communities and Local Government show that more than 400 Norwich City Council homes have been sold under the Right to Buy scheme since 2012-13, with few new properties being built to replace them. Can the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing give her comments on the impact of such losses and the failure of the previous Coalition government, and the current one, to support social housing in the city?"

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:

"To understand the issue there is a great deal of background information which is useful.

From 2012 councils were given the opportunity to use Right to buy (RTB) receipts to help finance replacement homes provided they were spent within three years of receipt. RTB receipts can only be used to fund up to 30% of expenditure on new dwellings, but not in conjunction with other receipts or grants totalling above 30% of expenditure. The remaining 70% was expected to be funded through borrowing within the Housing Revenue Account.

With local authority rents on average around 40% less than market rents, this implies that, provided the average discount to Right to Buy purchasers does not exceed roughly 40%, a council's Housing Revenue Account should not be adversely affected by the sale of dwellings.

If discounts are above this amount, however, receipts will be insufficient to fully compensate for the future loss of rent income from the sold dwellings, leaving the remaining tenants to bear an increasing share of costs.

Many councils have reported difficulties in achieving one-for-one replacement of homes sold under the reinvigorated Right to Buy. The reasons are clear:

- There will always be a lag between selling properties, pooling receipts and then designing and implementing replacement homes, the restriction of spending receipts within 3 years can therefore prove a challenge for councils;
- With the average discount on recent Right to Buy sales exceeding 50%, the net receipt is usually insufficient, once administration costs and the outstanding debt on the property have been paid, to meet 30% of the costs of a replacement home, particularly in areas where the market value of council dwellings is less than the cost of building new ones;
- Even where councils can fund 30% of the cost of a replacement, they may have difficulties borrowing the remaining 70% within the debt caps imposed as part of the self-financing settlement.

RTB receipts not utilised within three years have to be repaid to Government with interest. In order to retain any receipts within Norwich, the October meeting of cabinet will be considering a report to allow the council to grant fund local Registered Providers in addition to supporting our own new build programme.

Whilst the delivery of 17 replacement homes has been modest to date the Council will take handover of an additional 14 social rented dwellings in 2016 at the Brazen Gate site. It has recently secured planning permission, and will move shortly to delivery over the next few years, for the following schemes as well:

- 172 new homes on Three Score of which 48 will be for social rent;
- 10 social rented flats on Hansard Close; and
- 2 social rented family houses at Riley Close.

In addition there is an application awaiting consideration by planning committee in October for 105 dwellings at Goldsmith Street which, if approved, would move swiftly to delivery. The council secured an uplift in our

HRA borrowing cap of £6.8m through the government's Local Growth Fund to support delivery of this site, although this means we are unable to use RTB replacement receipts on this element.

Following the emergency budget the government's priorities for social housing are to reduce the budget deficit and to encourage home ownership. To this end four policy 'reforms' are planned in the next couple of years which will further have an impact on the council's ability to provide replacement homes:

1% rent reduction for all social tenants from 2016/17 for four years, despite only agreeing a ten year settlement of rent increasing of the Consumer Prices Index plus 1% in 2015/16. The effect of this is a significant cut in income to the thirty year Housing Revenue Account business plan which will have repercussions for the maintenance and improvement of tenant's homes as well as the council's new build ambitions.

Pay to stay. It is proposed that all council tenant households earning over £30,000 per year will have to pay an affordable rent as opposed to a social housing rent. Nationally on average this will be an additional £35 to £40 per week with the additional rent pooled by central Government.

Sale of high value voids. The government is proposing that all local authorities with housing stock should support the cost of extending the right to buy to housing association tenants by selling high value voids. The detail is still being worked through but the final legislation will undoubtedly result in stock and income loss for all authorities as well as reduced capital for our own new build programme.

Fixed term tenancies. Proposals are expected in the housing bill due in autumn to end lifetime secure tenancies for all **new** tenants. Tenants will be offered a fixed term tenancy, possibly 5 years, at the end of which a review will be carried by the council to assess the need for the accommodation tenants currently occupy. It is thought the review will cover current income / behaviour and suitability of the property for the household (i.e. is it under/over occupied.)

The Conservatives claim that they have a good record on building affordable housing, but I have to disagree. Nationally it is said that social homebuilding is at its lowest for over two decades and they have failed to replace homes one for one through the Right to Buy, only replacing one for every nine sold.

The Conservatives said they would "get Britain building". However, David Cameron has led the government that built the fewest homes in peacetime history since the 1920s when David Lloyd George was Prime Minister.

This is quite simply not acceptable."

Question 11

Councillor Ryan to ask the cabinet member for fairness and equality:

“Norwich Living Wage week will shortly begin once again. Can the Cabinet Member for Fairness and Equality comment on the support and assistance provided by the council to the successful Norwich Living Wage Group and the opportunities for members of the public and other organisations to become involved in the activities being organised?”

Councillor Thomas (Va), cabinet member for fairness and equality’s response:

“The Living Wage is a wage that pays enough for workers to have the opportunities and choices necessary to properly participate in society. It is higher than the national minimum wage. The current UK Living Wage is £7.85 per hour (outside of London) whereas the national minimum wage for those over 21 is £6.50. The Living Wage rate for 2015 will be announced on Monday 2 November.

Receiving the Living Wage does not mean living a life of luxury. It means earning enough to make sure people can feed their children the recommended five-a-day of fresh fruit and vegetables. It means being able to afford to pay for a TV licence and other bills. And it means earning enough to be able to put aside a little money for a rainy day.

Living Wage Norwich was formed in 2014 to campaign to help make Norwich a city where everyone in work receives a Living Wage and to promote the benefits of a living wage. The group draws its supporters from all sectors including employers, trade unions and churches.

Last year the city council organised and led a successful programme of events around the city for living wage Week. This involved close co-operation with Norwich Living wage group, employers and trade unions.

In order to support its work the city council provided a community grant to help the group establish and cover its costs.

A similar programme of events will be held in Living Wage week in November, and discussions are progressing with Living Wage Norwich and other organisations to develop a programme of events that will highlight the value and benefits of a living wage.”

Question 12

Councillor Maxwell to ask the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:

“Can the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing update council on the successes and achievements delivered by the HandyVan scheme, launched in January?”

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:

"Late last year the city council secured funding through Norfolk County Council's strong and wellbeing fund to deliver a handyperson service for the over 65s. The scheme is designed to deliver small repairs and 'odd jobs' around the home for older or vulnerable people who may find it difficult to carry out these jobs for themselves. Cotman Housing Association was selected through a tender process to deliver the handyperson service and the service started in January of this year.

Since the service started the Handyvan has completed 222 jobs at people's homes, 179 of which were grant funded for people in receipt of council tax reduction. 43 jobs were for people paying for the service generating £852 worth of income which is recycled back into the scheme.

On average people can expect the Handyvan to be at their homes in less than 2 weeks of initial contact. Works are categorized and prioritised with things that most affect someone's living conditions or safety being dealt with the quickest.

Seventy satisfaction questionnaires have been returned to date and the feedback has been exceptionally positive:

- All respondents have said that the works were carried out to a good standard;
- 85% of respondents found the service to be "excellent" and 11% found the service to be "good";
- 97% of users would use the service again and also 97% would recommend the service; and
- The vast majority of respondents feel happier, more secure and can move around more easily in their homes. They have stated they can now manage their day to day tasks and also they now know where to go if they need help."