



MINUTES

COUNCIL

7.30 p.m. – 11.30 p.m.

28 September 2010

Present: Councillor Dylan (Lord Mayor), Councillors Altman, Arthur, Banham, Blower, Bradford, Bremner, Brociek-Coulton, Collishaw, Driver, Fairbairn, Fisher, Gee, George, Gihawi, Gledhill, Grahame, Haynes, Holmes, Hooke, Jeraj, Little, Lubbock, Makoff, Morphew, Offord, Ramsay, Read, Sands, Stephenson, Storie, Thomas, Waters, Westmacott, Wiltshire, Wright(R) and Wright(J)

Apologies: Councillors Lay and MacDonald

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor said that since the last meeting he had appeared on the See/Hear television programme, which linked into the civic charity, attended Pride and supported the East Coast Truckers, an example of people doing excellent work to support others less fortunate than themselves. He had also taken part in events to celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

He announced that Norwich City Council was a finalist in the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) awards for public/public partnership of the year for the partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency, which is delivering the War Memorial, Skate Park and the windows upgrade programme.

The Lord Mayor then invited Councillor Brociek-Coulton to give an update on the achievement of the Friends of Norwich in Bloom in the Britain in Bloom, 2010 awards.

Norwich received a Silver Gilt Award in the Small City category and received four Silver Awards in the Urban Community categories for Mancroft, Sewell, Thorpe Hamlet and Town Close Wards.

The following also received special award nomination certificates –

The Assembly House – Best Community Floral Display
Mousehold Heath Defenders – Best Community Project
Mousehold Heath – Best Conservation Project
Janet Batch – Best Individual Floral Display
Magdalen Gates Pre-School – Best Young Persons Project
Lakenham Way – Bio-diversity
The Castle Entrance – Best Local Authority Floral Display
Stranger's Hall Gardens – Best Conservation Project

Councillor Brociek-Coulton said that this is the first time the city had won so many awards for urban communities and had so many categories put through for nomination. She thanked the people of Norwich who had contributed to the success which enabled the city to show the Anglia in Bloom judges just what a great community spirit we had in Norwich.

2. PRESENTATION OF LONG SERVICE AWARD

The Lord Mayor presented a long service award to Chris Popplewell, former Head of Economic Development.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

5. PETITION

Connor Calver-Moore, presented the following petition to the Lord Mayor –

'We, the undersigned, request that action be taken to stop the needless cutting down of our trees by Norwich City Council'.

Councillor Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member for Residents and Customer Services, responded as follows –

"In response to the petition sent to the council from Conner Calver-Moore regarding tree work in the Wilberforce Road and Rockingham Road area I can let you know the full sequence of events

On the 8/5/10 our contractors were called to Rockingham Road in response to an urgent tree enquiry following a report that a double deck bus had crashed into a tree. Upon inspection we found one tree to be split apart and dangerous and another tree which had also been struck and partially fallen. These trees were removed immediately as they posed an imminent risk to public safety.

We contacted First Bus who explained that the buses on this route had recently changed from single deck to double deck and that by suddenly adding the extra height of the double decker bus the trees had become an obstruction in the highway. We arranged an empty bus to take our arboricultural technician round all the routes that had suddenly changed with the First Bus safety officer and noted several other trees along the routes that were low over the road and now presenting an issue.

15 trees were pruned to enable safe and unimpeded access to the highway, however, four other trees along the road were found to be in very poor condition and removal work was arranged. Residents were informed and letters sent out to all on Wilberforce Road where the removal work was taking place. Residents were also told that replacement trees would be planted the follow season.

We have 8 *Corylus colurna* or Turkish Hazel trees ready to plant over this winter 2010/11.

It is only with great reluctance that the council does fell trees and only as a last resort after they have been inspected by qualified specialists. The council has a duty to ensure the highway is safe to use and free of obstruction. Unfortunately we sometimes have to remove trees to comply with this duty. This duty also includes pruning trees where branches overhang the roads which stop buses and other tall vehicles from using them. I can confirm that no tree has been felled unnecessarily and that all trees that could be pruned have been. We would of course rather see trees retained, however some trees along the route were in very poor condition which meant they had to be removed."

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 July 2010 subject to adding Councillor Fisher's name to the list of members present.

7. QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Lord Mayor advised members that 18 questions had been received from members of the council to executive members and committee chairs, at 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 | Councillor Jeraj to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance about unpaid council tax. |
| Question 2 | Councillor Stephenson to the Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care on responses to emails sent by the public. |
| Question 3 | Councillor Little to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on the Council's response to the Government's requirement for closer working at local level across public services. |
| Question 4 | Councillor Makoff to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services on the Prime Minister's proposal to create fixed |

term tenancies.

- Question 5** Councillor Altman to the Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care on uneven paving slabs in Randle Green.
- Question 6** Councillor Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on emergency contracts.
- Question 7** Councillor Lubbock to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance asking for a full independent enquiry into the letting of the Connaught Contract.
- Question 8** Councillor Read to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on discussions with Trade Unions following the commencement of the Connaught Contract.
- Question 9** Councillor Holmes to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on help for ex Connaught employees.
- Question 10** Councillor Ramsay to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on access to equipment for Connaught employees.
- Question 11** Councillor Offord to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on contingency plans.
- Question 12** Councillor Haynes to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on checks re emergency contracts.
- Question 13** Councillor Gledhill to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on possibility of in-house services.
- Question 14** Councillor George to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on recovery of costs lost in securing contracts.
- Question 15** Councillor Fisher to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on costs of awarding contracts.
- Question 16** Councillor Collishaw to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on the Keyline car park, Weston Road.
- Question 17** Councillor Wiltshire to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on adoption of roads.
- Question 18** Councillor James Wright to the Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care on the closure of the cashiers service at City Hall.

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

8. THE EXECUTIVE

The Lord Mayor said that the following amendment to his own motion had been received from Councillor Morphew –

‘To add new resolution –

- (4) to delegate appointment of representatives to outside bodies to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the four Group Leaders.’

(With no member objecting, the amendment was accepted and became part of the new substantive motion.)

Councillor Morphew moved and Councillor Waters seconded, the report.

RESOLVED –

- (1) unanimously, to change the name of the Executive to Cabinet;
- (2) with 18 members in favour, none against and 9 abstentions, to note the following changes to portfolios of current Cabinet members –

Councillor Arthur	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Waters	Cabinet Member for Resources, Performance and Shared Services
Councillor Brociek-Coulton	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods (North and East)

- (3) with 14 voting in favour, 4 against and 18 abstentions, to appoint the following as members of Cabinet –

Councillor Bermner	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods (South and West)
Councillor Westmacott	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Development
Councillor Sands	Cabinet Member for Wellbeing
Councillor MacDonald	Cabinet Member for the Environment

- (4) unanimously, to delegate appointment of representatives to outside bodies to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the four Group Leaders.

9. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Sands seconded the report.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to –

- (1) approve the appointment of David Johnson as Monitoring Officer for the City Council in place of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services;
- (2) agree that Victoria McNeil and Chris Skinner will act as Deputy Monitoring Officers for the City Council.

10. JOINT CORE STRATEGY – AGREEMENT TO FURTHER CHANGES

Councillor Morpew moved and Councillor Bradford seconded the report.

RESOLVED, with 23 voting in favour, 13 against and no abstentions, to –

- (1) agree the changes proposed to the “Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk: submission version (March 2010)” as summarised in the Supplementary Note dated 20th September to GNDP Policy Group;
- (2) agree the minor amendment to the existing Local Plan proposals map as set out in Supplementary Note dated 20th September to GNDP Policy Group;
- (3) agree that appendices, supporting evidence and background papers to the attached GNDP Policy Group paper should form the basis for progression to the public examination of the joint core strategy subject to the amendments set out in the Supplementary Note dated 20th September to GNDP Policy Group; and
- (4) delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Development, in discussion with the relevant portfolio holder, to agree on behalf of the City Council the final form of any further technical statements and evidence to be submitted to the Public Examination together with the revisions to previously adopted local plan proposals maps and all necessary supporting documents to the Secretary of State under Regulation 30 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

11. REVIEW OF THE PROCESS USED TO REPLACE THE SERVICES PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED BY CITYCARE

Councillor Morpew moved and Councillor Bremner seconded the suspension of committee procedure rule 14.5 of Appendix 1 of the Council's Constitution, which limits the length of speeches, and it was –

RESOLVED unanimously.

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Morpew seconded the report advising members on the process used to replace the services previously provided by CityCare, which was for information.

12. MOTION – CONNAUGHT CONTRACTS

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Morpew seconded the motion set out on the agenda.

Councillor Stephenson moved and Councillor Ramsay seconded that recommendation 4 be amended to read –

‘(4) endorses improved continued cross party working and scrutiny to make recommendations to executive on:-...’

The mover and seconder of the original motion indicated they would accept the amendment and, with no member objecting, it became part of the new substantive motion.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that –

Council:-

- (1) recognises the plight of the former Connaught workers made redundant by the collapse of the company and affirms its commitment to help mitigate the impact of redundancies;
- (2) thanks tenants and residents for their patience and forbearance at this time;
- (3) thanks all the council staff who have helped mobilise the emergency contract so quickly;
- (4) endorses improved continued cross party working and scrutiny to make recommendations to executive on:-
 - (a) letting the short term contract;
 - (b) exploration of the widest range of options for future service delivery;
 - (c) how best to deliver these services in the most sustainable, cost effective way in the long term.

(With 3 hours having passed since the start of the meeting, it was –

RESOLVED, with 31 voting in favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions, to continue with the meeting.)

13. MOTION – SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND HOUSING STOCK

The Lord Mayor said that two amendments had been received in advance of the meeting. However, with members indicating they objected to both amendments, they were not accepted and would need to be considered later.

Councillor Wiltshire moved and Councillor Fisher seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Ramsay moved and Councillor Read seconded that point (ii) be amended to read –

‘(ii) explore the options for the future maintenance of the city’s housing stock’

With 27 voting in favour, 3 against and 5 abstentions, the amendment was accepted and became part of the new substantive motion.

Councillor Wright(R) moved and Councillor Wright(J) seconded that point (i) be amended to read –

‘(i) undertake a review of the council’s procurement processes and, with particular reference to the process used in the tendering of the Connaught contracts, to consider the need to ask the executive to commission an independent enquiry.’

RESOLVED, with 12 voting in favour, 15 against and 6 abstentions, that the amendment was declared lost.

RESOLVED to ask Scrutiny Committee –

- (i) with 22 voting in favour, none against and 14 abstentions, to undertake a review of the Council’s procurement processes, with particular reference to the process used in the tendering of the Connaught contracts;
- (ii) with 35 voting in favour, none against and 1 abstention, to explore the options for the future maintenance of the city’s housing stock.

CHAIR

QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Question 1

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

"It has come to my attention that the Council recently incorrectly issued a large number of court summons for unpaid Council tax. Can the Executive Member confirm how many residents are affected and what has been done to inform them of the mistake and ensure that this doesn't happen again?"

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

"The summonses were not incorrectly issued. Everyone who received one had a valid debt. They were withdrawn because, although the total amount of the debt was correct, a technicality with the dates meant that the summons would not be valid for court. A letter of apology was issued to everyone who received a summons as soon as was practicably possible. 1700 council tax accounts were affected.

Since the issue was identified we have been working closely with our colleagues in Steria and Northgate, however at this point in time the reason for the error has not been discovered so a solution has yet to be found.

If members of the public find themselves in financial difficulties they should contact the National Debt line on 0808 808 4000 for confidential help and advice.

Norwich City Council tenants should contact a Norwich City Council money advisor on 0344 980 3333.

There is more help and advice on our website."

Councillor Jeraj asked, as a supplementary question, was the Council still prosecuting 1,700 people? **Councillor Waters** said that the letter sent to those involved said that they did not need to attend court but would be sent a new court date. If the matter could be resolved before then they would need to go to court.

Question 2

Councillor Claire Stephenson to the Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care:-

'Between July and September, when I was not a Councillor, I emailed the Residents Service Team's email address on over half a dozen separate occasions. Although I subsequently dealt with some of the issues which I raised through other forms of contact, not one of my emails received a reply. Is this experience typical when members of the public email the Council?'

Councillor Julie Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care's reply:-

"The organisation as a whole was averaging 7 days to answer emails during July to September. Having looked into the 8 emails received specifically from Councillor Stephenson between July and September every one was responded to by the service area.

Typically emails sent through the main mailbox which are processed by the contact team (old RST mailbox) are responded to on the day of receipt if they can be answered at the first point of contact or passed to the relevant service area to respond within the corporate service standard. The aim is to answer emails within five working days and a marked improvement has been seen with a third of service areas responding within 3 days."

Councillor Stephenson said that she had not received an answer to her 8 emails and asked, as a supplementary question, if she could be sent copies of the replies. **Councillor Brociek-Coulton** said that she would look into that.

Question 3

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

"There is every indication that, with a view to identifying savings and cutting public spending, the Coalition government is looking to require much closer working at a local level across public services including local government, health, welfare and policing. While I disapprove of the scale of the imposed cuts in general, I would like to know how the Council is preparing for this particular government requirement?"

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

"Councillor Little will be aware that partnership working between public sector bodies is nothing new. Norwich City Council is already very active in the field of partnership working, and I am confident that this will continue where there are opportunities to improve services and/or cut costs. The "Target Operating Model" for the future of the City Council, agreed by the Executive in June 2010, sets this out as a fundamental building block for more efficient and effective service delivery.

The City of Norwich Partnership (CoNP), which comprises public, private and voluntary sector bodies in the city, exists to promote and stimulate joint working to tackle key issues across the city area. The CoNP already oversees a number of examples of joint working within the city where local authorities, the police, health and other agencies actively share and pool resources, and work together.

A real Norwich example is the Motum Road Families Project, which has brought different agencies together to investigate the most efficient and effective process of meeting the needs of families that require multi-agency support in the Motum Road area. It will assess the level of intervention and support provided to a small number of identified families by public and third sector organisations, and will aim to improve

services and reduce costs by removing duplication, streamlining processes and joining up interventions with the families.

In addition, there are already a number of examples where the City Council is already working in partnership. For example:

- The CNC Building Control Partnership (with Broadland and South Norfolk Councils – with Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Council now joining)
- The Norfolk Public Law partnership (with Norfolk County Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council)
- Joint community safety work with Norfolk Constabulary
- Joint consultation activity such as the Norfolk Citizens panel and “Place Survey”

A range of additional potential joint working opportunities, particularly in “back office” services, are also being explored at the current time.

The previous government had already taken steps to accelerate partnership working through the “Total Place” initiative which aimed to encourage public sector partners to go back to a blank sheet of paper, and re-design services from a customer perspective, so that overlaps and duplication could be removed, and both savings and better services secured.

It is not yet clear what the new Coalition government's intentions are for partnership working. We understand that the core principles behind “Total Place” and partnership working are supported by the new government, but we also understand that “Total Place” will be re-branded as part of the proposed Localism Bill in the autumn of 2010. We will therefore need to wait a little longer to fully assess the future shape of public sector partnership working.

The City Council will therefore continue to seek out and explore viable joint and shared working opportunities. However, I believe that it is naïve to think that partnership working will be able to deliver the scale of efficiencies that the new government is proposing in the short timescale they want to use, and without any impact on local people. Experience has shown that mergers between organisations and services take time and effort to put in place, and inevitably result in major changes to how services are delivered, and to what standard. Wherever there is an opportunity to improve services through partnership it should be pursued, but my concern is that it may be used as vehicle to simply cut services and costs. The key to effective partnership working is to first identify the needs of the community, and to design a service around them, using the most efficient means available.”

Councillor Little asked, as a supplementary question, if the executive member considered that there was enough flexibility in the re-structure proposals. **Councillor Waters** said he hoped there would be sufficient flexibility from the government in the comprehensive spending review to allow the council to provide the level of services that the people of Norwich wanted.

Question 4

Councillor Ruth Makoff to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services:-

"Does the Executive Member share my concerns about the Prime Minister's proposal to replace future council housing tenancies for life with fixed term tenancies, and if this becomes policy, could you reassure current and future tenants as to what the Council would do to protect them?"

Councillor Brenda Arthur, Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services' reply:-

"We will oppose attacks on security of tenancy for council tenants who pay their rent, look after their property and respect their neighbours and community. We believe that secure tenancies are a vital component in creating safe and secure communities. We would therefore strenuously resist the regressive proposal to replace housing tenancy for life with fixed term ones.

We are dealing with people's homes, not some commodity that can change simply because a finite period of tenure has come to an end or their circumstances have changed. The Choice Based Lettings system and allocations policy is in place to ensure that social housing goes to those people who are most in need of high quality, safe and affordable housing. These same people are very often those most vulnerable in society, as well as those who are unable to access homes in the private market. Many of our tenants will have been in council or other social housing for a number of years. They may well have been brought up in it, brought their own children up in it, and as a result developed a sense of community and place which the council believes should be fostered and enhanced, not destroyed.

Secure tenancies support stable and sustainable communities and play an important role in preventing homelessness, improving access to education and health services. Secure tenancies help save money for the NHS, through health and well being, the police, by preventing and reducing ASB, and education and social services by providing stable and secure homes for children, families and older people.

Whilst the Council will be willing to consider additional choice of tenures as part of the affordable housing strategy, it would wish to express a strong commitment to retaining secure tenancy for those who want it.

We are committed to continue working with our RSL partners to develop affordable home-ownership and intermediate rental schemes, which people will be able to buy or rent as their circumstances improve. It is important to ensure that people have the opportunity to realise their aspirations and improve their quality of life without the fear of worsening their housing situation as a result.

If this proposal progresses, then the Council will work with our partners in health, education and other stakeholders to reinforce the important role of secure tenancies throughout the social housing community."

Councillor Makoff asked, as a supplementary question, if the executive member could clarify whether council tenants would be affected by the proposals. **Councillor Arthur** said she had no insight into David Cameron's mind.

Question 5

Councillor Steven Altman to the Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care:-

"Residents living in Randle Green and the surrounding area have been having problems with uneven paving slabs which are particularly hazardous at night, causing residents to trip. Council Officers have been contacted about this on a number of occasions but the problem still persists. Would the Executive consider prioritising this work immediately?"

Councillor Julie Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care reply:-

"Thank you for drawing this to my attention. I have asked officers to arrange an additional reactive inspection in the Randle Green area and to arrange any repairs accordingly. Officers will up-date you with the outcome of this.

All adopted highways in the city are regularly inspected and repairs are identified and ordered in line with national guidelines and the County Council's Transport Asset Management Plan. Potential trip hazards are given greater priority the larger they are. In addition, potential trip hazards in busier locations are given greater priority over quieter locations. For this reason, busier locations such as the city centre and main road network are inspected more frequently as well."

Question 6

Councillor David Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"Can the Executive Member give some idea of the number, and likely cost of the emergency contracts that we have committed to, in order to give emergency cover for contract 8?"

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

"There are eight contract areas covered by the emergency contracts including repairs, maintenance, gas, windows, kitchens and bathroom completions and voids. The total value will be around £1.2 million. The contracts are on a cost plus basis due to the short nature of the contracts, which is the cost of the labour, materials etc plus overheads plus a profit element. Due to the short term nature of the emergency contract the contractor cannot smooth out fluctuations and variations to achieve the most competitive price as would be the case in a longer term contract."

Question 7

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

"The collapse of Connaught, the social housing maintenance group and the contract it held with this Council has caused huge concern and disruption for the city's residents and tenants, and hardship for those 320 staff who have lost their jobs. The collapse has also caused many questions to be asked about the procurement process itself.

In order that there is public confidence in the Council's ability to let future contracts the Liberal Democrats are asking that there be a full independent inquiry into the procurement process which led to the Connaught Housing Repair and Maintenance contract.

Please will the Labour Executive who holds ultimate responsibility for letting the contracts agree to a full independent inquiry?"

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

"Connaught was a FTSE 250 company with a turnover of £650 million It had with over 150 contracts with local authorities so I think it is fair to say that its collapse has caused concern and disruption nationally.

Councillor Lubbock was involved in the cross-party procurement process so she understands from personal involvement the complex and thorough process undertaken in this matter. The process is also outlined in detail the report of the Deputy Chief Executive to Council this evening.

I think that time would be better spent moving forward rather than trying to rewrite history and what the City will want is the repairs and maintenance service running smoothly and jobs opportunities for former Connaught workers as soon as possible."

Councillor Lubbock asked, as a supplementary question, when the executive member would listen to tenants and agree to a full independent enquiry. **Councillor Waters** said that the council's Citywide Board represented tenants and it had given a strong endorsement to the way the Council had dealt with the contract and handled what had happened. He suggested that Councillor Lubbock should identify where in the process she believed there was a gap or a 'black hole' that would warrant an independent enquiry.

Question 8

Councillor Rupert Read to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"What contact did senior officers have with trade unions in the weeks immediately following the commencement of the Connaught contract in April?"

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

"Officers had significant contact with trades unions leading up to the commencement of the contract including union representatives attending the Contracts Working Party. During the mobilisation officers also met with union representatives. Once the contract started Officers had little contact as the key relationship was between Connaught Partnerships Limited as the employer and the unions. Officers have had regular contact with the unions since Connaught Partnerships Limited was placed in administration."

Councillor Read asked, as a supplementary question, if the executive member accepted that officers should have listened to workers concerns about the contractor. **Councillor Waters** said that officers had held discussions with senior officials in the unions.

Question 9

Councillor Adrian Holmes to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"What is the Council doing to ensure that ex-Connaught employees are employed by any companies who may take over contracts previously held by Connaught?"

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

'Contractors providing services under emergency contracts had been asked to

approach JobCentre plus and give first consideration to ex Connaught employees, and we will do the same with any longer term contracts that are let. The Council also ran an advice day on 22 September for ex-Connaught employees offering advice on:-

- claiming benefits;
- applying for jobs;
- pensions advice;
- money advice.

They were also given the opportunity to register their interest in applying for a job with an incoming contractor."

Councillor Holmes asked, as a supplementary question, how effective the efforts had been to get ex employees to register their interest in applying for a job with an incoming contractor. **Councillor Waters** said that the Council was committed to getting as many ex Connaught employees re-employed as possible.

Question 10

Councillor Adrian Ramsay to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"What efforts did the Council make to ensure that Connaught employees would have access to the equipment they would need to carry out their work when the new contract began in April?"

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

"There was a mobilisation plan with Connaught to get all services up and running for 1 April 2010 and this was monitored by the Council through regular meetings and reviews with the mobilisation team. This should have been a 3 month mobilisation period but this was significantly condensed due to the legal action taken by Morrison. The previous contractor owned the vast majority of equipment that they used and this was not transferred to the new contractor. The equipment was sold off as they were entitled to do with their property. Short term arrangements had to be put in place and this led to some equipment not being available at the very beginning of the contract but this was resolved as quickly as possible."

Councillor Ramsay asked, as a supplementary question, what action the Council had taken to ensure that the new contractor had sufficient equipment. **Councillor Waters** said that the Council would have fully expected the contractor to undertake their obligations and ensure a smooth transition.

Question 11

Councillor Peter Offord to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"The Eastern Daily Press quoted the Leader of the Council on 7 September, saying "We are well geared up with contingency plans." What were the plans to which he was referring?"

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

"I refer Councillor Offord to paragraph 19 of the report that has been issued to Members for this meeting."

Councillor Offord asked, as a supplementary question, what lessons had been learnt and how these could be used to safeguard future situations. **Councillor Waters** said that the matter would be discussed when considering the report later on in the agenda. He referred to how quickly the council had put in place emergency contracts to ensure that services continued.

Question 12

Councillor Ash Haynes to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"What checks were carried out by the Council on Connaught Environmental before awarding that company the emergency contracts?"

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

"Connaught Environmental Ltd has not been placed in administration because it was considered to be a viable business. The company was part of the Connaught group and had been responsible for the delivery of services on behalf of Connaught Partnerships Ltd with whom the Council had its contract. A swift decision was taken that ensured that staff retained their jobs and that service disruption was minimised."

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Haynes**, **Councillor Waters** emphasised that because Connaught Environmental was a viable business the administrator was notified and was happy with the council's proposal to novate several contracts to that viable part of the business. This was vital for continuity of service including emptying bins and street cleaning etc.

Question 13

Councillor Bob Gledhill to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"Can the Executive Member assure me that work will now be carried out, by the Council, to thoroughly explore and prepare for the option of bring some services in-house?"

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

"At the beginning of the process the contracts working party and executive thoroughly explored the option of bringing services in-house. However, given the scale of services, over £35 million per year, and the lack of ICT infrastructure, supply chains and management capacity, this was assessed as not being achievable. Instead a strategy of staggered contract re-let dates was agreed which allows for the in-house option to be fully tested as each contract ends. This is the strategy approved by the executive and will continue to be explored.

APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) has already been engaged to help the Council to assess possible options."

Question 14

Councillor Niki George to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"I understand attempts have been made to recoup monies lost in securing the Connaught contract and the cost of the emergency contractor. Could the executive member tell us where in the process these attempts are?"

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

"Councillor George is quite right that the council will be attempting to recover any costs and this work is in its early stages."

Question 15

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

"What is the total cost of having awarded the contracts to Connaught, taking into account any cost of 'settling differences' with Morrisons; the cost of emergency contracts and the cost of the retendering the contracts previously run by Connaught and where will any additional costs be paid from?"

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

"Rather than focussing on costs, the Council saved £1 million per year on the environmental contracts that are charged to General Fund Revenue Budget, and 30% on the cost of housing repairs, maintenance and improvements. The cost savings to the General Fund Revenue Budget continue with the novation of contracts to Connaught Environmental. The final outcome and costs of the housing repairs, maintenance and improvements contracts have yet to be finalised. Also, as this work has not yet concluded a total cost cannot be given at this time. Any costs in relation to general fund activities such as refuse, grounds, street cleansing and arboriculture will be paid from the general fund and any costs in relation to housing activities such as repairs, maintenance and gas will be paid from the housing revenue account."

In response to a supplementary question from **Councillor Fisher, Councillor Waters** said that members would be able to access information on the total cost once known.

Question 16

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

"When will the uninsured, unsecured, storage area without planning permission on the Keyline car park on Weston Road, used by Connaught be removed, and the businesses on the site allowed to continue as they are now blocked in?"

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

"This is not within the Council's ownership or control. However, the use of the area does not require a change of use consent under planning. The council is aware of a noise complaint relating to the previous use of the site by Connaught and are in contact with the complainant over this issue.

Any health and safety concerns on the site fall within the remit of the HSE, and these should be referred to them if applicable."

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Collishaw**, **Councillor Waters** said that he would be happy to meet with her to receive more information and to clarify the issues.

Question 17

Councillor Andrew Wiltshire to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"Many people in my ward have been in touch with me to report concerns they are paying their Council Tax but are not receiving the same service as residents in other parts of the city because their roads are either not adopted or not maintained. They have rightly pointed out that a refusal to pay their council tax could see them in court, but they are paying for services which they do not receive. What assurances can the Executive offer that the residents will soon receive an equitable level of service?"

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

"The council is responsible for maintaining all adopted roads in the city. Officers undertake detailed inspections on a regular basis of the entire network and order repairs accordingly, in line with the county council's Transport Asset Management Plan. The inspection work also helps to identify priorities for structural maintenance such as re-surfacing. If Councillor Wiltshire believes that there are specific areas of adopted highway within Bowthorpe which are not being properly maintained please can he draw them to officers' attention so action can be taken?

Turning to those roads which are not adopted, responsibility for maintenance rests with the developer. Councillor Wiltshire will appreciate that it would be wrong for the council to take on responsibility unless it was assured that the road was proven to be in good condition especially as such costs would be borne by the wider community.

Officers are working hard with the respective developers to ensure that roads can be adopted as soon as practically possible. At present, the only streets awaiting adoption in Bowthorpe – and anticipated dates for adoption – are as follows:

Location	Progress
Mardle Street	January 2010 subject to developer resolving minor defects
Dow Close	
Swallow Tale Close	

Weatherby Close	January 2011 subject to developer resolving defects followed by satisfactory 12 month maintenance period
Draper Way	
Barnham Close	

Council tax is used to pay for all the services provided, not just for maintaining roads and footpaths. If you do not use some of these services, it does not entitle you to a council tax rebate. For example, someone who does not have any children still has to pay full council tax even though they do not use schools. The only way to reduce the level of council tax is to appeal against the house valuation band using the District Valuer."

Councillor Wiltshire asked, as a supplementary question, if the council would commit to pursuing the developers. **Councillor Waters** said that the issue of unadopted roads was being dealt with as speedily as possible. He suggested that councillors advise constituents, if there were long delays or if they believed they had received a detrimental service, to go back to the District Valuer.

Question 18

Councillor James Wright to the Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care:-

"During the recent election campaign I spoke to a number of residents concerned about the gradual closure of the cashiers service at City Hall. Does the executive member share these concerns, and could they tell council how many residents are still relying on the service?"

Councillor Julie Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member for Residents and Customer Care's reply:-

"Analysis shows that during the 28 week period between 1 March 2010 and 12 September 2010, 30% fewer customers attended City Hall to make payments. This was a reduction of 21,570 visits compared to 2 March 2009 and 13 September 2009.

The opening hours of the cashier service reduced to 2 hours per day from 1 September 2010 and this has coincided with an accelerated decrease in the number of customers using the service. Statistics show that 49% fewer customers used the service during the 4 week period ending 12 September 2010 compared to the same period last year (5200 in 2010 compared to 10238 in 2009).

Since February 2010, we have received a total of 13 complaints/comments about the closure of cashiers covering several issues as follows:-

- 5 comments about the information,
- 6 comments about different payment methods, and
- 2 general comments about the closure

All of these customers have been called or written to and individual support continues at all points of contact and will continue to be provided. A programme of ongoing support is included in each phase of the closure programme.

We have been dealing with problems raised by individuals on a personal and individual basis. If Councillor Wright will let me or the Head of the customer contact team have the names and contact details for those who have raised concerns with him, I will ensure that each of them is contacted individually and that we give them the personal service we have promised to help deal with their concerns.”

Councillor Wright (J) said that there was still 130 people that are using the service and asked what would happen to them in December. **Councillor Brociek-Coulton** said that the team had worked hard to ensure that people understood that the service was coming to an end and what they would do in the future. Floor walkers had been explaining the different options and they would continue to promote alternatives.