



NORWICH
City Council

Council
24 September 2019
Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 1

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

“The Eastern Evening News reported on 25 July, the announcement by the leader of the Labour group on Norfolk County Council that his group would campaign against the proposed Norwich Western Link on grounds that the scheme is “unaffordable and unjustifiable”. The Labour Group leader is quoted as saying that he “felt the western link had been a rushed process and more environmentally-friendly measures could be taken to address the issue of rat-running through villages west and north of Norwich.” He went on to say, ‘We support solving the problem, but we’re firmly on the side of finding a better way. There is really not enough evidence to justify spending £153m – or probably a lot more – on a road that will do considerable harm to the environment. This is an opportunity for Norfolk to lead, rather than default to old school narrow thinking and throw an expensive new road at the problem – we can do better.’ Will the cabinet member join his colleagues Clive Lewis MP and the county Labour Group in opposing the Norwich Western Link?”

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

“As I said at the council meeting in July when Councillor Carlo asked the same question following Clive Lewis MP’s announcement that he did not support the building of the Western Link, the city council’s support for the Western Link is dependent on a package of other transport investment and mitigation measures being provided. These measures will need to result in a considerable shift towards non-car modes in the urban area through increasing walking, cycling and the use of public transport as well as improving air quality and encouraging inclusive growth and economic development.

30 years ago the southern bypass brought benefits to the south of the city by removing through traffic including slow moving HGV’s and other vehicles. This traffic now flows freely along the A47 and mostly does not enter the city. This has been a welcome development. The opening of the Broadland North Way, as the NDR is now known, has seen similar benefits North and East of the city. Building the Western Link will lock in benefits for residents in the west of the city, but only if, and I will say it again, the new road is coupled with a

package of measures that convinces people to move to more sustainable modes of transport for intra urban journeys. Evidence to date suggests that this is already happening and the current transport strategy is proving successful – Norwich is bucking several national trends; bus patronage is going up, the numbers of people cycling and walking are increasing significantly and our retail centre is thriving. Few other cities can boast such successes

A lot of claims are being made about the effects that the Western Link will have on the environment and climate change, much of which is based upon conjecture. I would prefer to wait until the full analysis and modelling results, of all the impacts that of the creation of the new link road will have, are published and then an informed decision can be made. If at that stage the planned mitigation measures do not offset the potential environmental harm of the road; then will be the time for the city council to reconsider its support for the Western Link. I have not seen any evidence since the July Council meeting that changes what I said previously, however as I said then, if and when new evidence comes to light the labour administration will of course consider it carefully.”

Question 2

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

“In June this year, the Labour chair of the 'Resources, Prosperity and Growth' committee in Brighton agreed to remove the term 'growth' from the committee's name and thus from its remit, in response to a question from a young Green councillor. In March, I attended a panel discussion about climate change with the Labour MP Clive Lewis, where he spoke explicitly about the need to look at models of "degrowth". Recognising that the planet we live on is finite, will the cabinet member ask council to replace references to "growth" in the corporate plan, with a term more inclusive of the needs of present and future generations, thereby also removing the demand for “growth” from the council's strategic objectives?”

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

“Thank you for the question. I certainly do recognise that many of the resources of the planet we live on are finite and that there is a need for fresh thinking in relation to the nature of growth and a move away from measures which regard economic growth as necessarily being a desirable thing irrespective of its impact on people or the environment. The growth in economic measures of output such as Gross Value Added or Gross Domestic Product should not be seen as signs of a successful place if these are delivered in a manner that increases the use of finite resources or doesn't address the inequalities in our society. I'm sure you will agree with me that the economic growth we have seen in the past has come at too great an environmental cost and has not sufficiently benefitted the poorest in society.

However, I would be very concerned about any attempt to amend our objectives in a way that doesn't recognise the need for Norwich to continue to grow. The population of our city is continuing to grow, both through natural growth and through patterns of migration, and I don't think we should be looking to stop either. To accommodate this increased population and address the problems of our existing population we will need more and better quality housing to be built, to increase the number and quality of jobs available in the economy and enhance the supporting infrastructure through more and better quality parks, medical centres and transport infrastructure.

To fail to plan for growth in this way would not only badly let down our current and future residents. But would be likely to ultimately increase the use of finite resources and contribution to the causes of climate change through displacing growth pressures from a place such as Norwich which is capable of growing sustainably and allowing people to live with minimal environmental impact to other areas where use of resource and climate change impact are much greater.

I think our current corporate plan recognises this distinction between genuinely sustainable and inclusive growth and other forms of economic

growth and reflects this in our priorities of: great neighbourhoods, housing and environment, inclusive economy and people living well. I recognise that thinking on how to decouple models of economic growth from increasing environmental impact continues to evolve but think that our current corporate plan and other associated strategies set the best framework we can have on this issue for the time being.”

Question 3

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

“In recent months I have dealt with a number of pieces of casework that related to planning issues. These included determinations of planning applications as well as planning enforcement cases. In many of the responses, delays in deadlines or inaction in enforcement cases were explained by staff shortages or a lack of resources. I have requested more information on the resources situation of the planning department and how this resource shortage is being addressed. However, I have not yet received an answer, I guess due to lack of resources. Could you please clarify the situation and explain how the council is addressing this resource and staff shortage?”

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

“Until recently the bulk of planning enforcement work was carried out by the public protection team in citywide services. Recent staff changes and competing demands upon that service have meant that their capacity to deal with planning enforcement matters has reduced. This has resulted in the informal arrangement whereby planning officers in the development management team have taken on an increasing case load of enforcement work. Enforcement work has to be managed alongside officers’ normal caseload of planning applications, which puts additional pressure on them. Planning officers are also not trained in relevant legislation such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, which limits their ability to pursue prosecutions through the courts. In these cases the assistance of environmental health officers with the appropriate training is required. These informal arrangements need to be formalised to ensure the council possesses an effective planning enforcement service, temporary additional resources are being sought to deal with the workload and the matter is being kept under review. Performance levels should improve in the coming months.”

Question 4

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

“The cabinet member may be aware of the 5G appeal (<http://www.5gappeal.eu/>) signed by scientists and doctors who recommend a moratorium on the roll-out of 5G for telecommunication until potential hazards for human health and the environment have been fully investigated through rigorous independent scientific investigation. Does the cabinet member agree with the aims of the 5G appeal and would he join towns and cities such as Glastonbury, Brussels, Geneva and Florence in stating support of the precautionary principle in this matter and not supporting the roll-out of 5G in Norwich until it has been proven not to affect the health of residents?”

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

“I’m afraid the council does not possess the expertise or resources to reach a judgement on whether the scientific evidence available justifies a moratorium on the roll out of 5G telecommunications infrastructure. Our current policy framework is generally supportive of such infrastructure and is guided by a clear instruction from government that we cannot take potential health impacts into consideration when making regulatory decisions.

Joint Core Strategy Policy 6 recognised the general benefits of improved telecommunications links across the county and in the city in terms of accessibility to services and economic development. Local Plan policy DM10 specifically encourages, with certain caveats, the provision, upgrading and enhancement of telecommunications networks and their associated infrastructure. The council is also working with neighbouring authorities and the county council through the Norwich Strategic Planning Framework Telecommunications sub-group to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the roll-out of new technology.

However, it is worth noting that a lot of telecommunications development is carried out under permitted development powers that are set by central government. Planning applications that the council can make a decision on are therefore few and far between. The government is currently reviewing these permitted development rights to facilitate the national roll-out of the 5G network. In practice, even the limited ability the council has to influence the provision of the new infrastructure is likely to be further restricted in future.”

Question 5

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

“This month the General Secretary of the TUC Frances O'Grady warned that the changes to the funding settlement received by local government ‘leave councils far more vulnerable to the economic damage that would be caused by crashing out of the EU without a deal, and that will mean bigger funding gaps for services that families rely on.’

Last month we also heard that the government had pledged an extra £20 million for councils to ramp-up preparations for leaving the EU and instructed them to appoint a designated Brexit lead. While this sum brings the total funding allocated by the government to help local areas prepare for Brexit to £77 million to date it is still an insultingly minuscule and token amount, given the amount of disruption a no-deal Brexit will cause as outlined in the Yellowhammer report and also given the fact that the government's own Get Ready for Brexit campaign is reported to cost £100million. Could the cabinet member comment on Norwich's no-deal Brexit preparations and the impact a no deal Brexit will cause to the communities in our city?”

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resource's response:

“Preparations here in Norwich and Norfolk are being co-ordinated through the local resilience forum.

Each authority has been asked by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to appoint a Brexit lead officer and the director of resources has been appointed to that role.

At the time of writing, there has been one national teleconference with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and a further one scheduled for Monday 23 September. The national assessments and focus are not on functions covered by a district council such as Norwich City Council.

Our greatest concern is not about the impact on the council but much more on the potential impact on our communities. I am concerned particularly about potential increases in food costs and the impact this would have on residents who are already struggling after the welfare cuts we have seen. The leader of the council has submitted the following question for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government teleconference mentioned above:

‘Will the Secretary of State press for an uplift or ideally the removal of the benefit cap because of the additional hardship created by anticipated increases in the cost of essential items (specifically food) as a result of a No deal Brexit? A situation already compounded by the depreciation of the £ since 2016.’

The government's own Yellowhammer document lists several severe consequences of a no deal exit from the EU on October 3 upon our food and

medical supplies and also upon our economy and jobs. We shall of course work with other agencies to limit the impact wherever we can. However given the local government's limited resources and powers it is unlikely that we could remedy all but for a very small part, of the possible dire effects of a such a no deal exit from the EU at the end of next month upon the citizens of Norwich."

Question 6

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

“In September 2017 Norwich City Council closed Heigham Park’s grass tennis courts.

The planning applications committee on 8 November 2018 approved the council’s all-weather courts scheme for Heigham Park and rejected a member motion to defer the scheme for enabling the council to consider the Heigham Park Grass Courts Group’s business plan. The minutes state that one reason for rejecting a deferral was that ‘the council had already lost half of the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) grant by delaying a decision.’ The minutes report the planning officer statement that ‘a delay could mean that the [LTA] funding for the scheme was no longer available.’

However, it now transpires that the LTA withdrew its funding offer when the council dropped its first planning application for hard courts at Heigham Park in June 2017.

A council email concerning LTA funding, dated February 2019, admitted that: “There is currently no application with the LTA. As a result of the previous planning application being withdrawn. That process stopped. No further application has been lodged with the LTA at this moment in time”.

The council was therefore well aware at the time of the planning application committee in November 2018 that the LTA had withdrawn its funding offer on Heigham Park following the withdrawal in June 2017 of the first planning application for Heigham Park by the parks and open spaces team. Nonetheless, the council advised planning committee members that LTA funding for Heigham Park remained on offer. Also in the planning report, blame was placed on the Heigham Park Grass Courts Group for delaying the LTA funding, even though, behind the scenes, the LTA had withdrawn funding due to the council dropping its first application.

Can the cabinet member explain why the planning committee was led to believe that LTA funding was available for the scheme at a time when that process had stopped?”

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

“The expansion of Norwich Parks Tennis and the associated benefits to additional sites, including Heigham Park, one of the council’s main strategic parks, has not been straightforward and the project has had to adapt and change for a number of reasons including an ever changing financial climate.

One thing that has not changed is this council’s commitment to deliver quality, affordable, accessible tennis to all residents, on a sustainable financial basis.

The planning application submitted by the parks and open spaces manager, which came before planning committee on 8 November 2018, was based on the most up to date information with regards to the funding situation at that moment in time.

The expansion of Norwich Parks Tennis, following the successful delivery of positive outcomes at Eaton Park, is viewed as an exemplar delivery model by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).

The proposed expansion was discussed with the LTA at a regional development level, to develop the project prior to the first planning application being submitted in 2017. Planning permission being obtained was a pre-requisite before an application for funding could be submitted.

The situation was, and always has been, that the LTA were fully behind the plan to expand the benefits of parks tennis to other parts of the city and would support a funding application being submitted.

The success of the bid would always be dependent on the LTA's own internal processes it has been made clear that the delivery of the programme has been subject to successful external funding.

At the time of the first application in March 2017 the LTA's Transforming British Tennis Together (TBTT) programme offered a maximum of 50% matched funding. Therefore it was on this basis that the planning application was submitted in 2017.

This application was subsequently withdrawn when queries raised during the public consultation period could not be addressed satisfactorily before the application expired.

For clarity the LTA grant programme offered 50% matched funding and therefore, the delivery of the new tennis facilities was modelled on a successful bid for 50% matched funding.

Changes at the LTA during July/August 2017 resulted in changes to the grant funding with a reduction of matched funding for successful bids from 50% to 25%. However, planning approval was still a pre-requisite to submitting a bid.

Although the amount of potential LTA capital funding had been reduced the council was still committed to delivery of the benefits of the project through expanding parks tennis in other areas of the city.

Delivery budgets were revised on this basis and a revised planning application was submitted in July 2018 based on the original planning submission, which was considered on 8 November 2018.

The minute from the committee meeting which states, that '*the council had already lost half of the Lawn Tennis Association grant by delaying a decision*' which your question refers to as a reason given for rejecting a deferral was accurate, as the matched funding had been reduced from 50% to 25%.

The second statement, that '*a delay could mean that funding for the scheme was no longer available*'; is also accurate as timescales relating to the expiration of funding for the programme from a S106 agreement could be put at risk, due to an inability to spend the funds within the required timeframe. The comment did not specifically refer to LTA funding as suggested.

I can confirm to Councillor Carlo that on 8 November 2018 when the planning application came before committee the LTA programme still offered 25% matched funding.

More specifically members of the committee were advised that the business case and financing was not a matter for the planning committee and that members would need to determine the application on the basis of relevant development plan policy together with other material considerations.

On the 8 January 2019 the council was made aware by the LTA that the funding programme had been withdrawn nationally and there was no longer funding to bid for. However, a replacement scheme would be introduced but it was not clear when.

The LTA has never made an offer of funding. Developing the proposals, securing external funds and answering enquiries has always been based on the fact that the LTA funding was subject to a successful application. Therefore there was no withdrawal of funding from the project by the LTA at any point.

The email response you refer to in your enquiry about LTA funding dated February 2019 is correct merely stating the current state of available external funding, namely:

- There was currently no application with the LTA
- At that time there was no application to the LTA funding as there was no funding programme in place nationally to apply to
- As a result of the previous planning application being withdrawn, that process stopped as a planning approval was required prior to application
- After the withdrawal of the planning application in 2017 work focussed on securing planning approval, prior to working up any future bid
- The impact of additional time and resources required to revise the design, complete the planning application, complete consultation prior to being considered by committee resulted in delays for the programme
- During this period, LTA funding opportunities reduced from 50% to 25% to 0%.

Information provided to planning committee was based on the facts at the time and the committee were not mislead, the advice that the business case was immaterial to the determination was accurate and members made their decision on the basis of relevant material planning considerations"

Question 7

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

“In 2018, Norwich City Council commenced a review of parks and open spaces. The council appointed an external consultant who addressed a workshop for members last September. Consultation with stakeholders programmed for spring this year was postponed in the run up to the local elections. In response to a Green Party enquiry in July about progress, we were advised that the council was looking at a revised timetable for key stages. Can the cabinet member comment on the progress of this timetable and share any interim findings?”

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

“Thank you for your question.

Initial findings and comments from the very productive workshops held with stakeholders, elected members and council officers are currently being reviewed.

This involves a considerable amount of detailed work which due to competing demands on available resources has resulted in a short delay.

I hope that work will be completed in the next month and then the process for adoption and the key milestones will be finalised.

At this moment in time there are no interim findings to share.”

Question 8

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

“Representing a ward nearby the historic and beautiful Mousehold Heath I am constantly aware of how lucky we are to have such an open space which benefits our city. As protection and promotion of the heath continues to be such a priority for this council, and particularly those serving on the Mousehold Heath Conservators, can the cabinet member for health and wellbeing comment on the positive opportunities contained within the newly launched heath management plan?”

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

“Mousehold Heath is a jewel in the crown of this fine city and I would firstly like recognise the role the wonderful work the Mousehold Conservators undertake as custodians of the heath on behalf of the residents of the city; and also the work of the two Mousehold Wardens and many volunteers, individuals and groups.

The new Mousehold Heath management plan came into effect in April 2019, identifying key objectives for the work of the Mousehold Conservators over the next 10 years. The objectives are based around 8 key aspects of delivering a well maintained and welcoming open space.

The site is managed in a way which balances the informal and formal recreational needs with the management of locally and nationally important habitat and species.

There are a number of habitat and species monitoring schemes in place, on the site to monitor their status and the impact of management activities on the site. The results from these studies are positive.

A particular focus of the Conservators work is to provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in the management of the heath and attend a variety of events where residents can learn more about this important site.

In excess of 40,000 hours of volunteer time have been given to the site over the last 10 years, to help make it the wonderful place it is today

Representatives from the Conservators recently attended a symposium about urban commons in Brighton to speak about their work and the positive working relationships with the council and community that are essential when managing a site such as the heath.

The Conservators received praise for on the work achieved on Mousehold which highlighted the valuable work undertaken on a national stage. However, Mousehold is now featuring internationally.

In January 2019 one of the Mousehold Wardens, Will Stewart was invited to attend the European Ranger Conference in Portugal, representing the Countryside Management Association, Mousehold Heath and Norwich City

Council. He was obviously a hit as he has now been invited to attend the World Ranger Congress in Nepal in November 2019, at no cost to the Conservators or the council.

It is clear from the new management plan that the site will continue to go from strength to strength over the next 10 years.”

Question 9

Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for safe and sustainable environment the following question:

“I was pleased to read in the cabinet performance report that recycling and composting rates are green for this quarter and have actually risen, against a national picture of stable or even decreasing rates. Can the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment give his opinion on whether the significant ‘Feed your Caddy’ campaign and other practical environmental steps have helped to continue to stimulate this?”

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

“There is no doubt that the programme of measures to increase the recycling of food waste in Norwich has been very successful.

During 2018 the Council worked with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to deliver a range of targeted food waste ‘interventions’ to increase the capture rate of food waste from the existing kerbside food waste collection service, and in so doing reduce the amount of food waste presented for collection within the residual waste stream.

Around 56,000 properties with kerbside waste and recycling collections received these interventions, which included –

- A roll of 52 PE food waste liners (the budget would not cover the cost of corn starch liners)
- A food waste information leaflet
- No food waste please’ stickers to be placed on the lid of the refuse bin

This was supported by a twitter campaign – ‘Feed your Caddy’ as well as media briefings and articles in the Citizen magazine and the local press.

Since these measures were rolled out in May and June last year over 10,000 additional food caddies have been requested by residents and the collected tonnage of food waste remains 40% higher than before the interventions. This increase is significantly higher than what had been forecast and well above the rates achieved in other areas where WRAP has supported similar projects.

It is the case that recycling rates in Norwich are currently holding up and ‘bucking’ the national trend for reduced recycling, but this in itself is only a part of the picture. Alongside the measures for recycling the council puts a significant emphasis on measuring how much residual waste is produced in Norwich households.

The performance measure in the corporate plan is ‘Residual household waste per household’ and the stretch target for this is to achieve no more than 375 kg of residual waste for each household. Currently residents are set to achieve a mark even lower than this, with only 81 kg per household recorded for the last quarter. Whilst the annual rate will be influenced by increased

waste over the festive period, this is still a very impressive 'mid-term' performance and indicates that this key measure for waste reduction may well be exceeded in 2019/20.

All of this is a tribute to the relentless efforts of council staff and the operatives at our collection contractor, Biffa, who are continually striving to reduce waste and increase recycling. Principally of course it's a tribute to residents who have embraced new services and have taken on-board the critical messages about waste reduction and recycling.

But despite all this, analysis shows that there are still large quantities of recycling being deposited in some domestic waste bins. So efforts will continue to support those who may not yet be fully aware of the recycling opportunities available as well as designing and implementing further schemes to build on the council's impressive performance to date."

Question 10

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

“I read earlier in the month that the Observer newspaper analysis of government figures shows that a quarter of the more than 260,000 households in England found to be homeless or under threat of homelessness last year were in paid work at the time. Overall, councils recorded 118,700 households as homeless and a further 145,020 as being under imminent threat of homelessness in 2018-19. In-work households made up a staggering 31% of cases in South-East England and 30% in London and the East of England. Having assisted several constituents in my ward with homelessness related issues, and with the autumn fast approaching, can the cabinet member for social housing comment on the ever increasing importance and difference which our own housing service makes to providing support to people facing this awful predicament?”

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

“As you may recall, last year this council was awarded the NPSS ‘gold standard’ in recognition of the high quality of our housing advice and homelessness services and we continue to achieve the same level of excellence despite a challenging external environment.

Our commitment is to provide personalised solutions to each person that approaches us for help with their housing situation. The council, through its housing options service, is committed to providing an accessible, drop-in advice service so that we are able to provide specialist, one to one assistance without delay to anybody facing housing crisis.

Our approach is successful; in the last quarter 90% of households who came to us facing homelessness were prevented from becoming homeless. An incredible success, demonstrating I think this council's commitment to providing top class services to those that are vulnerable or in need.

The prevention of homelessness; provision of high quality, personalised assistance and a broad range of housing options for those in housing need will remain priorities for this council.”

Question 11

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

“At a time when many urban city centre areas across the country are witnessing the rapid closure of shops and hollowing out of their retail offer, I was pleased to see that thanks to this Labour city council and our influence through Transport for Norwich, significant investment in London Street was approved earlier in the summer. Given this was the first street in Norwich to be pedestrianised over 50 years ago and provides an arterial route through the city centre itself, can the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth comment on the advantages and opportunities which can be delivered through this important scheme?”

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

“Not only was London Street the first in Norwich to be pedestrianised, it was actually the first in the UK; even 50 years ago Norwich was leading the way on transport issues. That has been followed up with things like introducing the first 20mph zone in England nearly 30 years ago and supporting the country’s most successful car club scheme. Through initiatives in the pipeline with the Future Mobility Zone bid and the Transforming Cities bid, I am sure there will be more firsts to come.

After 50 years London Street is overdue a facelift. I am delighted that through the first tranche of transforming cities funding, we now have the opportunity to make improvements. While some changes are cosmetic most are about improving the space to allow pedestrians and cyclists to move about more freely with street furniture clustered in coherent groups, areas for tables and chairs properly defined and trees relocated for easier access for the vehicles that need to cross London Street. The paving details have been designed to be more robust and to better stand up to the wear and tear from vehicles using Bedford Street. Finally the disabled parking in the turnaround space at the end of London Street is to be moved to a dedicated disabled parking bay on Bank Plain which will be designed specifically with the needs of disabled drivers in mind.

The improvements don’t stop in London Street, you all must be aware that there have been significant improvements in Rose Lane and changes are afoot in Prince of Wales Road. Still to come are changes in Agricultural Hall Plain and Bank Plain to significantly improve pedestrian and cyclists experience of using these street and places. Taken together these schemes transform the journey from the rail station to the city centre.”

Question 12

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

“Many constituents in my ward have contacted me to express both their interest and enthusiasm about the city council’s launch of Roar Power, a 100% renewable energy alternative to the Big 6 which continues to enhance our sustainability strategy and tackles fuel poverty. Given the recent public launch, can the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment comment on the next steps to develop, enhance and promote this much needed scheme?”

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

“It’s great to hear that your constituents are enthused about Roar Power and we hope they will consider becoming customers if they haven’t already. We are passionate about making Roar Power as successful as possible, to give our citizens the opportunity to protect the planet while saving money as well.

Initial reactions to the scheme have been very positive and we now need to seize the initiative and make sure that everybody across the region knows about Roar Power.

We are busy developing an ambitious multi-platform marketing strategy, and you can expect to hear lots more about Roar Power in the coming weeks and months. But we are taking the time to find out exactly what people want, and how we can deliver it to them with Roar Power. So watch this space and we will make further announcements as soon as we can.”

Question 13

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

“Over the years I have assisted several constituents in applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant, through the Home Improvements Team, so that they can continue to reside and enjoy their home. My constituents have found these grants invaluable with support to provide a range of adaptations including level access showers, hand rails, stair lifts, changing lighting schemes to improve visibility around the home, to carrying out small repairs and minor jobs around the house which they cannot do. I was therefore pleased to learn that our council scheme has been recognised for the speed at which adaptations are provided and could receive a national award for this tomorrow. Whether it wins or not, can the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods comment on the importance of the scheme to city residents, positive difference made to resident’s lives together with thanking the officers involved in its continued delivery?”

Councillor Jones, cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhood’s response:

“I welcome your comments and of course would like to offer my thanks to all the officers involved in providing this invaluable service.

The work of the home improvement team is vital in providing residents with good housing and being able to live independently. These grants are provided to support independent living for the residents of Norwich which reduces the burden upon the NHS and adult social care. On average someone who has received a grant will have their long term prognosis increased to the point that they would not need to be admitted to hospital or have a long term care package by five years.

I’m pleased to be able to report that last year 48% more grants were approved than in the previous year and spend increased by 78%, all while improving our turnaround time.

For the year 2018/19 263 grants were approved amounting to £1.15m and these were delivered, on average in 109 days compared to 130 days in 2017/18, 150 days in 2016/17 and 159 days in 2015/16.

The government’s recent autumn spending review has suggested that funding for disabled facilities grants will at least be maintained at current level which will enable the council to continue to deliver this service to the residents of Norwich. Budget allocations will be confirmed early next year to enable delivery planning to be undertaken

As well as providing the statutory disabled facilities grant the home improvement team also offer grants to prevent admission to, or allow earlier discharge of people from hospital. Home improvements loans which are interest free and only repayable on the sale of a property for vulnerable people to ensure their homes are safe to live in. These additional local

discretionary assistances are vital in preventing burden on the wider public purse.

The council also offer a discretionary top up that pays towards a calculated contribution for a disabled facilities grant. Last year, this enabled 65 people to receive a disabled facilities grant that perhaps wouldn't have been possible in another local authority area

I look forward to this vital and truly beneficial work continuing.”

Question 14

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

“According to new figures released by the Local Government Association (LGA), almost five times as many council homes are being sold under Right to Buy as new homes are built. Given the devastating impact enhanced right to buy has inflicted upon our Norwich City Council housing stock, and capacity of the council to provide much needed socially affordable rented accommodation to citizens, can the cabinet member for social housing comment on its recent impact in Norwich since 2010?

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

“Thank you for your question. I agree that the enhanced right to buy has hit this council hard.

In 2012 council agreed a housing refinancing agreement with central government based upon an approved HRA business plan. In this business plan we had an assumption of selling around 40 homes each year under right to buy, with the 2 preceding years having sold 37 and 38 respectively.

Just a few months later the government introduced vastly increased discounts and shorter qualifying periods that has seen this council lose on average 146 homes each year since, having hit a peak of 187 homes sold in 2017-18. In total the council has lost 1098 homes under the RTB since 2010.

In order to try to mitigate this loss of available homes to meet housing need the council signed an agreement in 2012 to retain all of the receipts from additional RTB sales in order to provide new homes under the one for one replacement scheme and has retained over £32m of receipts since this agreement was in place.

Unfortunately the government has imposed strict restrictions around the use of these receipts, including:

- the need to spend them within 3 years or
- pay them over to government with punitive interest, and
- that they can only fund 30% of any project cost.

This council has utilised some of these receipts to develop or purchase 196 new social rented dwellings, including 93 at the award winning Goldsmith Street development and 49 on Rayne Park purchased from Norwich Regeneration Limited and the recently completed refurbishment of Bullard Road to provide 6 new family homes.

In 2015 Cabinet recognised that these restrictions meant that we wouldn’t be able to fully utilise the amounts we were receiving on our own development projects and so we have also provided grant funding to local registered provider partners. To date this council has approved £9.6m worth of grants that will enable the development of 232 new affordable homes in the city to which we will have nomination rights.

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

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

The outcome of this consultation remains outstanding.

If the government is serious about wanting to build 300,000 homes each year local authorities have to be part of the solution to this. It is a challenge this administration is up for!"

Question 15

Councillor Stutely to ask the cabinet member for resources the following question:

“An official study has concluded that more than 750 people were denied the chance to vote during May’s local elections due to a trial scheme in some areas which demanded people show ID before casting a vote. Overall, the Electoral Commission study found up to 2,083 people were initially turned away for not having the necessary ID with them, and as many as 758 never returning. The Government, including the Norwich North MP responsible for this appalling scheme, has branded the pilot programmes ‘another success’. Will the cabinet member for resources agree that this council was right to voice its concern against this scheme last year, will continue to refuse to partake in any future piloting of voter ID, and make every positive effort to ensure a maximum turnout in the democratic process?”

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources’ response:

“There were voter ID pilots across 10 council areas in 2019. According to the [Electoral Commission research](#) on the pilots 1968 voters were asked to return with suitable ID and 740 later returned with the required identification. Identification ranged from passports and drivers licences to utility bills or ID prepared by the local Electoral Registration Officer. The largest urban authority in the pilot scheme was Derby. In Derby 514 voters were initially turned away with 256 returning later. As Labour authorities have not taken part in the pilots, we do not know what the figure would be in a large urban area like Leeds, Liverpool or Lambeth.

In Norwich rather than taking part in the Voter ID pilots, the elections team have concentrated on positively engaging with local residents and particularly those under-registered groups. For the first time this year students at the UEA will be able to register to vote automatically at the point of enrolment onto their courses. And the elections team is actively working with the UEA and NUA and the respective students unions in stressing the importance of registering to vote. This is important this year as a general election could happen at a time in the autumn when students have moved into their term time addresses. The council is also using to its own council data to contact home movers through new council tax accounts and continues to develop relationships with key groups like care homes, landlords and those residents who may need to register anonymously for safety reasons. Despite the efforts of the electoral services, a report by the [Association Of Electoral Administrators](#) stated that the government should be concentrating on updating archaic ‘out of date’ election law and also provide adequate funding to local authorities for the administration of elections and electoral registration rather than relying on the goodwill and long hours of those administrators.

This Conservative government is undertaking this policy of Voter ID to tackle a problem that hardly exists, there is no evidence of voter fraud expect in a tiny number of cases for which present law is more than adequate to deal with.

I believe that they are doing so by the desire to follow the strategy of voter suppression practised by the American Republican Party especially in the southern states to reduce voter turnout among ethnic minorities and poorer voters who often due to their poverty have fewer forms of ID."

Question 16

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

"Given these generally unhappy and tumultuous political times will the leader agree and comment that the city council securing the future of this year's Big Bang and Spooky City is a positive and important success, giving everyone the access to a much needed, hopefully happy, free cultural events in our fine city?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"The city council is delighted to host Spooky City, Big Boom and the Christmas Switch On in the coming months. These events offer free family entertainment and an opportunity for people to dress up, come together and celebrate. They promise to be wonderful occasions and will bring many people in to the city centre.

On a broader point, cultural investment is the means to harness the creative potential of all communities and individuals across Norwich. There is no such thing as too much creativity! In Norwich, the link between high levels of investment in broad-based cultural projects and local residents and visitors is striking: an overall engagement rate of nearly 50%.

After all, one expression of the exercise of democracy is that it should be fun!"

Question 17

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

“Norwich City Council supports the Norfolk Car Club which currently has 60 cars and vans available on the city streets.

In Eaton there is only one car available for rent within the ward boundary.

This is disappointing because more cars positioned close to where people live would encourage more use of the car club.

While there are 4 bays marked out and 3 bays in the process of designation in Eaton there is no finance available to resource cars for these bays.

Each new car club introduced will be used by 20 drivers. This means taking cars off the road and using them less, all of which is good for the environment and a more efficient use of vehicles.

Please will the portfolio holder comment on how Norwich City Council can help increase the number of car club cars in Eaton and the city as a whole?

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

“Over the years the city council has offered considerable support to the Norfolk car club and this has resulted in the Norfolk car club being the most successful not for profit car club in the UK. That support has come in a number of ways including bidding for funding, securing the necessary traffic regulation orders and marking bays. Support for the car club has also come from other sources including Department for Transport, Norfolk County Council and from new property developments.

Growth of the car club city wide, including in Eaton is currently led by the car club operator as they are best placed to determine most viable locations based on customer feedback. As you say, there are locations in Eaton where car club bays have been identified but as yet no car has been provided. It is a matter for the operator, however I am very hopeful that this will be rectified in the not too distant future.

Norfolk County Council are to submit shortly a funding bid to the Department of Transport looking for money from the Future Mobility Zone budget to significantly expand the car club in the city and to start the switch from petrol and diesel vehicles to electric ones. As part of that Eaton Ward would see a number of new cars and bays introduced. Norwich is one of seven cities shortlisted for funding and it is expected the 3 or 4 will be successful so I am optimistic that we will get something. Even if we are not, however, we are committed to working with the car club operator to identify other potential funding sources to further expand the car club and to encourage the residents

of the city to use shared transport as a viable option to individuals owning their own cars.”