



**Cabinet**

**16:30 to 18:00**

**20 January 2021**

Present: Councillors Waters (chair), Harris (vice chair), Davis, Jones, Kendrick, Maguire, Packer and Stonard

Also present: Councillor Osborn

**1. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Harris declared an other interest in item 7 (below) Environmental Services: overview of services to be commissioned from Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) (key decision) in that she was a director of Norwich NORSE (Building) Company.

Councillor Maguire declared an other interest in item 7 (below) Environmental Services: overview of services to be commissioned from Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) (key decision) in that he was a director of Norwich NORSE (Environmental) Company.

**2. Public Questions/Petitions**

**Norwich Western Link Road**

Lucy Galvin asked the leader of the council (chair) the following question:

“Please explain to me the position of the cabinet on Norwich City Council regarding the building of the £153 million Norwich Western Link road. What exactly does the Norwich City Council cabinet require in the package of measures for sustainable transport which the city is expecting to have in order to give its support? Please provide outline costings and headline aims of the whole strategy and explain how it will mitigate in full the locked in carbon costs from the road building.”

The following written questions had been also received regarding the Norwich Western Link road:

Lenny Neale-Krommenhoek, Norwich resident

“A large colony of rare and protected Barbastelle bats has been found on the route of the Norwich Western link, and the area is rich in other woodland, vital insects and wildlife. Please will Norwich City Council cease its support for the road, and join Norwich Labour party members in opposing it?”

Willem Buttinger, Norwich resident

“We all know we have to move towards a future where we live sustainably with the environment. Should you not say that enough is enough and see the Wensum Link as the turning point where we start moving to that sustainable future?”

Liz Brandon, Norwich resident

“As a Labour Party member, I was so delighted that Councillor Emma Corlett’s resolution was passed with such a huge majority at the Labour Party meeting on Friday. Her petition was worded perfectly and I hope you will join her to show that Norfolk and Norwich Labour politicians recognise that more road building will not help with the climate emergency that we face. Norfolk has just had terrifying floods we can’t risk these environmentally detrimental projects.”

Penny Edwards, Norwich resident

“Any plans to fund infrastructure should prioritise building a sustainable and comprehensive public transport system. In working towards this for Norwich, will the Cabinet stop support for and construction of the Norwich Wensum Link road, and fund a sustainable public transport system instead?”

Ben Pett, Norwich resident

‘Norwich Labour members support the principle of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. The creation of the Norwich Western Link clearly undermines such an aim. Will the cabinet therefore listen to the views of the party members and formally oppose the Norwich Western link ?’

Hannah Hochner, Norwich resident

“Norwich Labour members support the target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 to address the climate emergency. Building the Norwich Western link road will make it even harder, if not impossible, to meet this target. Building the road will destroy important ecosystems and habitat for a large colony of rare and protected Barbastelle bats. On the brink of the 6th mass extinction, we cannot afford to lose any more species and their habitats.

Please will Norwich City Council stop supporting the road?”

Michael Rayner, Norwich resident

“Funding for infrastructure should be prioritised on building a sustainable and comprehensive public transport system, including the infrastructure needed to support an electric bus fleet. As a step in working towards that for Norwich, will the Cabinet cease support for the Norwich Western Link, and instead fund a 21st century city transport system?”

(The chair explained that a single response would be provided for all of these questions and confirmed that the questions and response would be published in the minutes of the meeting.)

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive development replied on behalf of the cabinet as follows:

“Thank you for the multiple questions about the city council’s position on the proposed Norwich Western Link (NWL).

Clearly the Western Link scheme is a very major and controversial proposal and, if built, it will have significant implications for Norfolk’s carbon emissions, its environment, traffic conditions across the city and economic activity in the north of the city. However, it should be remembered that the scheme proposed is entirely outside our administrative area and that the city council is not a transport authority. Therefore, we are not part of the decision making process on the NWL, which is entirely a county council matter.

The city council has always been consistent that any support for the scheme would be dependent on it being satisfied that certain conditions were fulfilled. This is consistent with the content of the emerging Greater Norwich Local Plan that is on the agenda for consideration at this meeting. In particular, we have demanded that the NWL needs to be set in the context of a clear and environmentally progressive strategy for the development of transport in Norwich.

This strategy needs to be the foundation for a clearly defined and comprehensive set of schemes with funding attached which would demonstrate that, when viewed as a package, public transport, cycling and walking would be prioritised and promoted over the use of the private car. In particular, evidence of the decongestion benefits of the NWL in the city was sought as the basis for some of these measures to promote modal shift and road space reallocation.

Since the city council expressed conditional support for the strategic outline business case, almost no progress has been made on the Transport for Norwich Strategy, and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan has not been published for consultation. The award of £32m for the Transforming Cities Fund project last year was welcome but a far smaller award than the original high value package that would have been comparable in value to the estimated £153m cost of the NWL. We have as yet received no evidence that traffic levels in the city’s streets will be eased in a way that would improve air quality or enable modal shift or road space reallocation as a result of the construction of the NWL.

In December, cabinet approved a detailed and considered response to the draft Local Transport Plan. At the time of writing this answer, we have not received an acknowledgement or a response to that submission, which was sent on 17 December. The response explained the types of principles and interventions that we would like to see implemented to improve transport in the city.

The city council's response to the Local Transport Plan sets out our bold and radical vision for transport in Norwich. It was drafted in the context of the Council's 2040 City Vision, the Covid-19 Recovery Plan and the Norwich City Centre Public Spaces Plan. It sets out thirteen policy principles, the very first of which is to respect climate limits. It supports the county's carbon neutrality target of 2030 and proposes tough carbon reduction targets for transport, supported by an immediate and radical reduction in emissions. It demands that the Local Transport Plan should set a carbon budget for transport in Norfolk and Greater Norwich, supported by strong policies to contain emissions within that budget.

The second principle of the city council's bold vision for transport is that health and wellbeing and fairness must be at the centre of transport policy. Access to transport directly impacts life chances but it is the poorest in society who tend to live beside busy roads or in polluted city centres, with a consequent impact on life expectancy and general health and wellbeing, so transport must be clean and transport policy must promote social justice by reducing inequalities and promoting fairness.

The third policy principle is that non-car access from homes to places where people work, learn, shop and are entertained must be affordable. This will require an approach to land use and transport planning which creates compact mixed-use clusters and directs development and calibrates density towards them.

The city council's fourth principle is to prioritise the different modes of transport on the basis of efficient energy and space use. We need to continue to induce demand for more sustainable travel behaviour by designing Norwich around the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and buses. We propose the prioritisation of different modes of transport according to a hierarchy which is based on their energy efficiency, with walking and cycling at the very top.

There are a further nine policy principles for transportation in Norwich, which are freely available to peruse. They cover vital issues such as the equality impact of transport policy and design; the need to actively manage the delivery of goods, which has increased dramatically as a consequence of the rise of online shopping; the use of technology to support our goals; and the generation of revenue to invest in sustainable transport and to make us less reliant on central government grants.

Our ambitious transport vision also makes radical proposals of interventions for delivery, including a workplace parking levy; a gradual reduction in the space available for fossil fuel vehicles to park; the allocation of spaces for autonomous vehicles; the reallocation of road space and time from cars to more sustainable modes; measures to free the city centre and neighbourhoods from polluting vehicles; a reduction in traffic levels in the vicinity of schools; the setting of 20 mph as the default speed limit across Norwich; and the creation of Mobility Hubs, which would facilitate smooth transfers between shared and clean modes of transport and to ensure people can be confident that there are hubs places in the city where they can access and smoothly switch between buses, trains, car club vehicles and hire bikes.

All of these ambitious and radical policies and measures would transform the city into a safer, cleaner, more sustainable and more equitable place. This is now the city council's main focus for influencing the county council on transport matters.

But, this vision must be seen in the context of the city council's diminished influence on the development and implementation of transport policy and projects in and around the city. This reduced role is a direct consequence of the county council's unilateral decision to terminate the Highways Agency Agreement. Therefore, the city council can propose ambitious and radical policies and measures, but we no longer have any role in the decision-making and implementation process.

In terms of the Western Link, the termination of the Highways Agency Agreement and the diminution of the city council's role in transport matters has combined with a lack of progress on the part of the county council in developing a new transport strategy. This slowness has served to undermine our confidence that the county is serious about providing sufficient complementary measures to satisfy our conditions for supporting the project. As I say, the termination of the Highways Agency Agreement means the city council does not have a formal role in this process; a role which would have helped ensure confidence that such complementary transport policies and schemes in the city were being planned, funded and implemented in a timely way and as agreed.

However, our final position will await the outcome of work that is being undertaken to prepare for the submission of the planning application for the NWL and the adoption of the Transport for Norwich Strategy. On a decision as important as this it is only right that we wait until we are in full possession of all the relevant information.

In order for the city council to consider supporting the proposal we will need to see clear and convincing evidence of the NWL being a critical part of an environmentally progressive and deliverable transport strategy for the city delivering:

- considerable air quality and decongestion benefits in the city;
- a comprehensive investment package in public transport, cycling and walking that is commensurate with the investment being considered for the NWL capable of delivering against carbon reduction targets in the Paris agreement or any successor agreements;
- the completion of complementary schemes before the NWL is completed;
- a political mechanism to ensure that the governance is in place to ensure that these commitments are implemented; and
- evidence that the wildlife and landscape impacts of the scheme can be satisfactorily mitigated.

We are an evidence based council, which has consistently requested both the evidence and the answers to our questions before a decision of support could be considered. This evidence has not been forthcoming and we can only surmise

why. However, meanwhile, the actions of the Tory-run county council have removed from the city any meaningful power in decision making on city transport and highways matters through the removal of the Highways Agency Agreement. But, we have not waited idly for the county council to respond. Instead, our alternative is clear. We have produced a Norwich transport plan that is bold, radical, evidence based and decisive. If implemented, it would give our city a better future in making practical real life improvements to people's day to day transport needs while safeguarding our precious environment.

So, our message is simple, but I'll repeat it again for those who have chosen not to listen. If the Tories at county what us to change they'll need to answer the questions, provide the evidence, reinstate the Highways Agency, or something very much like it, deliver on our bold transport plan and give us a meaningful say in transport and highways matters in the city. Until then, just as before, we cannot consider support."

By way of a supplementary question, Lucy Galvin asked whether this meant that the council could not support the proposed Western Link Road at the present time due to the political situation. The cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive development confirmed that the council did not support the Western Link Road at the present time. This was not due to the political situation as suggested by the questioner but due to the lack of progress with the scheme and no evidence of the conditions that the city council had set in the terms for its support being met. He pointed out that in terms of environmental issues this council set a very high bar.

### **3. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020, subject to correcting the spelling of the name of Councillor Davis in the list of members recorded as present.

### **4. Equalities Information Report 2021**

Councillor Davis, cabinet member for social inclusion introduced the report. During the presentation she highlighted that Norwich: was a "young city" with 42.9 per cent of the population aged between 15 to 39; had a high proportion of single people; was less religious than the national average; had 33 low layer super output areas which fell within the 20 per cent of the most deprived nationally areas (based on income) and there was an imbalance between incomes in the city and the rest of the travel to work area; the pay gap between men and women had increased by 3.7 per cent this year which was against regional and national trends for a reduction in the pay gap (there was no pay gap for city council employees); that all employees working on city council contracts with a value of over £25,000 received the living wage; the proportion of residents being economically inactive had doubled this year due to Covid-19; and that the percentage of hate crimes and incidences in Norwich had decreased from 40 per cent to 30 per cent as a proportion of the whole of Norfolk. As a result of the ongoing impact of Covid-19, next year's report would show a different picture of increased inequalities, not just in the economy, but in health and education. The government should consider the restoration of the link between social security entitlements and the cost of living. It should implement a comprehensive child poverty strategy and reinstate targets and reporting duties on child poverty. The government should also assess the impact of its decisions on tax and spending and undertake an independent review of the welfare benefits system,

including the reversal of regressive measures such as the two child cap, reduction of housing benefits for under occupied social rented housing and eliminate the 5 week wait for universal credit, and provide local authorities with the funds that they needed to tackle poverty.

The strategy manager apologised that the information on hate crime and incidents had not been available when the report had been considered by the scrutiny committee (17 December 2020) and that this information had now been shared with members.

The chair commented that the use of infographics made the report accessible and easy to read. The report would be shared with the Norfolk Equality and Human Rights Council and other partner organisations.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) approve the publication of the Equalities Information Report 2021:
- (2) ask the strategy manager and colleagues to share the report with partner organisations, as appropriate.

## **5. Scrutiny Committee Recommendations**

The chair presented the report in the absence of the chair of scrutiny committee. The cabinet member for social inclusion had attended the scrutiny committee on 17 December 2020. There were no direct recommendations to cabinet but it was noted that in paragraph 8, the scrutiny committee had asked officers to arrange a members' briefing on the council's approach to working as an anchor institution to promote equalities in the city. The chair commented that the issues that had been raised in discussion on the Equalities Information Report would be conveyed to the Norwich Good Economy Commission.

Members noted that the scrutiny committee would be considering the insourcing of joint ventures at its meeting in March 2021.

**RESOLVED** to note the recommendations agreed at the scrutiny committee held on 17 December 2020.

## **6. Greater Norwich Local Plan – Regulation 19 consultation draft**

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth, presented the report. The Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) recommended its partner councils to approve the plan for the Regulation 19 consultation. The sustainable development panel (3 December 2020) had commented on the earlier draft of the strategy document and had informed discussion at the GNDP board meeting. The panel had also had the opportunity to comment on the site allocations document.

The planning policy team leader confirmed that the cabinets of both South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council had approved the draft Regulation 19 plan for consultation last week.

During discussion, Councillor Maguire, the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment, and one of the council's representatives on the GNDP, reassured members that the council in making its recommendations took into account environmental issues and the impact of climate change. The cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive development said that the constituent councils that made up the GNDP represented predominantly rural communities and that the recommendations from the GNDP reflected a consensus of these different interests. The consultation would provide an opportunity for the public to comment.

Councillor Osborn expressed concern that the draft GNLP was not compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or legislation requiring carbon neutrality by 2050, pointing out that the rural dispersal of housing was incompatible with this objective. The Greater Norwich planning policy team leader said that legal advice had been sought on this point and that there were measures to address climate change and compliance with the NPPF.

The chair and the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive development reiterated points made earlier about the opportunity to comment during the consultation and pointed out that the examination stage would test the soundness and legal compliance of the plan. It was important to appreciate that there could not be a GNLP without the agreement of the partner councils, which each had competing needs.

**RESOLVED** to approve the draft Regulation 19 Greater Norwich Local Plan for consultation on soundness and legal compliance in February and March 2021.

## **7. Environmental Services: overview of services to be commissioned from Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) (key decision)**

(Councillors Harris and Maguire had declared an interest in this item.)

The chair welcomed Hannah Leys, managing director, NCSL, to the meeting.

Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment, introduced the report in which he welcomed the transfer of environmental services into the control of the council's wholly owned company, NCSL. He said that there were some 50 services within environmental services, which included ground maintenance, street cleaning, parks and cemeteries, pest control, stray dogs, and collection and disposal of sharps. The wholly owned company would comply with the council's environmental strategy and be required to provide performance data. He explained that there were proposals to expand the electrification of the fleet and that the depot and service would be future proofed to ensure that it was as energy efficient as possible. He praised the contribution of officers across the council who had worked hard to ensure that the transfer of environmental services to the new company took place on 1 April. The company would provide a good service to residents and be democratically accountable to the people of the city.

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, said that the transfer of environmental services to NCSL would provide cost effective services to residents. He took the opportunity to thank the officers involved in this long and complex project.

The managing director (NCSL) said that she had been in post for 3 weeks. She said that it was a credit to her city council colleagues that the company was now at this stage. The company had recruited a head of health, safety and environmental quality and the development of the new depot was progressing well.

Councillor Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing, commended officers and the report, and said that she appreciated the work that had been undertaken. The transfer of building services would also be a large piece of work.

Councillor Osborn welcomed the transfer of services in house, but said that his group was concerned about the continued use of herbicides and missed opportunities to electrify the fleet and tools, and improve biodiversity.

During discussion the chair and cabinet members confirmed that every opportunity would be taken for environmental improvements. The director of place listed the environmental credentials of the new depot which he had reported to the climate and environment emergency executive panel (17 December 2020). The council owned the company which gave it more control. The depot would have conduits for electric charging points which could be retrofitted as more electric vehicles were added to the fleet. The managing director (NCSL) confirmed that the company was also committed to environmental improvements.

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) delegate authority to the director of people and neighbourhoods in consultation with the cabinet member for safe and sustainable city environment to award a contract for environmental services to NCSL for the six year period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2027, with the option to extend a further period of 5 years on an annual basis. The amount for 2021/22 is £6.543m. The total value for the 11 year period is estimated to be £75.816m;
- (2) delegate authority to the director of resources to agree and enter into a contract for provision of Support Services to NCSL for the six year period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2027, with the option to extend a further period of 5 years on an annual basis. The amount for 2021/22 is £0.522m. The total value for the 11 years period is estimated to be £6.283m;
- (3) approve a variation to the Tenancy and Estate Management System contract with Northgate for the period to 31 January 2027 for the value of £0.399m;
- (4) approve the re-profiling of capital spend between financial years, increasing the 2020/21 capital programme by £0.066m and reducing the 2021/22 programme by the same value. The capital programme is funding the contract variation and purchase of assets.

## **8. Write off of irrecoverable national non domestic rate debt (key decision)**

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, presented the report. He explained that, in general, if there was an opportunity to recover debts in the future the council would do so.

The interim director of resources assured members that the council worked with the business community to ensure that businesses were aware of any grants and support that was available to them. In this situation the business did not exist anymore so the debt was irrecoverable.

**RESOLVED** to approve the write off of £71,830.70 for NNDR (National Non-Domestic Rate) debt which is now believed to be irrecoverable and is covered within the bad debt provision for 2020-21.

## **9. Norwich Town Deal Implementation (key decision)**

The chair presented the report. The council was one of only four local authorities to be successful in its bid for £26 million. There was now a lot of work to do to carry out the programme and deliver the schemes, and engage the local community. The Town Deal board met weekly to ensure that targets were met and oversee the delivery of the programme. There were decisions that would feature in the council's budget setting next month. The Town Deal bid was integrated in the 2040 Vision and its objectives and reflected the communities' aspirations.

The chair then moved that discussion was continued following the exclusion of the public so that the appendices that were exempt from publication were taken into consideration.

(The minute of this item is continued under item \*11 below.)

## **10. Exclusion of the public**

**RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of items \*11 to \*12 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

## **\*11. Norwich Town Deal Implementation – exempt appendices (paragraph 3) (key decision)**

(Continuation of minute on item 9 above.)

Following discussion it was:

**RESOLVED** to:

- (1) approve the following in relation to mobilising the Towns Deal project including:

- (a) The budget profile of projects including the capital revenue split, (as set out in Appendix A);
  - (b) The statement on community consultation and engagement, (as set out in Appendix B);
  - (c) The project and programme confirmation document, (as set out in the exempt appendices);
- (2) delegate authority to sign-off individual project business cases to the director of place in consultation with the relevant portfolio holders.
  - (3) approve the project and programme confirmation document, (as set out in the exempt appendices).

**\*12. Managing Assets (General Fund) (key decision) (paragraph 3)**

**RESOLVED**, following consideration of the report, to approve the disposal of land identified in the report to support the development of six affordable homes under the Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent 2003.

CHAIR