



NORWICH
City Council

NORWICH CITY COUNCIL

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

7.30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Lord Mayor's Announcements

2. Declarations of Interest

3. Questions from the Public

4. Petitions

5. Minutes

To agree the accuracy of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 October 2008.

6. Questions to Executive Members/Committee Chairs

(A printed copy of the questions and replies will be available at the meeting)

7. Motion – Social Housing

Councillor Lubbock to move -

“This Council notes:

- The amount of social housing nationally has dwindled from 4.386 million social homes to rent in England in 1997 to just 3.936 million social homes in 2006 while the number of households on social housing waiting lists has risen almost 70% to 1.67 million.
- That, according to the National Housing Federation (NHF), one in every 16 households in the East of England are on a social housing waiting list.

- The last year has seen a steady rise in the number of people on social housing lists in Norwich.
- That many newly built flats and houses in the City are unsold or have been left empty due to the sharp economic downturn and associated problems.
- The policy of Newcastle City Council to buy houses on a new private development, which was in severe financial trouble, and make the homes available for affordable rents.

Council resolves to ask the Executive to:

- (1) explore the possibility of this Council buying up unsold properties and sites from building companies in order to replenish the social housing stock and help the property sector, using existing funding streams or asking the government to relax borrowing rules, allowing councils and social landlords to borrow against their assets to fund such a scheme;
- (2) open communication with private developers to see if localised solutions can be found to enable unused or unsold private housing to be used as social housing."

8. Motion - Northern Distributor Road

Councillor Morpew to move –

"This Council notes:

- That development of jobs and homes is crucial for the prosperity of the city and the wellbeing of those who live here now and will make their homes here in the future.
- Council recognises that it is important to provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure that we provide not just homes and jobs but create new and enhance existing communities to provide a high quality of life.

To that end Council resolves to:

- (1) Confirm its commitment to the Norwich Area Transport Strategy (NATS) and support for the Northern Distributor Road that is a key part of the NATS strategy. The NDR is an essential part of creating access to locations suitable for sustainable expansion and providing an opportunity to deal with many of the traffic problems faced by city residents.
- (2) Confirm the importance of the other NATS measures to improve and enable growth in the urban area and urban extensions, i.e:
 - Improved public transport including high quality services and priority measures;
 - Reduction of traffic speeds in residential areas

- Walking and cycling infrastructure;
- Improvements in the City Centre; and
- Protection of residential areas.

These should either be delivered where possible before the NDR is built or delivered as part of an integrated programme alongside the NDR and not left as a promise that might remain unfulfilled.

- (3) Support the assurances being sought from the GNDP that projects which deliver non NDR measures in NATS will be given equal consideration for funding (e.g. through the Integrated Development Programme).
- (4) Recognise the critical importance of other infrastructure investment and therefore support the policy of the Executive in pursuing priority for other infrastructure measures to ensure that the needs of residents in new and existing communities are addressed through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership such as:
 - skills education and training (including schools);
 - community provision – including leisure centres, sports facilities, allotments etc
 - green infrastructure including open spaces;
 - cultural facilities; and
 - emergency and medical services.”

9. Motion - Sustainable Communities Act

Councillor Watkins to move-

“This Council:

- Supports the bottom up process described in the Sustainable Communities Act, which is designed to aid local communities to direct central government assistance towards reversing community decline;
- notes that the Act gives local authorities the power to:-
 - (a) make proposals to government on the action and assistance government must take or give to promote sustainable communities; and
 - (b) argue for a transfer of public money and function from central to local control.

In the light of the Council's stated intention to make full use of the powers, the Council therefore resolves to ask the Executive to:-

- (1) use the Act by preparing and submitting proposals on how central government can help by 31 July 2009;
- (2) inform the local media of this decision;
- (3) write to local MPs, informing them of this decision;

- (4) write to Local Works (at Local Works, c/o Unlock Democracy, 6 Cynthia St, London N1 9JF) informing them of the Council's resolution to use the Act; and,
- (5) strongly encourage any new Council representing the Norwich area to continue to make full use of the powers."

10. Motion - Prepayment Meters

Councillor Arthur to move –

"This Council notes:

- Energy customers who pay for their gas and electricity using a pre-payment meter pay a premium to heat and light their homes. In some cases they can pay up to £70 more per year than customers who pay by quarterly bills and up to £300 more than customers paying by online direct debits.
- Ofgem acknowledges that most pre-payment meter customers are on the lowest incomes. It is clear that the market penalises customers who have to use these meters to budget or to pay off debt.
- Chancellor Alistair Darling has called on energy suppliers and Ofgem to come up with a fairer deal for the 5 million pre-payment meter users while the Energy Minister, Malcolm Wicks MP, stated that these extra costs "seem totally disproportionate.
- The National Housing Federation (NHF) is spearheading a campaign lobbying for energy providers to remove the punitive excess that prepayment users face. As part of this initiative NHF recently carried out a YouGov poll which showed that 80% of the public want the Chancellor to stop energy companies from charging pre-payment meter customers higher premiums.
- We believe that the additional payments made by those using pre payment meters flies in the face of financial exclusion and mitigates against people who are trying to budget.
- In Solihull Housing (a three star ALMO) an affinity agreement has been established with Ebico a non profit energy supplier whose fair price structure is irrespective of income, circumstances or how the customer prefers to pay.

The Council therefore resolves to:-

- (1) welcome the Executive's intention to respond to Ofgem's current consultation and strongly voices this council's opposition to the additional charges levied on prepay customers;
- (2) encourage other organisations and individuals to respond to the consultation;
- (3) support the National Housing Federation's campaign;

- (4) request that the Leader writes to the Energy Minister, Malcolm Wicks MP, urging him to end this inequality once and for all by compelling energy suppliers to equalise their pre-payment meter tariffs to the best quarterly bill tariffs (removing the poverty premium) and forcing them to severely reduce the differential pre-payment meter tariffs and direct debits;
- (5) ask the Executive to look into the options offered by the energy provider Ebico."

11.Motion – Campus Norwich

Councillor Sands to move –

"This Council notes:

- The proposal for another academy in Norwich highlights the growing diversity of governance arrangements for schools and further and higher educational institutions serving the city.
- The City Council recognises the importance of driving up educational achievement, but also recognises that there is an important need to coordinate standards, develop plans to meet the needs of the children and the skills and knowledge needed for a prosperous city
- The Council also believes that there should be a set of principles established for the way standards are set and achieved in the city, for consultation around major changes such as establishing academies or trust schools, and a body in place to help oversee those principles, moderate and act to ensure full consultation with parents and stakeholders when changes are proposed to the governance of educational institutions

The Council therefore resolves to:-

Welcome the proposal being explored by the Executive to establish 'Campus Norwich' partnership involving all Norwich schools and educational institutions and inclusive of families and communities to serve such a purpose and notes the intention to develop such a proposal for discussion within this Council and for wider public consultation during the next few months."

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