

Council

17 March 2020

Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 3

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

“Last month, an Appeal Court judgment ruled that a third runway at Heathrow was unlawful because the Secretary of State had failed to consider the Paris Agreement on climate change. Environmental groups consider that the same argument applies to the Government’s road building programme. Highways England are consulting on the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton scheme, with a deadline of 8 April. The Preliminary Environmental Information Report refers to a ‘probable increase in carbon emissions for both construction and operation’. This runs counter to the Paris Agreement and the Government’s statutory target of cutting carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. Surface transport emissions contribute 23% of UK emissions, with 2019 statistics showing an increase in traffic and new car emissions. Transport’s share of carbon emissions in Norfolk stands at a shocking 38%. Will the cabinet member ask officers to respond to the consultation stating the city council’s objection to this and other A47 dualling schemes on climate change grounds?”

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

“I believe it would be premature for the city council to lodge an objection to the long overdue improvements to the A47.

The implications of the recent legal judgement about Heathrow are far from certain. The need for improvement to the North Tuddenham to Easton section is well established and something that along with improvements to the remainder of the A47 this council has supported over many years. Delivery of our growth plans are dependant on the timely delivery of supporting infrastructure. This specific scheme will reduce congestion, improve road safety and, more generally, it will help support housing and jobs growth.

I appreciate, of course, the importance of trying to reduce emissions from transport, to reduce the need to travel and promote a shift to sustainable modes. However, I am not convinced that objecting to the scheme is appropriate and am also mindful that Highways England have yet to specify

any mitigations. What we need to ensure that we have an overall ambitious strategy to minimise the need to travel and maximise modal shift. This will be best done through the emerging Transport for Norwich Strategy rather than seeking to delay much needed infrastructure investment.”

Supplementary question from Councillor Carlo:

“Transport’s share of carbon emissions in Norfolk now stands at a shocking 38%. Department for Transport figures regarding the Percentage Change in Traffic 2012 – 2017 along the A11 between Ketteringham and Cringleford showed a 24.9% increase in traffic volume. This is clearly related to a red light increase in carbon emissions along the A11 to 2017 as shown as mapped by the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. Building more inter-urban road capacity results in an increase in carbon emissions which is not offset by a modal switch in the Norwich built up area. As the Highways England information admits, the A47 dualling schemes would increase carbon emissions for both construction and operation. Their traffic modelling takes into account the Government’s Clean Growth and Road to Zero strategies such as the transition of cars and vans to electric and so there won’t be any further specific mitigation measures as Cllr Stonard suggests. How is the City Council’s support for A47 dualling compatible with the need to stay within the Paris Agreement and the need to meet net zero by 2050?”

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

It is understood that a full environmental statement will be published alongside the Development Consent Order which is presently planned to be submitted later in the year and when there will be a further opportunity to comment. There will be ‘Further assessment of the carbon emissions associated with the Proposed Scheme and potential mitigation measures will be reported in the [environmental statement]. As this point the council will be able to comment on proposals and when the maximum information is available, albeit taking into account the full range of scheme impacts.”

Question 6

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

“The Integrated Waste Management Strategic Objectives Document approved by cabinet in February 2014 set targets including:

“To achieve a recycling rate of 50% and to seek to achieve a recycling rate of 60% by 2020”

In 2012, the recycling rate in Norwich was 40.6%. The most recent figures that Norwich’s recycling rate is at 38.3%. Can the cabinet member explain why we are not only so far off the target of 60% recycling, but also why recycling rates are worse now than they were eight years ago?”

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

“Norwich’s recycling performance is a reflection of the national picture.

Recycling rates in England increased substantially in the years between 2000 and 2010 and many local authorities subsequently set ambitious ‘stretch-targets’ for the next decade. Unfortunately recycling rates have flat-lined since then. The average rate for Local Authorities in England was 43% in 2011/12, but has increased to only 43.5% in 2018/19, reaching a high-point of 43.7% in the intervening years.

For Norwich to be consistently recycling in the region of 40% is a significant achievement for an entirely urban local authority. Most of the nation’s top recycling performers are predominantly rural areas - such as the East Riding, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. In areas with less urban development properties tend to have larger gardens and the predominance of properties with larger gardens, sometimes accompanied by a free garden waste collection service, encourages a very significant tonnage of green waste. Substantial quantities of green waste will always ‘skew’ the recycling figures. The garden waste collected in Norwich is typically less than 20% of the total recycling tonnage, whereas in less urban locations it can be more than a third by weight. Recycling statistics are based solely on the weight of material collected, therefore urban areas will always appear to be performing less well than areas with a significant tonnage of green waste.

Our neighbouring authority, Broadland, regularly performs much closer to the national average, but this is not surprising given that they have over twice the number of garden waste customers and collect on average three times as much garden waste by weight.

Over the last few years messages about sustainability have had an impact on households, a positive development but one which also impacts on recycling rates – e.g. where consumers are consciously seeking products with less packaging and manufactures are responding to the change in consumer habits. In recognition of this our own corporate performance indicators now

show the greater importance of reducing household waste, rather than relying solely on seeking to recycle more. Norwich residents have consistently performed better than those in other Norfolk districts in terms of kg of waste per household and this trend is continuing as the headline rate moves below 400kg per household per year towards the target of 375kg.”

Councillor Osborn’s supplementary question:

Thank you for your response, which makes sense and is reassuring. I note that, according to the "Let's Recycle" [league tables](#) extrapolated from Defra data, some metropolitan councils such as Stockport, Trafford and Ealing do have significantly higher rates of recycling than Norwich, while maintaining similar levels of total waste collected in kg terms. Furthermore, some of the rural districts, despite having arguably a larger amount of garden waste, still maintain similar levels of total waste to Norwich, for example South Oxfordshire, Three Rivers and Vale of White Horse, which suggests that they may have seen greater success in reducing total levels of non-garden waste. And some of the district councils that combine an urban centre with rural surrounds, such as Colchester, have both lower total waste levels and higher recycling rates. What is it that these councils are doing that Norwich can learn from?”

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

“When comparing waste and recycling performance it’s important to be clear about the collection services provided by the councils being compared. If these services are different the comparative performance is very difficult to assess and, potentially, of little value.

As you will know, Norwich operates on an alternate weekly collection service for waste and recycling (AWC), with 240 litre capacity wheeled bins. All of the councils you have mentioned operate an AWC service, but they are fundamentally different in how they provide this service.

Stockport, Three Rivers and Trafford only provide 140 litre wheeled bins for their waste services. South Oxfordshire and vale of White Horse only provide 180 litre bins for waste. So all of these councils would be expected to collect significantly less waste and more recycling – because they have physically restricted the amount of waste that residents can present. The fact that waste levels in some of these councils are similar to Norwich, despite these significant restrictions, is a great credit to our residents and our service.

Ealing is not a suitable comparator for Norwich because it operates as a waste disposal authority (WDA) – it is not a waste collection authority (WCA) like Norwich. Ealing also operate their own recycling centre, which further distances it from useful comparison.

When comparing our 'nearest neighbours' – towns and cities with similar socio-economic circumstances and similar collection services – Norwich is actually in the top 30% for recycling performance.”

Question 7

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

“The council-owned moorings on the eastern bank of the River Wensum between Foundry Bridge and Carrow Bridge are often used illegally by boats which may not meet environmental standards. Two boats have been recovered from the river-bed here in the last month, having, no doubt, leaked pollutants into the river system. In order to provide much-needed city centre housing, reduce anti-social behaviour and generate a revenue stream, I would like to see these moorings developed by the council with permanent houseboats and appropriate ancillary services installed to be rented out at market rates. Would the cabinet member agree to explore installing permanent houseboats?”

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

“Thank you for your question.

The River Wensum Strategy, a multi-agency strategy to revitalise the river corridor, was adopted by the council and its partners in 2018.

The strategy supports the provision of permanent residential moorings on the River Wensum and considers that they could deliver a range of benefits. Permanent houseboat sites with proper on-site facilities could help to bring life back to the river in the form of revenue-generating housing in a pleasant environment, contribute to meeting local housing need, and benefit the local economy.

The Broads Authority is the planning authority for the River Wensum within the city centre up to New Mills, and is also part of the River Wensum Strategy Partnership. The City Council made successful representations to the Broads Authority Local Plan public examination to allow for residential moorings in Norwich, so there is now a policy basis in the adopted Broads Local Plan for provision of such moorings along the Wensum, subject to a number of considerations.

The River Wensum Strategy does not identify specific sites for residential moorings, however there may be a number of opportunities for provision of serviced residential moorings that would benefit from being explored. If provision of residential moorings is progressed it is important that an assessment is made of all potential sites, not just the site between Foundry and Carrow bridges. This would involve development of options and feasibility assessment, and would require a multi-agency approach.

The River Wensum Strategy Board is currently developing a Delivery Plan and as part of this is likely to consider the potential for further investigation of the potential for residential moorings, subject to funding and in light of other priorities.”

Councillor Price's supplementary question:

"Will the cabinet member support this particular opportunity to contribute to resolving the housing needs of the city by discussing this potential income-generation proposal with NRL and working with other councillors to formulate a viable business proposal?"

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

"Council officers have considered the potential for residential mooring on the river in the past: the merits of doing so is acknowledged. However it would not be possible to achieve without some expense, through the creation of suitable mooring points for example. Other critical issues to resolve include provision for waste, sewage and services.

At first sight, therefore, it is not clear whether the income likely to be received would be sufficient to justify the investment. Given other pressures on the council's property portfolio at present due to Covid-19 as well, I would not recommend committing our limited staff resource to this at the present time."

Question 8

Councillor Grahame to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion the following question:

“Can I please have an update on the access charter?”

Councillor Davis, the cabinet member for social inclusion’s response:

“In a response to a public question at the July 2018 council meeting it was explained that a charter, such as Hull’s setting out the council’s promise to people with disabilities regarding highways issues, is contingent on an impact assessment having been completed by Norfolk County Council as the highway authority. Councillor Carlo asked for an update in March 2019 and it was explained that the assessment had yet to be completed. We are not aware that the county work is complete and meanwhile staff resource to develop a charter has not been available.

As Councillors will be aware the highways agency agreement with Norfolk County Council will end on 31st March this year. Thereafter this council will have no highway authority responsibilities and direct role over highway improvements in the city. All works that may come forward as part of the Transforming Cities Programme, therefore, will be designed and implemented by Norfolk County Council who will also be responsible for existing highway infrastructure.

In view of this change, an access charter is not something this council can take forward in any meaningful way. Any need will be something for Norfolk County Council to consider.”

Councillor Grahame’s supplementary question:

“It is a shame that the council left acting on the access charter for so long that it is no longer able to influence the design of our streets. Why did the council not take action sooner?”

Councillor Davis, the cabinet member for social inclusion’s response:

“The city council was never in a position to dictate the highway design policy for the city. As agents for the county council any charter that was adopted would have to be agreed with them, and until the county had carried out their impact assessment no one was in a position to produce a charter.

I would also remind Councillor Grahame that the last few years has seen an unprecedented level of transport investment in Norwich. The staff who would have worked on an access charter were fully occupied in implementing new infrastructure that was for the benefit of all the residents of the cities, including those with mobility issues.”

Question 10

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

“In the midst of a climate emergency and communities struggling under 10 years of austerity, we believe the Western Link Road is simply not justifiable.’ Does the cabinet member agree with this statement?”

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

“As I have said when asked this question previously, the south of the city has for many years benefited from the southern bypass, which has removed 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 city council has a duty on behalf of the whole city – north as well as south. The Western Link will deliver benefits for everyone, but especially those who live in the north and west of the city: an area that still experiences traffic similar to that in the south before the southern bypass was built. These citizens deserve the same benefits.

Saying that, we have said all along that city council’s support for the Western Link is dependent on a package of other transport investment and mitigation measures being provided. Those measures need to increase walking, cycling and the use of public transport as well as improving air quality and encouraging inclusive growth and economic development.

Many 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”

Councillor Youssef’s supplementary question:

“Councillor Stonard says that the city council’s support for the Western Link is dependent on a package of other transport investment measures. The city council took the same position in relation to the NDR. We now see that the council’s Transforming Cities application, as submitted, has not been accepted and, instead, Norwich City Council will have to share £117m with two other large cities. This much smaller level of funding will not fund the public transport network as envisaged. This means that there will be large amounts of road building going ahead around Norwich but not a large package of sustainable transport measures necessary for planned growth. Will the city council drop its support for the Western Link and request that

county funds earmarked for preparing the scheme are re-directed into sustainable transport measures for Norwich instead?"

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

"Whilst the announcement on the county council's Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) bid was undoubtedly disappointing the share of £117m that has been ring fenced to Norwich and two other cities does still give a significant likelihood of being able to deliver a meaningful package of measures to promote sustainable travel. Indeed it may still represent the biggest single investment in sustainable transport measures in Norwich.

It was never the intention that the TCF bid would represent the totality of measures needed to support the implementation of the western link. I would reiterate that until the full environmental impacts of the western link are known, along with the planned mitigation measures, then it would be premature for the city council to withdraw its' support for a section of infrastructure that has the opportunity to significantly benefit the city's residents."