



NORWICH
City Council

Council
29 January 2019
Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 1

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

“Over the last couple of years a number of residents have reported concerns about people cycling on the pavement. This is a particular nuisance for elderly residents and mothers with their children in pushchairs. It is clear that the council and the police need to do more to tackle this issue. One cheap idea, which would be easy to implement would be to stencil reminders on the pavement saying “cyclists please dismount on the pavement” or words to that effect. Does the cabinet member agree with me that this matter needs to be prioritised and will he consider implementing the measure suggested?”

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

“I think we will all agree that cycling on footways that were not designed to be shared use is a problem for us all. However I do not agree that stencilling messages on the pavement is the right way to solve the issue. There is no evidence to suggest that it would be effective. Also when we for instance used this technique to promote pedestrians and cyclists to be mindful of each other, it promoted a spate of commercial organisations thinking it was acceptable for them to stencil the pavement with adverts. Stencilling is therefore to be used with caution.

Of course we want cyclists to behave responsibly and not cycle on unsuitable pavements. The city council is making great strides in offering cyclists dedicated facilities through the City Cycle Ambition Grant programme. We are shortly to implement a scheme along Earlham Road, a location that I know where cycling on the pavement causes problems, which will make it safer for cyclists to stay on the carriageway.

I’m sure most people who cycle on the pavement know that they shouldn’t be doing it, but lack the confidence to cycle on the road. Norfolk county council does offer cycle training and through their Pushing Ahead project they are promoting this to a wider audience.

While we are encouraging cyclists to use appropriate facilities we should remember that the responsibility for dealing with cycling on the pavements ultimately is not a city council responsibility. It is an offence to cycle on a

footway and the only authority that has powers to enforce this are Norfolk constabulary.”

Question 2

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

“Norwich City Council plans to spend of £232,000 capital spending on developing all-weather courts, a large proportion of which is proposed for replacing grass courts at Heigham Park with three all-weather floodlit courts. Heigham Park Grass Courts Group have offered to take on the running and maintenance of grass tennis for free. A large number of local residents want to retain grass tennis at Heigham Park. Nelson has the second lowest level of deprivation in the city; there are wards where deprivation is high and the need for capital spend far greater. Will the Cabinet member allow the community to take on maintenance of Heigham Park grass courts and divert the capital saved to areas of the city where the need is greater and residents support all-weather courts?”

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

“I do wonder how many times an answer to this same question from councillor Carlo will need to be provided; the Leader, my predecessor and I have done so on many occasions either in this chamber or in email correspondence. My support for the all-weather courts was also confirmed at the Planning Committee meeting in November, which I believe she attended.

So, for sake of clarity may I provide some important points.

The city’s parks when they were laid out were, and this is very much the same today, provided for all residents. I would suggest that it is not about distinguishing between providing parks facilities in the more deprived areas for less affluent people and parks facilities in the less deprived areas for the better off. This council should be integrating facilities so that they can be used by all of our communities, not setting out to segregate them, with our residents encouraged to use any park they wish to regardless of where they live.

The area where the grass courts were has not had any fine turf management since their closure and would require reinstatement works beyond routine maintenance if they were brought back into use, which will not happen. Therefore, there is no current tennis court facility for a community group to take on the maintenance and running of.

The proposed investment in tennis provision is about providing a sustainable and affordable resource that will generate income to help maintain tennis courts into the future given that the council's budget continues to decline. This includes bringing in external funding into our parks, which the Green party has encouraged the council to do in this chamber.

This is an opportunity to build on the proven success of Norwich Parks tennis and expand it to Heigham Park, Lakenham Rec and Harford Park. The facility at Heigham Park, as well as the funding for it, cannot be viewed in isolation and is an important part of the delivery model which will enable the provision of affordable quality tennis, which is economically sustainable and available all year round. This is about long-term planning and investment which will open up increased access to tennis courts at affordable costs for our residents.

The investment will also provide tennis provision at Heigham Park from 0800 – 2200 for 52 weeks per year and not for the limited period of time the previous grass provision was provided.

There is a need to increase the number of tennis courts available, particularly as at peak time the courts at other parks are full. Demand is increasing year on year and the provision of all-weather courts will increase the availability of courts year round.

The removal of grass tennis at Heigham Park has already provided a contribution of £40,000 to the council's overall gross savings requirements of £2.5m per year over the next five years.

The expansion of Norwich Parks Tennis will bring benefits to Heigham Park, Lakenham Recreation Ground and Harford Park and the communities that use them. Unfortunately, the objectives of Heigham Park Grass Courts Group did not align with those of the council through Norwich Parks Tennis with regards to Heigham Park and the wider expansion of tennis provision.

I do think that it is worth highlighting again that the increased accessibility to tennis courts 52 weeks a year for a household membership fee of just £30 per year is good value. I have been told by residents from across the city that they feel this is extremely good value, which makes it more accessible for them to access the facilities and improve their health. Incidentally, the proposed membership in the Heigham Park Grass Courts Group revised business plan the council received in August 2018 was £60 per person for free play; 100% more expensive than Norwich Parks Tennis for a single member; and 8 times more expensive, based on a family of four playing.

All-weather courts at Heigham Park will benefit Norwich by contributing towards delivering our key priorities of:

1. A fair city – through the provision of affordable tennis where people are not socially or financially excluded by high membership fees or the cost of court hire; membership being £30 per household per year with no additional court costs (unless floodlights are required), contributing to reducing inequalities in the city.
2. A safe and clean city – tennis being delivered by a Sport England Tennis + accredited provider, which recognises venues that are safe to play at and provide an all year round tennis programme.
3. A prosperous and vibrant city - where more people will be able to access affordable leisure facilities, in the form of high quality all-weather tennis courts, 365 days a year from 0800 until 2200 increasing use and public presence in the parks.
4. A provider of value for money services – with a commitment to ensuring the provision of efficient quality services to residents and visitors, whilst continuing to face challenging savings targets; by protecting and improving tennis provision through capital investment with partners. Norwich Parks Tennis generating a sinking fund to cover the annual maintenance costs and scheduled re-colouring and re-marking of Norwich Parks Tennis Courts across the city into the future.
5. A healthy city – by increasing the opportunity for people to play tennis that is affordable, that can be booked online by members or on a pay and play basis by visitors to the city or non-members. The focus being to promote tennis throughout the year for all age groups, both adults and children, through social play, internal competition, matches and to offer professional coaching to any members who want to improve their standard of play.

To be clear, the proposed investment in tennis provision is about providing a sustainable and affordable resource that will generate income to help maintain tennis courts across the city into the future whilst the council's budgets continue to decline. This will enable residents, from across the city, to access the facilities at affordable costs and will have the impact of improving health outcomes.

Although the city council will not be providing grass courts at Heigham Park, there are ten grass courts available for hire through Schools Plus at Hewett Academy.

For complete clarity, my answer to the question is 'no'."

Question 3

Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:

"The Green group was contacted by a resident from the Marlpit estate on 10 January, and told that city council contractors were removing shrubbery and hedgerows in the area. The resident said that a contractor said the removal of

vegetation was to save money. She also said that she enjoys seeing wildlife, such as hedgehogs and hedge sparrows near her home, but these species rely on shrubs and hedges. Can the cabinet member please tell me how much similar vegetation is being removed and not replaced across the city? What is the rationale behind the removal of these shrubs and hedges?"

Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe city environment's response:

"Each year our joint venture partners, Norwich Norse Environmental, complete a considerable annual programme of grounds maintenance. On average they are cutting over 3 million square metres of grass every two/three weeks during the growing period and maintaining 23 formal parks, 60 natural areas (including woodland and marshland habitats), 89 play areas, 18 allotment sites (over 1900 plots) 15 football pitches, 4 bowling greens, 4 cricket wickets, 16 games courts, 18 tennis courts, 2 operational cemeteries, 28 closed churchyards, 2 pitch & putt courses and around 200,000 sq. metres of shrub beds. The council has continually sought to improve maintenance standards whilst at the same time recognising an ongoing requirement to manage costs.

During 2017/18 officers reviewed the provision and maintenance of shrub beds alongside the council's neighbourhood strategy. This strategy sets out a vision that a successful, sustainable neighbourhood will:

- be clean and well cared for by the community and the Council
- feel safe to live in and move around
- contain community facilities and activities that cater for the needs of its community; whether young, old or with special or particular needs and interests
- have local people who take responsibility for their own lives and those of their families
- have lively challenging community organisations that champion the needs of the people and the neighbourhood and who work to meet those needs independently.

As part of this review it was noted that a number of shrub beds did not meet the neighbourhood strategy vision, for a variety of reasons including -

- historical issues with inappropriate planting and maintenance
- general wear and tear
- damage caused by people and animals
- health and safety issues (e.g. shrubs obscuring line-of-sight for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists)
- access issues for maintenance (often due to later developments around the shrub bed)
- extremes of weather
- shrubs acting as 'litter traps'

To address all these issues a shrub bed improvement project was launched in 2018. The overriding aim of this project is to improve the quality of shrub beds

without increasing maintenance costs. To do this it was necessary to identify sites where more appropriate planting and/or alternatives to planting could be provided. This included sites where there are issues gaining access for maintenance (or problems removing green waste), sites that are poor quality or are sparsely filled and sites that needed substantial remedial works to bring them back to an appropriate standard.

For every site where the current issues suggested that the maintenance requirement should be reduced this would free-up resources to ensure that other sites throughout the city can be maintained to a high standard on an annual basis. The project will also have an emphasis on encouraging local communities to take ownership of planting in their local area and take on a level of maintenance where possible, or to encourage local businesses to support shrub bed maintenance, either financially or through donating equipment. This has been successful in other areas of the City and we are keen to build on these successes.

Marlpit was identified as one of the areas where the existing planting was inappropriate and where action was required to improve the quality of the bed. Consequently some of the existing shrubs have been removed to be replaced with healthier and more suitable plants and parts of the bed will be grassed. In this way the project will provide for the ongoing maintenance of shrub beds to a higher standard than currently whilst maintaining the council's commitment to the provision of green spaces and prudently managing the ongoing and future costs"

Question 4

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

"The announcement that the Conservative run Norfolk County Council will close 38 SureStart centres, including a significant number in Norwich, has been met with horror from my constituents in Bowthorpe Ward. Will the cabinet member for Social Inclusion condemn these closures and examine all options for what support might be provided to the communities who rely so heavily upon them in the future?"

Councillor Davis, cabinet member for social inclusion's response:

"Thank you for your question.

Yes, I will absolutely condemn the closure of the children's centres. Once again, we see the Tories making short-term decisions which will have a long-term impact on the children of our city.

The county council has given no details about how what remnants of a service will be weighted by deprivation and need - and there is no clarity on what the criteria will be to access the new service. Some areas of high deprivation,

such as Tuckswood and Heartsease will see their communities removed from easy access to children's centres. Without transport, or the money for public transport we will see vulnerable families unwillingly disengaged from the service.

Some sessions, which were previously universal, may now be chargeable, which will automatically exclude low-income families. The majority of universal services, once provided in centres, will now be available online, and despite Norwich City Council's excellent digital inclusion work there is a large risk that families will be unable to access the online offer. Many families relied on using IT equipment at their children's centres as they do not have computers. An enhanced focus on signposting and self-help can entrench inequalities by only meeting the needs of more naturally enfranchised families.

There are safeguarding risks where interventions are de-professionalised and delivered in community settings, and it is still unclear as to where these delivery points will be. There is real concern about the capacity of other community building in the city, as these are already in use by existing community groups. It is also completely unclear how this links to the Norwich Opportunity Area's aims of social mobility, particularly when this new service has been built around budget cuts, rather than assessment of community need.

Any local authority that disposes of buildings funded through Sure Start capital grants from the Department for Education is at risk of having the money clawed back under the terms of the contract. In Norfolk, there is a risk of a £16million clawback from the 38 centres earmarked for closure. The only way to prevent this is for the buildings to be taken over by other groups or organisations for the provision of services to under 5s. However, the county council has only made £500k provision for the whole of Norfolk to adapt or upgrade these buildings – that is £13k per building earmarked for closure. With early years' providers struggling to make ends meet and the pressure on school budgets increasing, this does not seem like a realistic prospect.

I have further concerns about the ability to provide a new model by November 2019, and there is something that sticks in the craw about skilled women losing paid employment and being replaced by volunteers. This does nothing to lessen inequality in our city.

Any new model for Norwich needs to have clearly articulated outcomes that relate to local issues that are evidenced to be mitigated by services proposed. As data supplied with the consultation on the current or proposed model is limited, we believe that what evidence there is should be used to shape services to improve:

The level of development at age 5 of the third of children in Norwich in Norwich who do not meet this level (in some wards this is 50%)

The long-term social outcomes of the cohort (including those falling short of a good level of development at aged 5) who are more likely to require additional support in school (via pupil premium), lack good

GCSEs, and ultimately transition into adulthood with less chance of secure, well-paid employment.

In order to achieve this, a new model would also need to reflect the higher levels of household and child poverty that are current in Norwich compared with neighbouring districts, and are geographically located in the same areas of sub-optimal development age 5.

Whilst the changes have resulted in 3 children's centres in Norwich rather than 1 proposed, the new services need to be resourced to meet the levels of need in the city.

This would necessarily include addressing socio-economic factors and household-specific issues such as parenting.

Although evidence locally seems to be partial on the impact of the current services, individual children's centres are able to evidence that:

They are working with families from deprived communities

That those who engage with children's centres on a consistent basis reach a better level of development at age 5 than their comparator peers

Recently published evidence from the House of Commons library indicates early year's attainment in Norwich South and Norwich North is better than for overall social mobility. This suggests that the current children centre provision is mitigating some of the negative effects of wider socio-economic factors.

In addition, the proposed model does not appear to be supported by any evidence that it would retain the best elements of this current effective practice.

A future model should therefore be constructed around this evidence and policy framework, even where causality is difficult to ascertain, with improved data collection, evidence-gathering and analysis built into the new model so that it can be monitored and effectively targeted on an ongoing basis. Without taking this longer-term, evidence-led approach, we believe that the decrease in resource proposed will lead a higher demand over future years for more expensive public sector interventions, including an increase in the Looked After Child population."

Question 5

Councillor Erin Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:

"Before Christmas one of my constituents was stabbed in an attempted murder at Godric Place, as part of the County Lines drug fuelled crime wave, which has hit our city. Given the escalating problem of violent crime and devastating consequences for Norwich can the cabinet member for Safe City

Environment comment on the ongoing work this council is taking to combat this growing problem?"

Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe city environment's response:

"The continuing issues of county lines which are occurring across the city and other parts of the county are of considerable concern to this council and other agencies in Norfolk.

Not only have there been incidents of violence occurring in our city, but Norwich is also seeing vulnerable tenants being cuckooed and young people exploited.

Whilst much good work has been undertaken by the Norfolk Constabulary to arrest offenders, I do support the Chief Constable's view, that the problems cannot be resolved by the police alone.

Norwich City Council has a very definite role to play and is playing its part.

The council's primary operational response to county lines is through the anti-social behaviour and tenancy enforcement (ABATE) team. The ABATE team is co-located with a team of police officers within the Norwich operational partnership team (OPT), based at Bethel Street police station.

Working jointly with the police, Operation Gravity focuses a lot of the ABATE team's resources due to the level of risk and harm to vulnerable residents and the impact of cuckooed properties on the wider community.

Whilst successes are achieved with the closing down of drug operations in council tenancies and the ceasing of cuckooing activity, a new location will spring up in another part of the city.

Over the 12 months, ABATE have worked with the police to issue section 8 misuse of drugs act letters in cases of cuckooed properties, following their successful implementation in elsewhere.

These letters are presented to residents in cuckooed properties jointly by ABATE and police officers where county lines activity is evidenced to be taking place. The resident is advised that police and council are aware of the drug dealing, how they are breaking the law and the subsequent consequences of that if it continues. The residents are also offered support to cease activity and how they can safely provide information on those operating the county line.

This might include a move to alternative accommodation and the property temporarily secured to stop the activity. This helps disrupt activity and protect vulnerable residents from violence, exploitation and unwilling cuckooing of their property. A review of the effectiveness from the use of 'Section 8' letters will be undertaken this year.

The council will also make use of the absolute ground for possession power in suitable circumstances. This enables some respite for neighbours that have endured ongoing antisocial behaviour from county lines activity.

The council's antisocial behaviour manager has provided briefings to all of the council's front line officers, to provide information on:

- What County Lines is
- What Operation Gravity is
- Indicators of county lines activity – what to look out for
- Risk to vulnerable residents
- How to report suspected county lines activity.

Information has also been provided to the council's safeguarding champions as well members.

The circulation of Crimestoppers information has also been used. Crimestoppers allows the public to report issues of crime and disorder anonymously and one area of the city was targeted by officers from the council's tenancy management and area management teams, the police and ward councillors, to encourage reporting and provide reassurance that the council and police officers will not tolerate drug dealing. Information was provided on what residents should look out for and how to report anonymously any activity taking place.

Officers met with police colleagues only last week to review the effectiveness of joint working and to consider what further action is required to protect vulnerable people and help rid the city of this menace.

I hope to bring forward proposals to cabinet very shortly which will develop further the already good work undertaken by this council in conjunction with the Norfolk Constabulary to target County Lines."

Question 6

Councillor Fullman to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:

"Representing a ward heavily affected by County Lines drug activity and serious crime I was concerned that hear the chief constable of Norfolk confirm that extra potential budget cuts, due to officer pensions contributions, could mean that numbers would fall to their lowest level since 1968, with a loss of 110 police officers. On top of previous serious police officer cuts, the abolition of the much loved PCSO's in 2017 and further reductions in the community safety support offered to my constituents, can the cabinet member for safe city environment confirm that he will support our local police force in securing the budget needed from central government to safeguard those engaged in protecting our city?"

Councillor Maguire, the cabinet member for safe city environment's response:

"The Norfolk Constabulary like all public services is having to cut services due to the Government's continued austerity programme. This is hitting some of your most vulnerable communities hard who are facing services which have been reduced.

Whilst the Norfolk Constabulary have taken steps to reduce costs such as sharing services and re-modelling how it delivers policing in Norfolk to meet reduced funding, the latest threat is the loss of more than 100 police officers due to the Government seeking increased employer pension contributions from an already decreasing budget.

It has been reported that the Constabulary will have to find an additional £5.6m of savings by April 2020 which is of the scale that will result in the loss of front line officers.

I can reassure Cllr Fullman that I shall be writing to the Home Secretary and Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner with this council's concerns as this is not what the residents of our city deserve."

Question 7

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

"In recent weeks there have been repeated attempts to challenge the asset investment strategy of this council, culminating in a recent Conservative leaflet accusing this council of spending £40m when it could be funding amongst other things "the police". Can the cabinet member for resources comment again, to help avoid the smallest shred of doubt, as to why this council invests in assets, the returns already achieved by adopting this strategy and how this desperately needed income can help support crucial discretionary and statutory services?"

Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resource's response:

"As per previous responses to questions about the council's asset investment strategy, the council invests in commercial properties in order to generate a new net income stream and thereby protect front-line services that would be at risk of being cut or reduced. To date the recent acquisitions have achieved a net initial return of 2.9 per cent.

Tory controlled District Councils such as Ashford, Canterbury, East Hampshire, Spelthorne, Woking and Uttlesford have all spent more on commercial properties recently than Norwich City Council. Both Labour and Conservative councils are investing in commercial properties from borrowing capital funds from the Government's own Public Works Loan Board, in order to produce revenue incomes to help protect vital local services from the effects of the massive cuts in Government Revenue Support Grants to Local

Government. Tory controlled Spelthorne Borough council has borrowed a billion pounds in recent years for this purpose.

Speaking recently before Parliament's Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee a senior civil servant Melanie Dawes said "there are only one or two councils that we are aware of that are really pushing the envelope beyond the guidance we updated with CIPFA (the professional accountancy body)". So perhaps those responsible for writing this leaflet, should have bothered to consult their own Government and Conservative councillors elsewhere in the county before writing such drivel."

Question 8

Councillor Smith to ask the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth's the following question:

"I was pleased that the Tombland Transforming Cities Project was announced late last year. The opportunity to secure significant additional investment to uplift this historic and important part of the city centre is particularly welcome. The scheme presented would see the old public toilet removed, substantial aesthetic enhancements and better access for pedestrians, cyclists and those enjoying the open space outside the many busy restaurants. Can the cabinet member for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth comment on the scheme and progress to secure the funding for it?"

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

"The city council supported the county's application for Transforming Cities funding last June. It was based on bold vision to create a healthy environment and a productive economy by investing in clean transport. The Department for Transport really liked our application and Norwich has been shortlisted as one of twelve cities that can bid for a share of £1.28bn. The ease with which people can walk around the city centre and reach public transport is vital to achieving the vision in the application. Tombland is a key space where many competing uses need to be reconciled in a very special historic environment. The southern part of the space near the Ethelbert Gate needs a thorough redesign because it is currently a mess with redundant structures, surfacing that is hard to walk on, a lack of footways, a poor bus waiting environment and intrusive vehicle access. I am delighted that officers have come up with proposals to solve these problems whilst retaining the necessary vehicle access to create a really excellent space in the same way that we achieved with the area in front of the Maid's Head a few years ago. We will be gathering views from the public between 31 January and 28 February so we can see what improvements need to be made to the proposals. I hope lots of people will share their thoughts so we can maximise our chances of having the best possible scheme and securing the money to pay for the work.

The county council will be submitting a business case to the Department of Transport in the summer which will detail the schemes that have been

identified to deliver the vision for transport improvements in the greater Norwich area and Tombland will form part of the package of measures for the city centre. It is expected that an announcement on exact schemes to be funded will be made in the autumn.”

Question 9

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

“I was pleased to see that this council took the title of ‘Best Regional Council’ at the East of England Energy Efficiency Awards in May last year and then another national trophy for our free hot water for social housing project in September. Representing a ward where I regularly see thermodynamic installations on our tenants roofs I am aware of the significant positive difference such improvements can make to providing free hot water and lower energy bills. On the back of these successes can the cabinet member for social inclusion comment on the ongoing efforts this council will take to further prevent fuel poverty in Norwich?”

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

“Thank you, Councillor Thomas, for your timely question.

Norwich City Council is committed to working with those in fuel poverty. We support our residents in a number of ways to help them avoid tipping into the fuel poverty trap.

Within the council’s own housing stock our award winning thermodynamic project has benefitted 641 homes to date, and a further £500,000 has been requested to enable us to continue the rollout of this energy saving technology for the next financial year. This would serve to benefit recipient households financially by reducing energy bills, whilst also reducing carbon emissions.

In addition to the Thermodynamic Project, we also continue to install External Wall Insulation (EWI) to the council’s housing stock. We are now nearing the point where we have completed installs to nearly all the homes possible. To date, 426 properties have benefitted from EWI. Further investigations regarding other non-traditional buildings which could benefit from additional insulation measures are ongoing.

Loft and Cavity Wall Insulation continues to be delivered across the city, with many council homes receiving upgrades in the loft and/or cavity walls. NPS Norwich uses information from their continuous programme of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), local knowledge, contractor feedback, tenant feedback and thermal imaging to ensure budgets are targeted to the homes in the most need.

Finally, Norwich City Council is upgrading lighting in communal areas to more energy efficient LED (Light Emitting Diode) lighting. This ongoing programme will reduce service charge bills for tenants and leaseholders as well as improving the energy efficiency/ carbon emissions of the block, as well as reducing maintenance costs. This is a project that will span a number of financial years due to its scale.

Elsewhere in the council, our Private Sector Housing team are ensuring landlords are providing sufficient heating to meet the needs of their tenants. Where this is not the case and an excess cold hazard is identified, an enforcement notice is issued by the council and action must be taken by the landlord to remedy the problems identified and bring the property up to standard.

In the private sector, the council will continue to promote the take up of any available government funding, via the Cosy City project, to improve thermal and fuel efficiency in privately owned homes. Such measures could include: loft and cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation and/or boiler replacements, depending on the qualifying criteria stipulated by the funding body.

Finally, the council will continue to actively promote ways in which Norwich citizens can lower their energy bills with a number of different partners and stakeholders which include: the Citizen's Advice Bureau, NHS and other Non-Governmental Organisations. This includes the successful Big Switch and Save and our exciting and innovative new White Label project due for launch later this year.

Our comprehensive programme of work across homes of all tenures will help prevent fuel poverty in Norwich, and assist our citizens to heat their homes for less."

Question 10

Councillor Trevor to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment the following question:

"The cold weather snap last year impacted on our city most heavily in February and March, rather than the more traditional winter months. Given the rise in homelessness since 2010 can the cabinet member for safe city environment confirm that the council is prepared with its Severe Weather and Emergency Provision (SWEP) arrangements to meet the challenges which any cold weather snap can pose?"

Councillor Maguire, cabinet member for safe city environment's response:

"To be clear, nobody in Norwich should be homeless, let alone sleeping out when temperatures drop to zero and below. It is a disgrace that in the 21st century we live in a society where thanks to supercharged austerity since

2010 we now see rocketing homelessness and rough sleeping reminiscent of the worst days of the 1980s Thatcher government period. In responding to homelessness and rough sleeping, Norwich City Council officers have made arrangements in the event of cold weather snaps occurring at unexpected times.

The Severe Weather and Emergency Provision (SWEP) arrangements are in place and have been activated on two separate episodes in January 2019 offering warm accommodation to known rough sleepers and anyone at risk of sleeping out.

Currently there are arrangements for 18 spaces (including gender and age appropriate places), which are coordinated by the Housing Options team here at the council.

In addition to the above, council's officers are working to enable community groups in Norwich to develop a winter night shelter provision. This is currently based on two different locations offering safe and warm for 20 individuals over five nights.

Volunteers who have received appropriate training and receive informal support and supervision by peers and practitioners lead the provision, which is not dependent on the weather.

Access to the winter night provision is through referrals from Pathways Service with council officers providing support and monitoring.

In addition, the Pathways Service has access to nine spaces of emergency accommodation for those that are new to the streets or present with high needs.

As well providing individuals with accommodation, the facility enables the service to assess individuals prior to moving them into appropriate and long-term accommodation.

This all winter provision is still developing and it is hoped further groups and facilities will come on board to widen availability.

This new service is part of the changes introduced by this administration during 2018-19 to support the increased number of individuals sleeping rough in our city created due to the impacts of the Government's austerity programme. The city is already starting to see positive results from the introduction of the Pathways Service, which was commissioned by the council.

More needs to be done but I would like to recognise the excellent work that has been undertaken by our partners so far and thank all those involved."

Question 11

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

“The closure of the Heatrae Sadia factory in Norwich, announced earlier this month, is a bitter blow to workers, their families and our city. This factory had enjoyed nearly 100 years successful trading in Norwich and the proposed closure will once again damage our crucial manufacturing base. Can the leader comment on his efforts to work with employers and unions to see what opportunities might exist to keep this important asset in the city?”

Councillor Waters, the leader’s response:

“Heatrae Sadia is currently engaged in a consultation process with their workforce with regard to a possible relocation of the Norwich plant into their larger site in Preston. This consultation is ongoing and to date closure of the Norwich factory has not been formally confirmed and no redundancy notices have been issued to Norwich workers at the site. I am in contact with the UNITE Regional official directly dealing with the Heatrae Sadia factory and we share the view that everything should be done to help the factory expand on the Norwich site and not move to Preston.

Heatrae Sadia have been an active and valued part of Norwich’s Advanced Manufacturing sector and the news of a potential closure of the Norwich site is extremely saddening, whilst nothing has yet been confirmed thoughts are with workers and families who must be finding the uncertainty extremely stressful and worrying. We are in regular contact with the company at the moment and with the Jobcentre, local manufacturing sector groups, New Anglia LEP and other partners we are ready to support the workers and the business through this difficult time whatever the outcome of the consultation.

Obviously our preferred option would be to retain the Heatrae Sadia business here in Norwich but, in the event that we are unable to do this; the local manufacturing sector has a buoyant job market with several local businesses that would see the transferable skills and knowledge of Heatrae Sadia’s workforce as a valuable asset to their own businesses. Other workers may wish to access re-training or business start-up support in order to explore self-employment or work in alternative sectors.

In any eventuality we stand ready with our partners to offer a comprehensive package of support.”