



Cabinet

13 September 2023

Questions to cabinet members

Question 1

Councillor Hoechner to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development the following question:

“I would like to thank Councillor Stonard for a very constructive conversation about ethical advertising on 8 August and I was very happy to learn that we agree both on the importance of adopting an ethical advertising policy as soon as possible, and on the harmful effects of digital billboards. These latter consume a huge amount of energy, leading to more carbon emissions, and they increase light pollution, which adversely affects both wildlife and people’s health. It was really encouraging to hear that the Council Leader is keen to look into the possibility of adopting a moratorium on new digital billboards. Could you please confirm what timescale there is and whether this will be included in the upcoming review of the Development Management Policies?”

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

“As we discussed the council has previously asked cabinet to develop and enhance an advertising strategy for Norwich to minimise the harmful effects of advertising. This has been pursued both in relation to our own advertising income and our role as a regulatory authority.

You may remember I told you that currently the council’s only advertising contract relates to bus shelters. That contract runs until July 2026. We plan to look at the possibilities for ethical advertising and consider its implications prior to starting work on the replacement of this contract in spring 2025.

With regard to our role as a regulatory authority, applications for new advertisements, including digital billboards, are considered under the specific regulations, which allow only limited consideration of impacts. As agreed, I have looked into this. Specifically, only matters relating to amenity and highway safety can be taken into account. The impact of lighting upon the amenity of residents and as a distraction to drivers is therefore something that can be considered but the energy consumption of the billboards and impacts on wildlife are not. We may be able to consider these matters further in any review of the Development Management policies. The timing of this review is not known and much will depend on government guidance at the time. I’m afraid unless there is radical change in government policy it is highly unlikely that we will be able to introduce a moratorium on certain types of advertisement as this conflicts with current national regulations.”

Question 2

Councillor Osborn to ask the leader of the council and cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable development the following question:

“In 2019, the city council, on Councillor Stonard’s recommendation, endorsed Norwich Airport’s Masterplan which proposes a near-200% increase in the number of flights from the airport to 1.4m a year by 2040. The Climate Change Committee’s balanced pathway to net zero states that at most aviation can increase by 20% to 2050 – and that is dependent on all other net zero policies being delivered successfully and on time, which we are off track for currently. In light of the climate emergency and Norwich City Council’s place as a stakeholder in Norwich Airport, will the Council Leader revise his 2019 opinion to be in line with experts on aviation emissions and acknowledge that a three-fold increase in flights from Norwich Airport would be disastrous for the planet?”

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

“The future of Norwich and other regional airports is best considered through national policy. I’m sure you will agree with me that the current government’s focus on technology and developing sustainable aviation fuels is an insufficient response to the climate emergency and risks undermining attempts to deliver net zero carbon emissions by 2050. However, seeking to force local people and business who intend to fly to use more distant airports isn’t the solution. An effective national policy response is needed on the matter and in the meantime, we will continue to work with the airport to minimise their carbon emissions where possible. And I hope the Green Party will support this approach to working constructively with the airports on carbon emissions.”