



**Council**

**19:30 to 20:55**

**23 January 2018**

**Present:** Councillors Fullman (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Bögelein, Bradford, Bremner, Brociek-Coulton, Button, Carlo, Coleshill, Davis, Driver, Grahame, Harris, Haynes, Henderson, Herries, Jackson, Jones(T), Kendrick, Maguire, Malik, Manning, Maxwell, Packer, Peek, Price, Raby, Sands (M), Sands (S), Schmierer, Stonard, Waters, Woollard and Wright

**Apologies:** Mr David Walker (Sheriff); and Councillors Jones(B), Lubbock and Ryan

**1. Lord Mayor's Announcements**

The Lord Mayor informed members of two events scheduled in aid of the civic charity; the first to celebrate Chinese New Year would be held on 19 February 2018 at the Riverside Chinese restaurant and the second an international feast which would be held on 26 March 2018 at St Andrews Hall. Tickets were available from the civic office.

The Lord Mayor went on to reassure everyone about what was happening on Hay Hill. Until recently the market stall at the front of Hay Hill had been reserved for hire for charity use. Going forward, charities would be allocated a stall at Norwich Market, which the council believed would be more suitable. However, the stall itself would remain in position on Hay Hill.

The trader on the other stall in the area had told the council that he was ceasing trading at the end of January and this stall was to be permanently removed due to its age and condition.

Currently there were several organisations that used the two market stalls on Hay Hill to distribute food, when the stalls were not occupied in the evenings. The council was not asking these organisations to move on, or to close their activities. The council understood the removal of one stall might be difficult for some of the groups, so it would be exploring alternative arrangements to help them.

The Lord Mayor said he was aware that concerns had been raised about this and that he had been assured that officers would be contacting the groups concerned to meet with them to find a way forward.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. Questions from the public**

The Lord Mayor said that two public questions had been received.

### **Question 1 – Support for mortgage interest payments**

Ms Erin Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion:

“I was recently speaking to a retired lady in my ward, who was very concerned and confused about the government axing Support for Mortgage Interest and handing the contract to Serco.

(SMI) helps financially constrained homeowners with their mortgage payments – some of them might otherwise be at risk of being repossessed. But from April 2018, SMI will no longer be paid as a free benefit. Instead, the government is offering to loan people the money, which will have to be repaid later with interest.

Tens of thousands of people, many of them pensioners, will be saddled with what amounts to a new mortgage on top of their existing home loan. Can the cabinet member for social inclusion expand on the government’s plans and write to both Norwich MPs for their views?”

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

“Thank you for your question.

The government’s decision to change Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) as a free benefit to a loan via SERCO has been introduced very quietly. They have certainly managed to keep it under the radar, as the first many of us heard of it was through calls from worried residents. SERCO’s role in this is as an information provider and they will not be operating the scheme.

There are several areas of concern however. The Government’s own impact statement on the changes declares that this change will affect 170,000 households nationwide, the majority of whom will be pensioners. While anyone in receipt of this loan can, during the period pay it off at any time, we believe that pensioners will be the least able to take up this provision. Being on a fixed income with little likelihood of it increasing suggests they will feel the impact of this change disproportionately to the rest of those affected.

The contracting out of the information condition is also an area for concern. What provisions are in place if a call is not received by a claimant? What triggers SERCO to make the call? Experience of the current SMI scheme suggests that it is not well understood within the DWP and frequently

claimants miss out on payments because the necessary forms are not sent to them, all of which may equally apply to the new loans. Further, the information condition requires both members of a couple to receive the required advice, and draft information produced by the DWP suggests that both members will need to be together when the call is received, which may prove difficult or lead to delays in some cases.

The criteria for SMI has also changed. Homeowners could apply for it to be paid 13 weeks after losing employment, falling ill, etc. but the government has changed this to 39 weeks. This could have devastating effects for the people who will be made redundant from Britvic and Unilever if they are not able to find employment quickly. The Tories have ripped away a safety net which has been in place for 70 years; meaning people are now at more risk of losing their homes as well as their livelihoods.

SMI was set up in 1948, after the Second World War, as a working-age benefit. However, pension credit is also a qualifying benefit, and over half of the recipients are of pension age, and many have interest-only mortgages. The government have decided that the current set up is unsustainable and announced that from April 2018 SMI would no longer be a benefit, but replaced by a state backed loan. In effect, a second mortgage with the government loan secured against the property. This will only save the government £30-£40 per week, on average, per affected household. This is effectively government sponsored equity release. The chances of being able to pay back the loan - with interest - for most pensioners is remote, meaning the equity is taken from the house when it is disposed of. If the house is inherited after death, the new owner will be responsible for paying back the loan if the property is sold, or someone else becomes the legal owner.

If you decide to turn down the offer of a loan, SMI benefits will stop around the 6 April 2018. Mutual insurer Royal London has criticised the way the change is being handled, saying, "The government needs to make sure people have the help and advice they need to decide whether or not to take out a second mortgage to pay for this, but instead, thousands of people are getting letters that miss crucial details such as the interest rate on the mortgage."

If you encounter anyone who is affected by the changes to SMI and need advice, please direct them to Citizen's Advice or, if they are pensioners, Age UK. The recommendation from agencies is to seek independent legal advice and not rely on what you are being told by SERCO."

Ms Erin Fulton-McAlister confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.

## **Question 2 – Finance settlement for local government**

Mr Cavan Stewart to ask the leader:

"On the 19 December 2017 the Secretary of State for Local Government announced the provisional finance settlement for local government in

England. This included a change in the council tax threshold from 2% - 3% before triggering a local referenda. Could the leader of the council comment on the implications of this for the council's budget in February?"

**Councillor Waters the leader of the council's response:**

"Thank you very much for your timely question Mr Stewart. The technical implications are as follows; a 2.99% increase in the 2018/19 council tax represents an increase in overall income of £264,000. The 1% increase in the council tax threshold announced by government generates £87,000 of this total amount in 2018/19. The increase grows the city council's tax base which has a beneficial impact in future years and not just for 2018/19.

As you may be aware the city council has just completed its annual budget consultation. The consultation was well underway by the time the Department of Communities & Local Government, on December 19, announced that it was increasing the threshold at which a referendum would be triggered for District Councils from 2% to 3%. We had assumed in our consultation that the 2% trigger would role forward to 2018/19.

The cabinet will have to carefully consider whether it wishes to exercise this additional small flexibility as part of the budget it presents to full council in February. In part, we will need to be mindful of the views expressed when analysing the budget consultation data. Another factor will be the pressures on our General Fund budget as a result of year on year cuts in the central government grant and the stabilising benefits of an increase in growing the city council's tax base to help protect vital council services."

Mr Cavan Stewart confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.

**4. Petitions**

No petitions were received.

**5. Minutes**

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2017.

**6. Questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs**

The Lord Mayor said that 14 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of appendix 1 of the council's constitution.

**Question 1**

Councillor Haynes to ask the leader of the council about satisfaction with the council's public engagement.

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| <b>Question 2</b>  | Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment about recycling to China.  |
| <b>Question 3</b>  | Councillor Bögelein to ask the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth about affordable housing and the viability assessments.        |
| <b>Question 4</b>  | Councillor Raby to ask the leader of the council about the local plan.  |
| <b>Question 5</b>  | Councillor Jackson to ask the cabinet member for resources about electric vehicles in the council fleet.  |
| <b>Question 6</b>  | Councillor Grahame to ask the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth about neonicotinoid insecticides in the Wensum.                 |
| <b>Question 7</b>  | Councillor Schmierer to ask the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth about Chapelfield Christmas carpark queues.                   |
| <b>Question 8</b>  | Councillor Sands (M) to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing about the right to buy impact on the housing revenue account. |
| <b>Question 9</b>  | Councillor Driver to ask the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods about tackling poor living condition in the private rented sector. |
| <b>Question 10</b> | Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods about new legislation for private rented tenants.                  |
| <b>Question 11</b> | Councillor Sands (S) to ask the cabinet member for social inclusion about the 'ready for work' jobs fair.   |
| <b>Question 12</b> | Councillor Maxwell to ask the leader of the council about Britvic and Unilever leaving the Colman's site.   |
| <b>Question 13</b> | Councillor Malik to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment about recycling to China.  |
| <b>Question 14</b> | Councillor Peek to ask the cabinet member for safe city environment about air quality in Norwich.   |

(Details of the questions and responses and any supplementary questions and responses are attached as Appendix A to these minutes.)

**7. Treasury management strategy statement and annual investment strategy mid-year review report 2017-18**

Councillor Kendrick moved and Councillor Button seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

**RESOLVED**, with 26 members voting in favour and 10 abstentions to approve the revised:

- (1) authorised limit and operational boundary prudential indicators for the current financial year 2017/18.
- (2) minimum Revenue Provision policy to take effect this financial year onwards.

**8. Motion - International holocaust remembrance alliance definition of antisemitism**

Councillor Wright moved and Councillor Ackroyd seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Wright indicated that he would like to withdraw his motion because cabinet at its meeting on 17 January 2018 had agreed to alter the Equality Information Report to make it explicit that the council had adopted the international holocaust remembrance alliance's definition of anti-Semitism in its entirety.

As no other member objected, it was:

**RESOLVED** unanimously to withdraw the motion.

**9. Motion – Care leavers council tax exemption**

Councillor Wright moved and Councillor Ackroyd seconded the motion as set out on the agenda, and following debate it was:

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that:

A 2016 report by The Children's Society found that when care leavers move into independent accommodation they begin to manage their own budget fully for the first time. The report showed that care leavers can find this extremely challenging and with no family to support them and insufficient financial education, are falling into debt and financial difficulty.

Research from The Centre for Social Justice found that 57% of young people leaving care have difficulty managing their money and avoiding debt.

The local authority has statutory corporate parenting responsibilities towards young people who have left care up until the age of 25.

Council **RESOLVES** to

- (1) Note that The Children and Social Work Act 2017 places corporate parenting responsibilities on district councils for the first time, requiring them to have regard to children in care and care leavers when carrying out their functions.
- (2) Include in the next consultation for the 2019/20 council tax reduction scheme a provision for the scheme to include a reduction to zero council tax payable by care leavers up to the age of 25 regardless of income
- (3) write to the county council's Leader and Director of Children's Services to urge them to use their convening powers and expertise in corporate parenting to work with all council tax collecting authorities within the county area to exempt all care leavers in the county from council tax up to the age of 25, sharing any arising costs proportionately.

#### **10. Motion - the 'gig economy' in Norwich**

An amendment to the motion as set out on the agenda had been received from Councillor Waters which had been circulated, as follows:

At resolution (3) a) insert the word 'exploitative' after the first word 'ban'.

Further amendments to the motion as set out on the agenda had been received from Councillor Bögelein which had been circulated, as follows:

To incorporate the following into resolution (2)

To include facilitating a public conversation, as part of the Norwich 2040 Vision work, around Universal Basic Income, as one possible response to the ever changing nature of work.

Amend the wording of (3) f) to read:

'Ban the use of 'umbrella companies' for passing employer tax liabilities on to workers, and extend the remit of the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to cover policing umbrella companies to ensure compliance'.

Councillor Waters had indicated that he was willing to accept the amendments, and as no other member objected, the amendments became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Davis seconded the motion as amended above.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, that:

Nationally, according to the TUC, 3.2 million people now face insecure work which has risen by 27% over the last 5 years (this work includes those in zero-hour

contracts, in agency and other insecure temporary work, and in low-paid self-employment). In recent years there has been an increasing development of the 'gig economy' in Norwich - a relatively new and expanding industry characterised by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.

Council **RESOLVES** to:-

(1) Note with concern

- a) the woefully inadequate rates of pay which leave some people financially worse off than had they been unemployed;
- b) the poor treatment of workers who require time off to see to a family emergency, recover from sickness, or mourn a deceased relative
- c) the 'grey area' of self-employment in which many of the flexibilities and commonly accepted practices that are associated with this way of working is totally absent
- d) The confusing and changeable ways in which monthly earnings are calculated; and the ever-present threat of losing work and with it one's sole source of income, with no notice and no right of appeal.

(2) ask the cabinet to commission research into the changing nature of work in Norwich with a view to using the findings to promote good employment practices across the city; to include facilitating a public conversation, as part of the Norwich 2040 Vision work, around Universal Basic Income, as one possible response to the ever changing nature of work.

(3) ask the Leader of the Council and the cabinet member for resources to write to The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy asking him to:

- a) Ban exploitative zero hours contracts so that every worker gets a guaranteed number of hours each week.
- b) Give all workers equal rights from day one, whether part-time or full-time, temporary or permanent – so that working conditions are not driven down.
- c) Shift the burden of proof so that the law assumes a worker is an employee unless the employer can prove otherwise.
- d) Levy punitive fines on employers not meeting their responsibilities, helping to deter poor practice.
- e) Involve trade unions in enforcement and set up a Ministry of Labour with the resources to enforce all workers' rights.
- f) Ban the use of 'umbrella companies' for passing employer tax liabilities on to workers, and extend the remit of the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to cover policing umbrella companies to ensure compliance.

- g) Give employment agencies and end-users joint responsibility for ensuring that the rights of agency workers are enforced.
  - h) Roll out sectoral collective bargaining and strengthening trade union rights, because empowering people to claim their own rights in the workplace is the most effective means of enforcement and ensuring that workers have greater job security and adequate levels of pay to enjoy a decent quality of life.
- (4) Ask the leader of the council to write to the two Norwich MPs to support resolution (3)

LORD MAYOR

**Questions to cabinet members / committee chairs**

**Question 1**

**Councillor Haynes to ask the leader of the council the following question:**

“The council has recently changed the way it seeks resident feedback on various aspects of its performance, so that it takes its sample from a wider and less self-selecting pool of residents. It is therefore unsurprising to see somewhat reduced scores on these performance measures following the changes. However, the most recent figure for the measure on public engagement shows that just 27% of residents are satisfied with the opportunities to engage with the council. Does the cabinet member agree this is a concerning figure, and can he give his opinion on what the council should be doing to improve it?”

**Councillor Waters leader of the council's reply:**

“The measure is a year-to-date measure in order to account for quarterly fluctuations, so the true figure is 38%, although this is still behind the target of 54%.

As acknowledged, we have indeed moved to a different method of sourcing respondents to our survey-based satisfaction measures. This means that we are receiving responses from a pool of residents who have not had a recent history of contact with the council, as opposed to the previous approach against which the target was established.

Obviously, for many of our residents, as long as they receive the service they wish to the standard they wish, there is no need for them to proactively engage with us, but nevertheless we would like all residents to feel that their views matter and they can engage with us if they wish.

One solution to this is to change of methodology itself, so we would expect that over time, the approach we are taking will start to improve this indicator. And the more detailed information that we are receiving through this method will help us to shape our approach to engagement in the future.

We are also in the process of a large programme of resident and stakeholder engagement, including focus groups, surveys and conferences, and we were very pleased to be supported in this by colleagues from the local media. This is the most extensive example of engagement we have undertaken in some time and is yielding a rich

and detailed evidence base; again this process should contribute to an improvement in this indicator.

As we continue to face unprecedented financial pressures, we must ensure that what we do is meeting the needs of residents so we will be reflecting the findings of this exercise back to residents and planning our future service delivery accordingly.

And of course, let's not forget the significant levels of community engagement undertaken by ward councillors not represented in these figures."

Councillor Haynes asked a supplementary question and enquired which service areas were those surveyed particularly frustrated about? In response Councillor Waters stated he did not have that specific data to hand but was confident it was available and would arrange for her to have it.

## **Question 2**

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

"China's recently imposed ban on imported plastic waste for recycling has brought the issue of recycling into the spotlight. While I have been told by officers that Norfolk will not be affected by the Chinese ban as we provide 'uncontaminated waste', the fact that we send our waste paper and card to Asia (China, Vietnam and India) and the possibility that some or all of our waste plastic ends up in Asia is completely unacceptable and is part of a wider national and international problem.

Will the leader of the council work with Norfolk Waste Partnership, Norse Environmental Waste Services and the county council to put pressure on the government to develop a comprehensive strategy for recycling all our waste in the UK?"

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

"Thank you for the first of two questions that I have received upon Norwich City Council's involvement with waste and, in particular, recycling. This is timely because of the misinformation that seems still to be spread upon this important topic. In answering both questions, it is essential to recall that Norwich City Council collects waste: Norfolk County Council is the disposal authority.

Norwich City Council delivers the material collected for recycling to the materials recovery facility at Costessey run by Norse Environmental Services Ltd (NEWS) where it is sorted and sent for reprocessing. NEWS will continue to source outlets for the sorted material which are as economically advantageous as possible.

It should be noted that China has not banned the import of waste, rather it has increased the quality threshold of the material it will allow into the country. The sorting systems used by NEWS removes as much contaminant as possible from the material ensuring the final products reach and exceed the quality threshold demanded by the markets and in particular the market in China. This enables NEWS to take advantage of the best markets available. For clarity, Norfolk's plastic for recycling is currently reprocessed here in the UK and Holland. The Norfolk Waste Partnership publishes a destination map for all materials at: [www.recyclefornorfolk.com/learning-zone/why-recycle](http://www.recyclefornorfolk.com/learning-zone/why-recycle)

One of the reasons the quality threshold was increased was because of the amount of waste material contained within the plastic and these other materials makes it difficult to recycle - quality is key. This is true whether the material is sent to China or is recycled at home. You may have seen the Norfolk Waste Partnership's most recent campaign "Give your recycling a little bit of love" where residents are asked to ensure anything put in the blue bin for recycling is clean, dry and kept loose.

The council asks residents to give any items a quick rinse to remove any items of food or liquid and to ensure they are dry before they put it loosely in the bin and not to bag up the recycling material. All of this means contamination is much reduced enabling us to take advantage of the best markets for our recycled material. Further information can be found on the Recycle for Norfolk Website as follows:  
<https://www.recyclefornorfolk.com/bins-at-home/little-bit-of-love/#>

I am sure you will be pleased to know that representatives of the Norfolk Waste Partnership liaise nationally with organisations such as Resources Association and RECOUP (Recycling of Used Plastics Limited) and works closely with WRAP (Waste Action Resources Project), where Norfolk is able to respond to and influence the government's agenda on waste, recycling and the Government's recently published 25-year Environment Plan.

The work that we have been doing through the Norfolk Waste Partnership adds greater voice to issues and opportunities that need to be raised –The Norfolk Waste Partnership has been selected as a shortlisted finalist in the 'Best Public/Public Partnership' category in the 2018 LGC Awards which recognises the good work it undertakes. However, where a Norwich specific voice is required I will make that case directly with Government."

The cabinet member in response to a supplementary question said they would look at anything possible to improve recycling rates.

### **Question 3**

#### **Councillor Bögelein to ask the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth the following question:**

“Council officers stated some time ago that the council intended to review its guidance on affordable housing and the viability assessments that developers can use to claim exemption from affordable housing contributions. I am not aware of any further progress on this issue. Given that a major planning application was approved earlier this month with just four affordable homes - 2.6% of the total number, rather than the 33% required by the council’s policy – does the cabinet member agree that this issue should be addressed as a matter of urgency to stop Norwich losing out on more money for affordable homes?”

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

“As members of the council will be well aware the city council does all it can to ensure that the number of genuinely affordable homes that are delivered in Norwich is maximised. The success of our approach here is illustrated by the fact that over the past five years for which monitoring information has been published (2011/12 – 2015/16) 423 of the 1481 additional homes that have been built in the city council area have been affordable. That is 29% of all provision. A percentage close to our policy target and far in excess of that achieved by many councils.

We do have detailed planning guidance on affordable housing. The Local Plan was adopted in Dec 2014 and the council adopted supplementary planning guidance to provide detailed guidance on the implementation of these policies and the approach to assessing viability as soon as possible in March 2015.

We are aware this guidance needs review to take account of changing practice with regard to viability assessments and to reflect the up to date assessment of Housing Need that was completed in 2017. But, as the government has announced that it will shortly update national planning guidance with the stated intention “to help make viability assessments simpler, quicker and more transparent” it seems sensible to see what the revised national approach is to be before we issue fresh local policy on the matter.

The revised national guidance is expected in March 2018 and we would expect to commence production of the updated Supplementary Planning Document shortly thereafter.”

In response to Councillor Bögelein’s supplementary question the cabinet member responded that the 29% figure was a total figure. He referred to the recent planning committee decision regarding the development at St Mary’s works and stated he welcomed the committee’s decision. He said that the

council strived to achieve the best possible balance overall taking account jobs and city regeneration whilst seeking a 30% affordable housing figure.

#### **Question 4**

##### **Councillor Raby to ask the leader of the council the following question:**

“The city council has a policy of requiring 33% affordable housing on new developments of more than 10 homes. A Green group motion in September last year asked the cabinet to do what it could to ensure this figure of 33% is maintained or bettered in the new local plan for Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk. Following an amendment, the council ultimately resolved to ask cabinet to “consider” doing this.

The draft consultation document for the local plan offered as policy options “Seek 29% affordable housing on all sites above the qualifying threshold”, or “Seek more than 29% on all sites above the qualifying threshold”, establishing an apparent baseline that is lower than current policy. In the Greater Norwich Development Partnership meeting in November where the document was approved for consultation, a last-minute amendment reduced this figure further, to 27%. This amendment passed without comment or question from any of the members, including the three Labour representatives from this council.

Can the leader of the council explain why Norwich cabinet members did not question this reduction of the baseline affordable housing requirement?”

##### **Councillor Waters leader of the council’s reply:**

“At the council meeting of 26 September it was resolved unanimously to ask cabinet, among other things, to consider in light of evidence, that the existing policy of requiring at least 33% affordable housing in developments of more than 10 houses is upheld or bettered within the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

This is very much the approach that cabinet is taking towards the matter and as the production of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) proceeds evidence is being assembled on both housing needs and viability.

Currently the evidence provided in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment suggests that the need for affordable housing over the period 2015-2036 will be 29% of the total housing needed across the plan area. The adjustment made from 29% to 27% merely reflects the success that the local Councils have had in delivering affordable housing since 2015.

As the consultation seeks views on providing more than 27% and does not seek to suggest any upper limit the change from 29% to 27% in the consultation is not considered significant.

It remains our position that we will seek to maximise the levels of delivery of affordable housing without prejudicing the regeneration of the City.”

Councillor Waters in response to Councillor Raby’s supplementary question said he took housing need very seriously and that the council’s commitment to building new council houses in the city at Goldsmith Street and Bowthorpe evidenced this.

## **Question 5**

**Councillor Jackson to ask the cabinet member for resources the following question:**

“In January 2017, a meeting of the full council resolved to ask cabinet to consider using 100% electric vehicles for the staff pool by 2020. With the fleet being upgraded this month, it appears that still only two of the 21 vehicles will be fully electric – the same number as before, and down from four in 2016 – and I can find no evidence that the council resolution was ever considered. Can the cabinet member explain why the council has not taken the opportunity to increase the number of electric vehicles in its fleet?”

**Councillor Kendrick cabinet member for resources’ response:**

“The latest fleet review did consider increasing the number of full electric vehicles (EV’s). As an early adopter of the technology in 2012 the council has learnt much in regards to having EV’s within its fleet. The main barrier to full adoption is the electrical load capacity of St Giles Car Park. Installing the load to charge 21 vehicles at the same time would exceed the maximum load of the asset and would therefore require costly upgrades to the buildings electrical systems.

In addition UK Power Networks who manage the grid may have asked the council to pay for a new grid connection as the maximum load of 20+ EV’s charging would cause stress on the local network. These adaptations would have been on top of marked up designated bays and installing docking systems.

The council’s new fleet is the most practical, low carbon and cost effective solution available. Considerable amounts of time and effort has been taken to establish the right balance in regards to fleet size, operational need, vehicle type and the emissions they produce. The blend of full electric, electric hybrid and low emission petrol is the most environmentally efficient fleet the council has managed and will contribute towards decreasing the council’s operational emissions which are 54.1% lower than 2008.”

In response to Councillor Jackson's question the cabinet member advised moving to 100% electric vehicles had been considered but was not practicable and the most environmentally efficient fleet possible had been achieved.

## **Question 6**

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

"Neonicotinoid insecticides (NNIs) have been consistently found to be extremely harmful to bees. Tests for NNIs in 16 British rivers in 2016, mandated by EU water regulations, have classified the River Wensum as one of the worst-affected rivers in the country, with 'chronic levels exceeded'. There are no Environmental Quality Standards for NNIs pollution and the Environment Agency does not know what the impacts are of using this powerful insecticide.

The Wensum is one of the finest chalk rivers in Europe and the source of Norwich's drinking water. Consequently, the impacts of NNIs on the Wensum's ecology and potentially on human health are very worrying.

Will the cabinet member write to the Secretary of State and ask him to i) confirm the UK's support for extending the EU ban on use of NNIs; ii) put in place regular and systematic testing of NNIs in UK rivers to monitor their levels and impacts; and iii) put in place urgent measures for returning our rivers to a good condition?"

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

"Thank you for your question. You are right to highlight that recent press reports have focused on the extent of pollution of the River Wensum by Neonicotinoid insecticides (NNIs). This is timely as we are shortly due to finalise the River Wensum Strategy which we are working hard on in partnership with other local stakeholders.

NNIs are the world's most widely used insecticide and are highly toxic to a wide range of invertebrates. They also cause harm to bees and other pollinators, and evidence is growing that they harm other species such as songbirds. Therefore, neonicotinoids represent a significant risk to surface waters and the diverse aquatic and terrestrial fauna that these ecosystems support and I agree that the levels of NNI pollution in the River Wensum is of serious concern for its impacts on wildlife.

The Environment Secretary Michael Gove has indicated that tougher restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticides are justified by the growing weight of scientific evidence that they are harmful to bees and other pollinators. The Government's recently published 'Twenty-five year Environment Plan' sets out policies to address a number of environmental issues including improvements to how we manage and incentivise land management, in particular introducing new farming rules for water, and reduction in the environmental impact of pesticides.

However this is a policy document that is weak at the moment as it needs to be backed up with a clear timetable for implementation and the detailed legislation to ensure its full implementation.

I am therefore happy to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Affairs to ask him to:

- i) confirm the UK's support for extending the EU ban on use of NNIs;
- ii) put in place regular and systematic testing of NNIs in UK rivers to monitor their levels and impacts; and
- iii) identify urgent measures for returning our rivers to a good condition, and set out the relevant legislation required to ensure their implementation.

But will write in my capacity of chair of the River Wensum Strategy Steering Group in addition to that of portfolio holder."

Councillor Stonard in response to Councillor Grahame's supplementary question confirmed that the river was the property of all the city and as such all Councillors were included in information and consultation about the River Wensum Strategy.

## **Question 7**

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

"Throughout December there were regular delays on the inner ring road, especially around the Grapes Hill roundabout, due to an increase in the number of vehicles coming into Norwich in the build-up to Christmas. However many of these traffic jams seemed to be caused or at least exacerbated by drivers using the inner ring road to queue while waiting to access the Chapelfield car park. Although there is a sign telling drivers not to queue back on the ring road, this is often ignored, in particular in December. Given the need to tackle air pollution, especially caused by vehicles idling, does the cabinet member agree with me that more should be done to work with the owners of the Chapelfield car park and other bodies such as the police to stop cars using Chapelfield Road to queue while waiting to access the car park there?"

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

"I certainly agree that resolving the issues with the queue to Chapelfield car park would go a long way to addressing problems on the ring road, particularly in the Grapes Hill area. However the city council, working

with Norfolk County Council, have explored all options for managing the problems caused by this queue but there is no affordable, effective solution to be had.

Intu, the owners of the car park, attend the Christmas journey planning meeting that is held every year by the two councils. Other attendees include other car park operators in the city, bus operators, the police and Norwich BID. At that meeting options for managing the additional Christmas traffic are agreed on. This year those actions included:

- Temporary (Variable Message Sign) VMS signs on the A11 and A140 north approaches to the city advising drivers to use Park and Ride (funded by the BID and both councils)
- Introduction of additional permanent VMS signs advising drivers of car park space availability, funded by the Westlegate scheme
- Traffic marshals managing queues to the Forum and John Lewis car parks at peak times (funded by the Forum and John Lewis)
- Promotion of the journey planning website by the Transport for Norwich team
- Details of travel options included in marketing literature by the BID and Intu

Intu declined to provide traffic marshals at the entrance to their car park, although they did have additional staff on duty to speed up access through the ticket barriers to help the queue move more quickly. Legally the council has no powers to force a third party to address issues within their site that cause problems on the highway, which means that we could not oblige them to employ marshals.

In the past police traffic wardens had responsibility for both enforcing parking restrictions and directing traffic. With the introduction of civil parking enforcement in Norwich in 2000, responsibility for parking enforcement moved to the council, and the police retained the power to direct traffic. However like all public sector organisations Norfolk Constabulary are under financial pressure and managing traffic is by necessity a low priority for them."

In response to Councillor Schmierer's supplementary question the cabinet member advised that planning applications did look at parking. He said this was ultimately an enforcement issue which arose at peak times of the year. He said retailers had their role to play too and where they had employed traffic wardens this had worked well.

## Question 8

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

“Access to social housing is a major priority for many of my constituents. I was saddened to learn that since April 2014, Norwich City Council has lost 524 properties in Right to Buy sales with a value of £64.6 million against a sale value of £31.8 million – a loss of £32.8 million. Can the cabinet member for social housing comment on the level of right to buy sales and loss of social housing since 2010 and their impact on our HRA?”

### **Councillor Harris deputy leader's response:**

“I would like to thank Councillor Sands for this question which shows the challenges the council faces as a landlord and a trend which is extremely concerning. In fact since 2010/11, the council has been forced to sell 926 properties through right to buy. This is made up of 437 flats and maisonettes and 489 houses and bungalows. The market value of these sales was £109,544,500 but the sale price was £54,417,494 meaning ‘discounts’ were claimed totalling £55,127,006.

The outcome of the right to buy figures are:

- the loss of council homes and ability to potentially house people in most acute housing need
- the discounts are effectively a subsidy paid for by our tenants given to people buying these homes
- at an average rent of £77 per week the loss to the council's housing revenue account at today's prices of some £3,565,100 per annum.

The summary of this is as follows:

Total right to buy sales -	926
Total valuation	£109,544,500
Total price paid	£54,417,494
Discount & loss to the council	£55,127,006

Without even considering the impact on the council's HRA business plan, this would equate to the council building 20 new houses per year or being able to provide new bathrooms and kitchens for all existing tenants on a rolling programme. The table below illustrates this in more detail which is equally worrying.”

### **Flats and Maisonettes**

### **Houses and Bungalows**

	Number	Valuation	Sale Price	Number	Valuation	Sale Price
10/11	19	£1,633,000	£987,000	16	£1,805,000	£1,261,000
11/12	21	£1,724,000	£1,012,000	17	£1,725,500	£1,151,150
12/13	44	£3,692,000	£1,451,750	46	£5,325,500	£2,689,140
13/14	59	£5,097,500	£1,900,890	86	£10,421,500	£5,123,632
14/15	72	£6,634,000	£2,648,488	77	£9,741,000	£4,928,090
15/16	66	£6,673,000	£2,731,482	85	£11,911,000	£6,376,400
16/17	79	£8,576,000	£3,645,441	84	£12,598,000	£7,058,651
17/18	77	£8,951,500	£3,816,540	78	£13,036,000	£7,635,840
Totals	437	£42,981,000	£18,193,591	489	£66,563,500	£36,223,903

Councillor Sands (M) confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.

## Question 9

**Councillor Driver to ask the cabinet member for safer stronger neighbourhoods the following question:**

“I was very disturbed to learn over the Christmas period of the unpleasant, unhealthy and sometimes dangerous living conditions being experienced by private tenants at 60 St. Faith’s Lane. Could the cabinet member for Safer Stronger Neighbourhoods comment to council on what the City Council are doing to tackle these poor living conditions and how we can crack down on landlords anywhere in the City who put their tenants health and wellbeing at risk in pursuit of greater profits?”

**Councillor Herries cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhood’s response:**

“Officers from the private sector housing team inspected all 47 of the flats at 60 St. Faith’s Lane before Christmas. The Fire Service also attended to ensure that there were no immediate risks from fire. The landlord was required to provide temporary heating to a small number of the flats over the Christmas period and will be required to improve the heating and insulation in up to 17 flats in total.

Because of concerns about the condition of the electrical installation, the council has had to commission an electrical inspection of the whole

complex. This is in progress and will take up to three weeks. So far, no emergency remedial action has been required but the landlord is likely to be required to carry out a significant amount of improvement work based on the faults that have been identified to date.

Other problems identified include poorly maintained service areas and pavements and inadequate bin provision. Again, action will be taken by the council to ensure that these are remedied and officers are considering taking legal action against the landlord for failure to comply with housing management regulations.

The council has a range of powers that it regularly uses to improve sub-standard and hazardous accommodation. These include the ability to serve improvement notices and to prosecute landlords who breach management regulations or who fail to carry out required improvements. Unfortunately, however, investigations and legal action take a lot of resource and we therefore have to prioritise the very worst cases.

A recent addition to these powers is the ability to impose financial penalties as an alternative to prosecution. These penalties can be retained by the council to support its private sector housing enforcement and require much less officer time to process. As a result, poor landlords are now much more likely to receive a significant penalty for letting substandard homes.

I believe that this new approach has the potential to act as a real deterrent to landlords who fail to take their responsibilities seriously and to remove the worst performing ones altogether.

I am therefore very pleased to report that we have just received our first payment, of £6,000, from a landlord who was letting a poorly converted garage and that there are a number of similar cases under investigation."

Councillor Driver confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.

## **Question 10**

**Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for safer stronger neighbourhoods the following question:**

"I was pleased to see that Clive Lewis MP backed a Bill that was introduced by Labour MP Karen Buck last Friday which will give renters a new legal right to ensure their home is 'fit for human habitation'. The new legislation, long campaigned for by Labour, could help renters in 97,000 dangerously unfit properties in the Eastern Region. Nationally, there are over one million rented properties containing the most serious 'category 1' hazards, including homes that have unsafe electrics, vermin infestations, or aren't fire safe. The Labour Bill last week will give tenants new legal powers to enforce their right to a decent home by taking their landlord to court if the property they live in is not fit. Will

the cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhoods welcome this change and support all measures to continue to champion tenant's rights and protections?"

**Councillor Herries cabinet member for safer, stronger neighbourhood's response:**

"I agree with Cllr Button that this legislation is a step in the right direction to enable tenants to require their landlords to provide decent, safe accommodation. The reality is that the private rented sector has doubled in size in the last 10 years in Norwich and now accounts for 21% of all homes in the city. Research carried out for the council by the Building Research Establishment indicates that 20% of the privately rented properties in Norwich, an estimated 2,800 homes, have a category 1 hazard and would, therefore, be considered to be 'unfit for human habitation' under the proposed legislation. Although the council works hard to tackle those hazards, as we are required to do, the scale of the problem means that we are realistically only able to bring about improvements in a small proportion of those homes. The ability of tenants to take effective action themselves is therefore welcomed.

That said, if this legislation is to be more than merely symbolic, tenants need to feel that they can use the powers without facing the possibility of losing their homes. Whilst the law has been changed recently to provide some protection against retaliatory eviction, tenants still know that they may eventually be evicted if their landlord is upset about them raising issues. Tenants will therefore still be unlikely to challenge their landlords until the current 'no fault eviction' power under the Housing Act 1988 is repealed. Tenants don't just need good quality homes, they need security of tenure.

Tenants also need to be able to afford the cost of legal representation when taking on their landlords. This legislation will therefore only be effective if access to legal aid is improved.

Much of the publicity around the bill concerns the rights of council tenants to take action against their landlords. The anomaly is that councils cannot take enforcement action against themselves so these proposals will enable tenants to take private action to bring about improvements. Again, this is welcomed.

Of course, examples do exist of poor conditions in council-owned homes around the country. However, council homes in Norwich are considerably safer, more secure and more affordable than those in the privately rented sector so I do not anticipate that the powers will ever need to be used by our tenants.

There is therefore a very strong case to build more new council homes and to prevent their loss through the right to buy. The council will continue to press the government to lift the constraints currently limiting our ability to do this."

Councillor Button confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.

## **Question 11**

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

“I spoke to several constituents in my ward who have benefited from the City Council organised Ready for Work jobs fair, at the Halls in Norwich. Given the coming impact of Universal Credit and other social security changes which are impacting so severely upon citizens in our city, can the cabinet member for social inclusion comment on support and opportunities which this upcoming event will hopefully offer?”

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

“The Ready for Work jobs fair will be at The Halls again on 7 February 2018, from 11am to 2pm run in conjunction with Norwich Job Centre. The focus of the fair this year is all about finding and applying for work. There will be circa 35 businesses in St Andrews Hall on the day. All will have current vacancies that people can apply to on the day or after the event. We decided to focus on job vacancies due to the feedback we received last year – attendees felt that there were too many advice agencies and they wanted to interact more directly with employers. However, we will have support available on the day in a few ways:

- There will be a pop-up Digital Hub where people can apply for jobs, create CVs, job search and use Better Off on the day (this was very popular last year, and will again be staffed by Norwich City Council digital coaches)
- There will be Norwich City Council and Job Centre staff at the event acting as ‘jobs fair buddies’ who will be able to support people with low confidence on how to get the most of the fair through signposting and making direct introductions
- There will be jobs boards at stations in the Halls with further vacancies, and details promoted on a big screen
- The Job Centre will be present to give any additional information to job seekers, including signposting to training organisations and other agencies offering support to people looking for work”

Councillor Sands (S) confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.

## **Question 12**

**Councillor Maxwell to ask the leader of the council the following question:**

“Like many Norwich people I was bitterly disappointed to hear that Britvic and Unilever will be leaving the Colman’s site in our city. Can the Leader comment on the support and work which will be ongoing to work with the owners, trade unions and employees in the weeks and months ahead?”

**Councillor Waters leader of the council’s reply:**

“Thank you Councillor Maxwell for your question. The announcement of the closure of the Carrow works site by 2019 and the subsequent loss of over 360 well paid manufacturing jobs is a blow to the city’s economy and the loyal and skilled workforce of Britvic and Unilever and their families. Both Unilever and Britvic had decided that the long term business case for retaining production capacity in Norwich did not meet their shareholders best interests. The council has very little influence to change each company’s decision.

Throughout the formal review process we worked proactively to present a positive business case for both companies to stay in the city including offers to relocate to alternative sites.

Since the closure announcement the city council has continued to lead and coordinate the response from Norfolk County Council and New Anglia LEP to help mitigate the immediate impact of the closure and assist the workforce in finding new employment opportunities and any associated retraining or relocation support. We have also been in contact with the unions throughout the process.

We are meeting with Unilever on 23 January and are awaiting confirmation from Britvic for a meeting in early February. We will be seeking further information about the timetable for closing the plant and what measures of support will be available to assist the workforce in securing alternative employment. The meeting with Unilever will also include details of the proposal with a local Growers consortium to retain the production and packing of Colman’s mustard powder, the historic mustard milling process, and mint processing in a new state-of-the-art facility in the Norwich area which will create around 25 jobs.

Further ahead, we will be looking to work collaboratively with the site owners to examine the regeneration potential of the Carrow works site to attract new jobs and homes to help the future growth of the Norwich economy. We will also be contacting the Business Secretary Greg Clark to request an urgent meeting to discuss and seek a significant contribution to the future regeneration of the site by the time production ceases in 2019.”

Councillor Maxwell confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.

**Question 13**

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

“Would the portfolio holder responsible for waste and recycling comment on the recently published recycling rates for Norwich City Council and how the recent news regarding the Republic of China’s tightening up on their importation of recycling materials from overseas (including the UK) affects these?”

**Councillor Maguire cabinet member for safe city environment’s response:**

“For 2016/17 Norwich achieved a recycling rate of 38.2% which is comparable with our comparator group of authorities. Exeter achieved a recycling rate of 31.6%, Lincoln 36%, Stevenage 39.8%, Harlow 43.9%, Preston 31.4% and Crawley just 27.4%. More importantly is the residual waste per household where we collect 429 kilos per household. Although we may not be achieving the recycling rates some authorities are, the amount of waste we actually collect is far less than most which, as you know, is what it should be about. Within our comparator group Exeter collects 452kilos, Lincoln 525, Stevenage 518, Harlow 409, Crawley 539 and Preston 601. This means far less rubbish has to be collected and disposed of reducing financial costs to both the city council and the county council.

With regards to China tightening up on the quality of recycling material they import this will have no impact on our recycling rates. As mentioned in the previous question, we can meet the quality thresholds which allows us to take advantage of the best markets available. Quality is the key and the work we are doing with our residents through the “Give your recycling a little bit of love” campaign will ensure we continue to meet the quality thresholds.

Through the investment in NEWS Limited all material is sorted limiting the amount of contamination and further ensuring the quality of the recycling product. NEWS supplies a quality secondary mixed paper and card product which is destined for the packaging industry. In conjunction with its brokers, NEWS is able to produce grades of mixed paper that meet the new quality standard required by the paper packaging market and is able to meet the new standards set by the Chinese.

Most of the plastic we collect is recycled either in the UK or in Holland. The Norfolk Waste Partnership publishes a destination map for all materials at: [www.recyclefornorfolk.com/learning-zone/why-recycle](http://www.recyclefornorfolk.com/learning-zone/why-recycle). This focus on providing quality products is what has helped all Norfolk authorities achieve an overall recycling rate of 46.7% in 2016/17 higher than the England average (45.1% in 2016/17).”

Councillor Malik confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.

## **Question 14**

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

“Would the portfolio-holder for safe city environment comment on DEFRA’s latest report regarding air quality in Norwich?”

**Councillor Maguire cabinet member for safe city environment’s response:**

“All local authorities have a duty to carry out annual reviews of air quality in their area. Pollutant levels are reviewed and assessed against government air pollution objectives set out in the national air quality strategy. Local Authorities are required to submit a Local Air Quality Management report each year to DEFRA who review and assess the details. The Annual Status report received from DEFRA recognised the progress made by the city council on the 2015 action plan including:  
traffic management measures to reduce through traffic,  
improving bus access,  
managing traffic congestion in the central air quality management area, including extending pedestrian areas with restricted traffic access.

DEFRA also recognised the significant strides made by the council in developing measures to address the source of exceedances (where actual levels exceed target) by the number of traffic measures that are being adopted. In short the conclusions reached were acceptable for all sources of pollutants.

The council will continue to take action where it is practicable and will continue to monitor the air quality especially within the Norwich central air quality management area. Further details of our proposed actions can be found on our website as follows:

[https://www.norwich.gov.uk/downloads/file/3020/2015\\_air\\_quality\\_action\\_plan](https://www.norwich.gov.uk/downloads/file/3020/2015_air_quality_action_plan)”

Councillor Peek confirmed that he did not have a supplementary question.