NORWICH
City Council

Council

21 June 2022

Questions to cabinet members

Question 1

Councillor Lubbock to ask the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion the following question:

> "During the last few weeks of April residents were contacting me as they were frustrated by not being able to get through to the City Council using the phone.
>
> On calling the contact centre the message was 'we are experiencing a high level of calls, please call back later or you can access services online'.
>
> On enquiring what the problem was I was told it was a combination of high level of demand, backlog of housing repairs, staff training and staff shortages.
>
> I would now like, a fuller explanation to understand the extent of the problem up to the present time, with details of how many days/hours the phonelines were unresponsive and how many calls have been lost."

Councillor Hampton, the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion's response:

> "Since April, the volume of calls has continued to be high because of increased contact about the £150 energy rebate, and increased repair enquiries. Current data based on calls answered show a 44% increase compared to last year. In addition, March and April are generally always busy times of the year due to Council Tax and business rates bills going out.
>
> Since April, there have been two occasions when the telephony system has not worked due to a technical issue but this only resulted in 65 minutes of downtime. Apart from those occasions our phones have not been unresponsive. However, at times customers have received the message to call back later when the queue limit has been reached. It is not possible to provide details of customers who have not managed to get through/lost but I can confirm that in April we answered 16,657 calls and in May it was 23,567.

To address the increased demand, we are recruiting to fill vacancies and have employed additional temporary staff to help with energy rebate calls, starting week commencing 13 June."

Question 2

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

> "During regular discussions with local residents in Eaton, a frequent question that comes up is about the work currently being carried out in St Stephen's. Residents are concerned about disruption to bus journeys, difficulty accessing shops and facilities in St Stephen's, the length of time needed to complete the works and, not least, the huge sum of money involved.
>
> Does the cabinet member feel that the ends justify the means given the significant amount of time and money being spent?"

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

> "This Transforming Cities Fund scheme will improve bus services, particularly from areas to the south like Eaton. The sawtooth kerbs will reduce delays and help people with restricted mobility who struggle to board buses that cannot park against the kerb. It will complement projects recently completed on Thorpe Road, Cromer Road and Aylsham Road and save passengers considerable time, promoting sustainable transport and improving air quality.
>
> There will also be more places to sit and an improved environment in St Stephen's Street. This should in turn promote further investment in Norwich City Centre which is already seeing considerable levels of investment being made in its retail sector.
>
> The construction project is being managed by the county council. I know they are working hard to minimise disruption. However, they have kept all bus services running and shops open, which necessarily lengthens the build. I echo the thanks given by Councillor Wilby, my counterpart at the county, to the public for their patience.
>
> I am confident that the disruption will indeed be worth it in the longer term. The city cannot afford to stand still at the current time and needs to promote further investment in the city and more sustainable patterns of transport."

Question 3

Councillor Mike Sands to ask the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods the following question:

> "I have warmly welcomed Ukrainian refugees into my ward, though remain appalled at the lack of support from central government in promptly processing visas and allowing easier safe routes to this country. Many residents have volunteered to host a refugee and I am aware that checks on properties and the suitability of hosts must be carried out. Can the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods' comment on the work of this council to deliver the Homes for Ukraine scheme in practice?"

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods' response:

> "Norwich City Council continues to work hard to ensure we can safely welcome Ukrainian refugees to our city, despite the difficulties created by central government processes.
>
> The data from central government has been challenging in its quality, but by using the Norfolk Vulnerability Hub which was developed during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been able to process information in a timely manner.
>
> Before the guest's arrival, Norfolk County Council undertakes a DBS check on the host and members of the household, and we at Norwich city council undertake property checks on the host location before arrival, and welfare checks on the guest, which we aim to complete within 48 hours of their arrival. We have been able to undertake these checks in a timely manner and have employed three new officers two of whom are Ukrainian speakers, to assist with this.
>
> This is a well-established process and there are weekly partnership meetings to ensure we continue to deliver successfully. Where there are issues with the suitability of the property or the host, we work in partnership to resolve these issues. There is also a robust process in place for any breakdowns of placements which ensures that guests are relocated quickly and with consideration for any arrangements such as school placements or work.
>
> I am pleased to say that we have processed 71 host properties and have 149 expected guests with 81 having arrived already."

Question 4

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

> "Many residents in my ward expressed their thanks for the smooth running and effective management of the recent City Council elections. I am pleased that this council continues, uniquely now in Norfolk, to elect by thirds, which gives our citizens a yearly opportunity to cast their vote. This will however be the last election before Voter ID is implemented with all the concerns and significant risks this entails. Can the cabinet member for resources firstly thank those officers involved in the recent elections and comment on how we can best ensure that the hindrances of Voter ID are ameliorated?"

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources' response:

> "The council's Electoral Registration Officer is awaiting further information around implementation and funding of all aspects of the Elections Act, including the parts related to implementation of Voter ID. This has not yet been provided by Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities however the council will be working with the Electoral Registration Officer, all members and other stakeholders, partners and the public once further details have been announced, in order to mitigate the effects of the Government regrettable legislation on Voter ID.
>
> I would be delighted to pass on my thanks to staff for the excellent work they undertook in the running of the recent election."

Question 5

Councillor Erin Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods the following question:

"I am proud to represent a ward which contains many private renters but am concerned over how many of these homes contain significant hazards. Earlier in April all of the people living in the 53 apartments in St Peter's House were forced to move out at around 10pm after the building was deemed unsafe. Can the cabinet member for Safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods' comment on the work this City Council to protect these people and pursue the landlord?"

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods' response:

"Five years after the Grenfell tragedy the case of St Peter's House was deeply shocking, with a large properly in central Norwich being occupied without any power, working fire protection or alarm systems and many serious breaches of building and housing regulations. This necessitated rapid action from many Council officers to address a clearly dangerous situation and provide considerable support to those displaced.

It is disappointing that two months following the action we took to keep residents safe that the developer of the block has not taken the action necessary for us to lift the Emergency Prohibition Order and get leaseholders and tenants back into their flats.

The council's private sector housing team are continuing to work proactively with the developer and other agencies including UK Power Networks, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and CNC Building Control to ensure the safety of the building for the residents of St Peter's House.

Meanwhile officers are still carrying out investigations into this matter and therefore it would be prejudicial to the investigation and any potential enforcement action to comment further at this time. I would be happy to provide an update at a future council meeting once the investigation has been concluded."

Question 6

Councillor Brociek-Coulton to ask the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth the following question:

> "I was pleased to see that the City Council carparks now have a cashless option together with the opportunity to pay with coins. Can the cabinet member inclusive and sustainable growth comment on the benefits to the council through offering this additional option to users?"

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

> "The arrival of cashless payments in our carparks is long overdue and I am delighted that we have now achieved it. In a time where the demand for physical cash has declined, it is important that other payment options are available to our customers. This gives our customers increased flexibility on how they chose to pay and makes our carparks much more attractive to use. Paying is made much simpler for customers and will generate additional income to support council initiatives, at the same time as reducing our running costs."

Question 7

Councillor Driver to ask the cabinet member for community wellbeing the following question:

> "Like most people in the city, I am proud of our historic and important Norwich Market and try to support it whenever possible. In recent years it has continued to grow, prosper, and provide a range of products and services which are appreciated. I was particularly pleased that it has recently become the first 'Net zero waste' market in the country and how this will help the environment. Can the cabinet member for community wellbeing discuss how this implemented and the benefits delivered environmentally?"

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing's response:

> "The council has been working in partnership with Market Traders and the BID to reduce the environmental impact of the Market by minimising the waste that is produced there.
>
> This work has identified that the vast majority of the materials and by-products found on the Market can be re-used or recycled. These include packaging (predominantly cardboard, paper, plastic and pallets), cooking oil, coffee grinds and other types of food waste. The project has also looked at minimising the use of single use plastics such as cutlery and coffee cups.
>
> New waste and recycling storage and collection methods are aimed at improving the quality of material that is sent for recycling and minimising the amount of processing required to produce new items from this material.
>
> We are confident that they will deliver that this work will provide significant financial and environmental benefits for the Market."

Question 8

Councillor Peek to ask the cabinet member for environmental services the following question:

> "Homelessness and rough sleeping have risen rapidly in recent years as access to social security, housing and support has been steadily diminished. It is likely to increase further as the cost-of-living crisis grows and we risk entering yet another recession. I was therefore pleased to see that work to build to build seven one-bed homes on Kett's Hill for people who have experienced rough sleeping is well underway and should be completed later this year. Can the cabinet member for environmental services comment on progress and the importance of our city providing such specialist accommodation?"

Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for environmental services' response:

> "This work forms part of our Norwich tackling rough sleeping strategy to provide people with homes and support to help rebuild their lives. The funding for these homes comes from a successful bid with Broadland Housing Association to the Government's Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme in 2021-22.
>
> We have worked successfully with Broadland Housing Association to secure capital and revenue funding for a similar project at Lakenfields, which saw six one-bed modular flats delivered and ten homes purchased on the open market at the end of last year.
>
> Our ambition is to build and secure more homes like these to help break the cycle of homeless for people who have faced multiple disadvantages during their lives. We have therefore, submitted a further bid this year for additional rough sleeper accommodation funding for a seven one-bed house development with Broadland Housing Association and an eleven one-bed flat development with Flagship Housing Association."

Question 9

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

"A recent article in the Evening News earlier this month highlighted that foodbank use in the NR3 area had rocketed in recent months and that the Phoenix Hub in Mile Cross, which is one of our city's poorest, is supporting ever more families across the community. Given the lack of action by central government to respond to the cost-of-living crisis can the Leader explain again how the social inclusion strategy of this City Council can provide a measure of assistance during these difficult times?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"The city council recognises the pressure that the cost of living crisis is placing on people in Norwich, particularly those on lower incomes. We have a well-established approach to supporting financial inclusion, including our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, funding charities to advise on financial issues and help people facing homelessness, supporting the city's new social supermarkets and helping with energy costs. Longer-term, we are making Norwich a Living Wage City, so people earn a good wage.

However, the cost of living crisis requires an additional urgent response. We are exploring what more we can do to, ensuring everyone is able to claim the benefits, discounts and support they are entitled to and helping charities meet the increased levels of demand. We are also getting every penny that we can from central government, to pass to people in need.

Many of the issues underlying this crisis can only be tackled nationally. However, this council is committed to making Norwich a Fair City and we will continue to do everything in our power to help those struggling the most."

Question 10

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

"I am proud to represent Bowthorpe Ward which has seen some amazing new Passivhaus council housing and other properties built in recent years thanks to the investment of this council. Approval for Threescore Phase 3 has recently been given which will ensure the majority of the 76 properties will be used as council owned social housing, with some to be sold on the open market. They will be built using a fabric first approach to provide eco-efficient homes. Can the cabinet member for social housing comment on how work will soon proceed and when these new homes should be completed?"

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

"Following approval by cabinet in January contracts for the construction of Three Score Phase 3 have now been let and the groundworks started in April.

Over the summer you should be able to witness the frames for the first of the new council homes being erected on site. I am very much looking forward to handing over the keys to these new homes to council tenants in March 2023.

My understanding is that our wholly owned housebuilder Norwich Regeneration Limited will commence marketing of the 24 excellent quality new homes for private sale in autumn this year. The entire development should be complete by September 2024."

Question 11

Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing the following question:

"I have long supported the excellent LetNCC scheme which successfully works with landlords to provide affordable accommodation for people who may not be eligible for social housing. A few years ago, the 1000th tenancy achieved through the scheme was celebrated. Can the cabinet member comment on this with regards to the national Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation scheme?"

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

"The funding from Norfolk County Council for Private Sector Leasing (PSL) to participate in the Syrian Refugee Program (SRP) commenced in November 2016 with the first families arriving in February 2017.

Since then, under the original SRP scheme, we have met our commitment to accommodate 150 people.

Since the scheme was widened to become the UK Resettlement scheme (UKRS) we have accommodated a further 25 people. We are now recruiting for an additional Private Sector Leasing Officer, funded by Norfolk County Council, so we can meet our commitment to accommodate 90 refugees per year for the next 3 years at least, with an equal 45/45 split across the schemes.

In addition, we have accommodated 52 people since the emergency situation in Afghanistan in August 2021. Most recent figures show that 36 of these are civilians (under the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme).

Moving forward we have been asked to offer 5 properties of at least 2 bedrooms by July 2022 for the next cohort of families seeking refuge under UKRS. Once we have secured these, we will then look to bank the next properties for October/November.

We are trying to secure new properties to the scheme to do this, so we do not impact the waiting list of people being assessed by Housing Options as in housing need.

Total number of refugees accommodated via PSL since 2017 is 227."

Question 12

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

> "I am concerned that the council does not hold any information on how many of its homes have prepayment gas or electric meters, which require people to pay for electricity before they use it. In contrast to billed customers, who are given warnings before being cut off, those with meters lose their energy supply when their money runs out (after a small emergency credit). Even worse, they still have to pay standing charges which carry on racking up, from 5p-80p a day. This means customers can build up debts even when not getting any energy. What is the council doing to find out who is in this position to assist them in the current energy price crisis, which is set to get worse?"

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

> "Our tenants make their own arrangements for energy supplier. In some circumstances tenants may choose a pre-payment meter or may be required to have a pre-payment meter by their supplier. As household circumstances may change, we do not hold this information.
>
> If a tenant is experiencing financial difficulty then they can self-refer to our money and budgeting advice service via our website or speak with our staff who can refer on their behalf Housing, budgeting and money advice.
>
> We also have an affordable warmth officer who can assist residents with their energy bills, and those who may be experiencing fuel poverty, through emergency interventions and longer term support, including support to reduce long term fuel debt. We also provide advice on the most appropriate tariffs for residents."

Question 13

Councillor Grahame to ask the cabinet member for environmental services the following question:

> "Residents whose gardens are endangered by the contaminated sharps of others have to choose between removing the danger themselves, leaving it there or paying for someone else to remove it. I understand that NCSL are looking into quoting for a future service. I would like to know when this will happen, the likely price-range and who should bear the cost. Would we consider providing sharps boxes, gloves and training to residents where there's a recurrent problem?"

Councillor Oliver, the cabinet member for environmental services' response:

> "Norwich City Services Limited respond to reports of discarded needles in open spaces, and where they carry out garden and void clearances on behalf of Housing Services.
>
> NCSL would provide this service for a fee, where requested by owner occupiers or tenants in privately rented property, and that the fee would depend on the number and location of the sharps. There are no plans to provide a universal service at this time.
>
> With regards to the provision of sharps boxes, gloves and training to residents, the Council would not consider providing these and would recommend that residents contact NCSL to have discarded sharps removed."

Question 14

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

> "I am aware that planning conditions are not always met by developers after being agreed at a planning committee meeting. This includes hedgehog gaps in fences. What are planning officers doing to ensure that such conditions are met?"

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

> "Our approach to conditions is the same regardless of the issue that they cover. If a detail is secured by a condition, it is considered necessary to make the development acceptable. If we become aware that a condition has not been complied with then we will first of all seek to resolve the situation by talking to the developer. In the rare event that we are not able to find a solution by negotiation, then we can serve a formal breach of condition notice that would require compliance with the condition. Ultimately, we would need to pursue any failure to comply with a notice through the courts"

Question 15

Councillor Haynes to ask the cabinet member for community wellbeing the following question:

"Urban fruit trees could be considered as nature's food banks, and a sensible use of urban green spaces of any size and designation, given the current economic climate, obesity epidemic and supply chain troubles. Can we agree in principle to seek opportunities for edible planting and to use opportunities as they arise, for example, by planting edible varieties of, say, cherry trees, rather than inedible ones, and to actively seek such opportunities?"

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing's response:

"The creation of orchards for production of fruit through community-lead projects could have many benefits for local communities. We would be keen to hear from tenants and residents' associations with such proposals.

Residents are also encouraged to grow fruit and vegetables in private gardens and/or our allotments which can be rented at an affordable rate.

Increasing the growth of fruit and vegetables would support the development of a Nature Recovery Network for Norwich, as outlined in our ambitious draft Biodiversity Strategy, through enhancing nature corridors.

There are challenges for the City Council in growing fruit trees itself on public land, due to their significant maintenance requirements, in the context of the significant financial pressures on the General Fund revenue budget"

Question 16

Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for community wellbeing the following question:

"The local Norwich Play Streets group is working hard to promote the idea of play streets for their social and health value. Although the highways function is the responsibility of the county council, I know the city council has supported the concept in the past, including by lending play street equipment. Key to success is publicity. Please let me know what specific promotion through council communications channels is planned, including social media and publications, signposting interested residents, covering play streets and their positive aspects, and working with the Car Free Norwich group?"

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing's response:

"As Councillor Price will be aware, with the recent transfer of responsibilities for Highways functions back to Norfolk County Council, responsibility for the Play Streets scheme now sits at County Hall. We at the City Council have been very supportive of the initiative; for example by offering road closure kits to residents and community groups through the excellent relations we have. We are very happy to continue to support the scheme and share promotional and communication material about it in line with County Council communication plans."

Question 17

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

> "The city council's response to the Local Transport Plan consultation in December 2020 stated that the council's vision would aim to: *Raise long-stay parking charges in public car parks, designed to incentivise use of park & ride; maintain overall revenue levels by offsetting fewer car park users with the higher amount paid by each; facilitate redevelopment of redundant car parking space and intensify the turnover of the spaces that remain.* The Corporate Plan approved in February 2022 committed to a *Review of potential development sites, including surface car parks, to improve their management and develop a pipeline of potential housing development sites.* Could we please have an update on work done to reduce the amount of car parking space in the city?"

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

> "The development strategy team is actively progressing work to identify a housing pipeline to provide sites suitable for direct development or through our housebuilder NRL. This should be concluded later in the year and will have been informed by high level feasibility of sites including some surface car parks"

Question 18

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

"Given the housing and cost of living crises we are seeing in Norwich, will the Anglia Square development be subject to the Community Infrastructure Levy and subject to providing the quota of affordable housing as stipulated by Joint Core Strategy policy 4 for housing delivery in the affordable housing Supplementary Planning Document?"

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

"The council always seeks to maximise the amount of affordable housing provided on any redevelopment site that triggers the requirement for it. Anglia Square is no exception. However, our planning policies have always allowed for the viability of a development to be taken into account when calculating how many affordable units a site should provide. A viability appraisal of the scheme submitted for Anglia Square is being prepared and will need to be taken into account in determining the planning application in due course.

As far as CIL is concerned, the council has adopted a policy on exceptional circumstances relief for sites that would deliver wider regeneration benefits. It will be down to the applicant to make an application for such relief should they consider it necessary. Such an application can only be made if planning permission for the development is granted"

Question 19

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

"The council is aiming to review its procurement social value guidance this year. Central government procurement policies require a minimum of 10% scoring on social value in the assessment of contract bids, based on consistent criteria. The benefits of an explicit score have been clearly argued, as it:

- gives a much clearer signal to contractors that social value related improvements must be considered for any contract, leading to longer-term changes in contractors' approaches to social value
- enables the inclusion of explicit social value KPIs and therefore a much higher leverage in contract management of social value contributions
- gives the public and councillors a clear signal and confidence that contracts adequately consider social value.

Local government should follow the lead of Government and adopt this more stringent social value consideration. Will the cabinet member advocate for an explicit social value score for Norwich City Council Procurement?"

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources' response:

"Our procurement strategy makes clear our commitment to investing in social value within our contract and commissioning work whilst balancing the need to ensure we secure good value for money for the people of Norwich.

There are excellent examples in the work we do to secure social value in our commissioning. By way of example, the recent tennis court operator contract, which received a great deal of attention at the scrutiny committee, included a 25% weighting for how the contractor will engage with the community and reduce inequality. However, it's not just the work we directly undertake, but the influence we can have on others; we work with providers of framework contracts, such as our partner Eastern Procurement Limited, to encourage them to promote social value in the setting up of framework contracts and in this regard recently secured the creation of eight apprenticeships in the building materials contract we procured on behalf of Norwich City Services Limited. You may recall that as a Cabinet, when we reviewed our strategy, we specifically considered whether to have a target and elected not to, recognising that it's fundamentally about how we build social value into what we buy and the guidance we provide to staff.

Whilst you advocate that the government is taking the lead, unfortunately historically central government have placed barriers in the way of local authorities for securing better social value outcomes, most notably the local government act 1988 which bans us from taking non-commercial considerations into account when procuring, except to the extent that it is necessary to secure compliance with the social value act. We can all hope that the forthcoming procurement act removes some of these barriers”

Question 20

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

"The city centre has recently seen a string of closures of shops, with the national decline in high streets hitting Norwich as we emerge from the pandemic. Other councils, such as Camden, have introduced policies and initiatives to revive high streets. There are also schemes where councils have partnered with businesses to open "meanwhile spaces" for start-up businesses which see premises leased out rent free or for peppercorn rents to promote small businesses, innovation and entrepreneurship. This anticipates the potential legislation that will give councils powers to force landlords to let out empty retail units. Will this council introduce a policy for bringing vacant retail or office units in the city centre into use, potentially as meanwhile spaces for temporary use by start-ups, artists, charities or other less established businesses?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"The council's policies aim to maintain a prosperous and vibrant city centre. Whilst there are empty units in the city centre, the monitoring work that we've carried out reveals that Norwich continues to hold its own in relation to other centres as can be seen by the number of people coming into the centre. We continue to work with property owners and other partners such as the BID to promote the centre and we have seen places like Castle Quarter responding to changing patterns of town centre use by moving towards a more leisure-based offer. We see similar patterns on a smaller scale in other locations, such as Magdalen Street, which has continued to thrive despite a very challenging few years.

If the proposed Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill does indeed contains useful powers to allow the councils to take control of buildings for the benefit of their communities, transforming boarded up shops or derelict buildings into thriving businesses, shared community spaces or housing we will of course consider their use very carefully."

Question 21

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

"Over the last thirty years, Norwich's urban footprint has expanded dramatically, engulfing a large amount of countryside and parts of the city's patchwork of green spaces. Examples include: the loss of parts of school playing fields for all-weather sports pitches and gardens to house extensions and parking. The drive to development is taking a terrible toll with a loss of space for nature, more light pollution and more hard surfaces that increase the risk of flooding and make the city a hotter place. A reduction in greenspace and greenery also impacts on people's physical and mental health. Natural England's call for 'nutrient neutrality' in planning new overnight accommodation is just one manifestation of the failure to protect our natural environment. Will the portfolio holder explain what the Council will do to increase urban green space and greenery in heavily built-up areas such as the city centre and Norwich more generally?"

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing's response:

"The local plan contains policies to protect open space, promote sustainable drainage and protection and provision of trees within development. The council also undertakes regular monitoring of the loss of designated open space. Planning applications are assessed against these policies and continue to seek enhancements to the natural environment as appropriate.

The council has long been involved in efforts to protect and enhance the environment such as through past green infrastructure and tree planting strategies.

Various workstreams are ongoing aiming to improve the quantity and quality of the city's natural environment. These include the production of a new Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy, implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain ahead of the requirement of the Environment Act (to include a citywide biodiversity baseline study), natural environment policies within the GNLP, and projects facilitated through the River Wensum Strategy.

Prior to notification from Natural England that nutrient neutrality affects our area, the city council has had water efficiency policies which are the most demanding the Government has allowed to be set and aim to reduce the impact of housing development on protected sites by reducing flows through Whitlingham Water Recycling Centre."

Please note that the following questions are second questions from members and will only be taken if the time taken by questions has not exceeded thirty minutes. This is in line with paragraph 53 of Part 3 of the council's constitution.

Question 22

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

> "Over the last three years, I have repeatedly been promised a priority plan for installing security doors, but also told that we could not tell any residents about it. Despite this, residents in blocks such as Ebenezer Place and Leopard Court received letters from the council telling them that they were prioritised for security doors. Furthermore, under the current contract, I have personally seen elderly and disabled residents who are unable to open the doors because they are too heavy. These doors cost around £16,000 each, costing the HRA account millions and leaseholders as much as £4,000, when cheaper systems were available. It is now June 2022, and we still have not seen a confirmed plan for prioritisation and the details of the programme specification are still unclear. Please can the Cabinet Member provide an answer for residents who want to know what is happening with their doors?"

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

> "Procurement of the door entry is progressing with a start date of December 2022 targeted. This start date is later than was originally anticipated and as the procurement process has taken longer than expected.
>
> We are looking at the possibility of accelerating the programme through Q4 to enable us to meet the overall original programme targets.
>
> Consultation on the type of door and configuration is planned for from September onwards to ensure that the doors fitted are "fit for purpose" and meet the requirements of the residents living within the receiving properties.
>
> Once a contractor has been successfully appointed a detailed programme of works will be agreed and shared with residents and affected Councillors."

Question 23

Councillor Galvin to ask the cabinet member for community wellbeing the following question:

"Heigham Park tennis courts, although still closed, were furnished with nets and white line markings several months ago, on a surface that was apparently not finished as it was black rather than green. After multiple enquiries, officers informed me that the surface is due to be recoloured green (as per the planning permission). Can you explain why nets and lines went up before the finished surface was down?"

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing's response:

"The redevelopment work at Heigham Park will further extend the highly successful Norwich Parks Tennis Scheme by providing high quality, accessible, affordable sports facilities that will be available 52 weeks of the year.

The project is nearing completion, and the lining and nets that were provided in March were in the anticipation that the courts could be used before the final surface coating was applied. Unfortunately, some minor planning conditions had not been fulfilled at the time, which prevented use of the courts. These have now been addressed, and we are looking forward to the courts opening in July.

As set out in the draft Greater Norwich Playing Pitches Strategy, Norwich has been identified by the Lawn Tennis Association as having the highest number of people in the country wanting to play tennis, and these excellent new facilities will seek to meet this demand.

This Labour-led city council will always prioritise affordable sports facilities, and the health and wellbeing benefits that they bring"

Question 24

Councillor Osborn to ask the cabinet member for community wellbeing the following question:

> "I was delighted to learn that the council has agreed to implement a No Mow May policy. However, there have been numerous instances where grass and plants were mowed during May, including off St Leonards Road and at Bull Close. Please can the Cabinet Member explain what steps will be taken to ensure that the policy is maintained and implemented?"

Councillor Giles, the cabinet member for community wellbeing's response:

> "No formal policy had been agreed by the Council to support "No Mow May", although grass cutting has been reduced during May and June due to the lack of rainfall in the city. We are looking to ensure that the NCSL grass cutting programme is aligned with aligned with our emerging Biodiversity Strategy."