

Council

22 March 2016

Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 1

Councillor Button to ask the cabinet member for fairness and equality:

The latest round of the council's 'Switch and Save' programme has now finished. Can the cabinet member for fairness and equality comment on the savings achieved yet again from this excellent, practical initiative?

Councillor Thomas, cabinet member for fairness and equality's response:

Thank you for highlighting this practical and popular scheme that has helped thousands of Norwich citizens save money. Through the power of collective purchasing, we work to secure the lowest energy prices for our registrants, therefore helping to reduce the cost of energy and offset rising energy prices.

The recent seventh round of our successful collective energy switching scheme delivered an average saving of £320 a year per household. The tariffs were market leading with 98% of people making a saving. The 'typical cost' standard tariff is £1,129 a year compared to ours at £764 year. If all 2119 people took up their offer the average saving would be £678,000.

In the last seven tranches overall 15,359 people registered for the Switch and Save. Norwich has repeatedly had the highest national conversion rates, with over 2000 total switchers.

If all homes took up the offered savings a total of at least £2.7 million would be saved on energy bills by Norwich residents.

Norwich City Council always endeavours to engage with fuel poor households to ensure that they are aware of the Switch and Save.

The small fee we receive from the Switch and Save goes back into affordable warmth work. This has been invaluable for vulnerable residents, as it has provided urgent heating for them in the winter

The 8th Norwich Switch and Save tranche will be launched on the 22 March and will run until the auction date on the 17 of May.

Question 2

Councillor Peek to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety:

Thanks to the city council, replacement trees have been planted across my ward in Wensum which have been greatly appreciated by many constituents.

Despite the severe limitations on budgets, can the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety give his opinion on the many successes achieved in pushing forward the replacement tree programme and the numbers secured for the city so far?

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety's response:

Although budget limitations are a constraint on the number of trees that can be planted, work has continued to identify and secure other funding to enable a planting programme much greater than that which would have been possible through the council's tree budget.

In the year last year, across the city, 260 trees were felled for safety reasons and 587 trees were planted. 45 of these have been planted in Wensum Ward replacing 42 trees which were removed in the same period. I am pleased to hear that constituents in Wensum ward have expressed their appreciation for the planting that has taken place.

180 trees were planted as part of the council's tree replacement programme and an additional 407 half standard and 1 year old trees were planted at a number of sites using funds from the Trees for Norwich sponsorship scheme, Community Infrastructure Levy, section 106 funds, external grant funding and through work with friends of groups.

- 13 trees planted through the Trees for Norwich sponsorship scheme
- 99 trees planted using Neighbourhood CIL
- 16 fruit trees planted at Wensum community centre as part of the landscape play/improvements
- 3 trees at Wensum View as part of landscape/play area improvements
- 60 parkland trees in Earlham Park with funds from the Government's higher level stewardship scheme
- 200 whips (first year trees) planted at Eaton Park on the southern boundary of the pitch and putt course through the Big Tree Plan initiative with the involvement of TCV and Friends of Eaton Park.

- 10 black poplars propagated from cuttings by Friends of Earham cemetery planted at Marston Marsh.
- 6 fruit trees donated for planting at Lea Bridges Park

Looking at the above, I think all members would agree that the council has been successful in pushing forward with the tree replacement programme and in maximising all resources available to us in helping to maintain the long term tree cover and biodiversity of the city.

Question 3

Councillor Bradford to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

For a considerable period, Crome councillors and I have been supporting residents to secure traffic and safety improvements in the Britannia Road area.

Can the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development comment on the significant safety opportunities secured through the recent approval of the NHAC report last week and the importance of positively using Community Infrastructure Levy monies to facilitate changes such as this?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

I am delighted that part of the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) has been prioritised for the benefit of the community in the Britannia Road area. As a result of the decision at NHAC last week, we will now be consulting residents on a scheme that will improve compliance with the existing 20mph limit; help to deal with anti-social driving; better manage the parking on Britannia Road and promote cycling as part of the wider measures in the area.

The package of measures responds to feedback from the community and other stakeholders and includes further traffic calming measures, improved pedestrian facilities and managing on-street parking to reduce the current congestion problems. I am also hopeful that we will also be able to provide some cycle parking for visitors to the Britannia Café and the heath.

I believe the approach taken amply demonstrates the tremendous value of CIL monies in helping to respond to the concerns and needs of local communities.

Question 4

Councillor Brociek-Coulton to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

The 'One Planet Norwich' event earlier in the month was a fabulous success and once again highlighted the practical environmental successes being achieved by this Labour city council.

Can the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development give his opinion on the event and also update members on the key successes achieved?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

The second One Planet Norwich Festival was the most successful yet with 8,300 visitors attending over the weekend, an increase from 6,000 the previous year. The Forum and the millennium plain were filled with new activities and a range of stallholders that engaged the community on more sustainable alternatives to everyday living.

Inside The Forum we had electronic surveys that asked the visitors questions on their experiences at the festival. We use this to learn what went well and how to improve for future activities. One question asked whether they had learnt anything new about sustainable living at the festival, of which a staggering 86% of the respondents answered yes.

Another question gauged where the visitors have travelled from to visit the festival. The majority (67%) came from Norwich but some also came from as far as Cambridge and Suffolk.

The One Planet Norwich Facebook page reached 11,500 people between 7-13 March. The twitter posts reached 47,353 people. We established a post engagement (number of actions on posts, e.g. likes, comments, shares etc.) of 6,343 on Facebook and 825 on Twitter. The festival event also attracted customers to engage with the new council webpages.

The event generated a strong media interest. The event got a lead article in the Evening News, there was a double-page spread about one of the festival's speakers Karen Cannard in the week before in both the EDP and Evening News. Karen was also interviewed on BBC Radio Norfolk and Future Radio. BBC Radio Norfolk did a live broadcast on the morning of the festival with Future Radio also promoting the event in the lead up.

The wide coverage meant we achieved a good local recognition of the One Planet Norwich brand and the existence of the festival, which will help us build for future years' events.

The evidence indicates that the festival has proved to be successful in communicating sustainable activities to the wider community and when asked

if both the visitors and stallholders would like to return next year the shared response was yes.

A full report will be given to the sustainable development panel.

Question 5

Councillor Manning to ask the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:

The government recently announced a partial climb down and delay in the implementation of 'pay to stay' for council tenants, thanks to significant multi-party opposition to this damaging policy.

Can the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing give any indication on the likely numbers of Norwich City Council tenants who would have been affected and could still be if this ghastly policy is implemented in full?

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:

The concept of pay to stay was introduced as a voluntary scheme in 2014 whereby social landlords could charge higher rents for social housing households earning over £60K per year. To my knowledge no stock-holding local authority chose to implement this.

The policy was revived as a part in the Housing and Planning Bill 2015, whereby from April 2017 any household living in social housing with an income over £30K (£40k in London) would pay a higher rent based on a market or near market rent for their accommodation. Local authorities would be required to return the extra income to the government. Housing associations can enter the scheme voluntarily and keep the extra income for investment in new social housing.

The government estimated that there are approximately 350,000 tenants with household incomes over £30,000 per annum living in social rented property - including over 40,000 with incomes in excess of £50,000 per year.

Without any detail of how the scheme would be implemented and using current rents and local average income levels, **very rough estimates** indicate that up to 20% of current Norwich tenant households may have been impacted by, on average, in the region of £50 per week. Ironically, one of the potential consequences of the policy was that the increased rent would in many cases lead to an increased level of housing benefit entitlement.

As the measure has passed through Parliament it has faced considerable opposition. The Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) has provided full briefings to MPs and Lords as part of this. The government has now published its response to a limited consultation on this issue, to which the

council provided evidence. The Government's response states the policy will now reflect the following:

- Pay to stay will be based on an as yet unspecified taper starting at £30k outside of London so that rent increases are applied gradually. Further details to be made available in due course.
- Households in receipt of housing benefit will be exempt from the policy.
- Local authorities will be permitted to retain "a reasonable amount for administrative costs"; the level of which is subject to further discussion.

Issues that remain outstanding are:

- On what area will the basis of the market rent will assessed? Will it be regional or local?
- How will household income information will be supplied / requested?
- What administration will be required to manage the scheme?
- Rent levels will be based on the previous year's income. If a tenants circumstances change in the 'current' year i.e. employment is lost, income will therefore decrease and if the family has no savings how will the tenant fund the increased level of rent?
- Will the amount the council has to pay to Government be based on what is actually collected or what should be collected? For example, if a tenant does not or is unable to pay the full amount does the balance fall to the council to pay? This will mean less money available to the council to spend on homes and services.

Question 6

Councillor Coleshill to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety:

The recent cabinet approval of the '*Community asset transfer policy*' means that where the council has community-used land or buildings it would find financially difficult to keep or maintain, rather than sell or rent these commercially, it can offer them for community ownership or management.

Can the cabinet member for neighbourhood and community safety give his opinion on the expressions of interest so far received for the Russell Street Community Centre?

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety's response:

As a result of wide publicity carried out to promote the community asset transfer opportunity of Russell Street Community Centre, eight groups viewed the centre and three groups subsequently submitted expressions of interest.

The expressions of interest have been assessed and the groups were invited to attend an informal interview, so that any questions could be clarified by the group and the council.

Based on this information, one group has been identified as meeting the requirements of the asset transfer policy and has been invited to submit a business plan.

Whilst I am unable to provide details of the name of the organisation concerned at this stage, I was very pleased by the interest shown by voluntary and community organisations in this opportunity and their ideas how the centre could be used to benefit the community.

Question 7

Councillor Ryan to ask the cabinet member for resources and income generation:

I was greatly impressed by the rapid progress of the new 595-space car park in the Mountergate area on Rose Lane. Can the cabinet member for resources and income generation give his opinions on both the progress achieved so far and the wider opportunities which this development will help facilitate in regenerating this area of the city centre?

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for resources and income generation's response:

Progress in the construction of the new car park has been exceptional - especially given the constraints of its tight city centre location. In just 12 months the project has not only transformed a key gateway to the centre of Norwich, it will also provide a new high quality facility which will increase the council's income generating capacity and act as the catalyst for further regeneration of the wider Mountergate West area. In fact the council's investment in this project has already been an important factor in giving private sector investors the confidence to improve adjacent major office buildings, which in turn will improve opportunities for increased employment within the city.

When the new car park is completed the former car park site will be released for further suitable development which will continue to improve and regenerate the wider area. The car park project has been an excellent example of how the council itself can successfully and appropriately stimulate regeneration.

The new car park is expected to be completed this spring.

Question 8

Councillor Herries to ask the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:

Would the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing agree that the latest development of 'The Feed' (a catering enterprise) as part of the LEAP social initiative, once again underlines the innovative and far-reaching approach of the organisation in tackling both homelessness and the wider issues often connected to it?

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:

This council, with its focus on preventing homelessness, crisis and reducing inequality, has long recognised the need to take an holistic approach to the issues that affect those facing homelessness within our community.

As a result, LEAP (Learning, Education, and Accommodation Project) was founded in 2008, with one housing adviser as part of the council's housing options team, to empower people who face disadvantage to live a fulfilling life of their choice by supporting each client with their own individual employment, education and accommodation needs.

Since 2008, LEAP has developed significantly, with the council now a partner with St Martins Housing Trust in an expanded service which, over the last 8 years, has empowered hundreds of clients to a better life and a positive future. The LEAP team have become specialists in addressing the needs of homeless and hostel-dwelling clients by providing accessible, individually tailored support to individuals in housing crisis by building their skills through coaching, training and mentoring. In this manner the scheme addresses single homelessness, offending and re-offending, substance misuse and mental ill health, developing a legacy of skills and stability within the individual and the community

With a view to developing a sustainable future, LEAP recently launched 'The Feed', a catering social enterprise based at 'Open' on Bank Plain in the centre of Norwich. 'The Feed' provides a bespoke catering service developed through a social enterprise model offering personal development, meaningful work experience and a way of improving self-confidence for clients who have often found themselves very far away from the job market.

It is important, I think to reflect on what the individual clients who have worked with LEAP and 'The Feed' have gained from the experience. Of the 138 new clients who signed up to work with LEAP in 2015, 45 have gained employment, 26 have moved into their own independent accommodation and 96 have reported that since working with LEAP they have attained the skills to achieve what they want in life.

Both LEAP and 'The Feed' are great examples of the innovation and ambition shown by this council in order to address homelessness and inequality in Norwich through dealing with its causes.

Question 9

Councillor Mike Sands to ask the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:

It was an emblem of homelessness and poverty that looked like it had gone away, but over the past five years the number of rough sleepers across England has doubled. There are now an estimated 3,600 people sleeping on the streets nightly in England and the resurgence of this problem has rightly dismayed many.

Can the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing give her opinion on the on-going work and efforts this council takes to assist people facing homelessness and housing difficulty?

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:

The view in the authority has always been that the best way to deal with homelessness is to prevent it from happening and the council quite rightly, places great emphasis on this approach through the provision of specialist housing advice and assistance to all those facing homelessness or in housing difficulty.

The council's housing options team provides a range of options and advice to these clients, including a homeless prevention fund, a private sector leasing scheme, mediation, legal advice and referrals to supported accommodation. Over the past 12 months, this pro-active approach has directly prevented 600 households from experiencing homelessness and assisted many hundreds more in resolving their own housing issues.

Our approach has been recognised as best practice and a recent peer review of the service, undertaken as part of the DCLG gold standard challenge reinforced this, praising the high quality, accessibility and effectiveness of the housing options service in preventing homelessness in Norwich and the innovative range of options available to clients.

The council is mindful that Norwich, as the urban centre in a large rural county, will always be a magnet for those facing homelessness or rough sleeping in the region. The council recognises this and, again as an example of using innovative approaches has, since 2010 employed a dedicated rough sleeper co-ordinator to work intensively with individual rough sleepers and those at risk of rough-sleeping in the city to find pathways into accommodation and support.

While, statistics show that numbers of rough sleepers nationwide have increased 30% in the last year, by contrast, in Norwich numbers have remained static over the last 12 months, with 13 rough sleepers at the last count. This represents something of a success in the wider context and is testament to our pro-active approach.

While these remain difficult times, with pressure on services and changes to the welfare system continuing to effect vulnerable people, I have confidence that this council's commitment to innovation, work with partners and focus on providing a client centred, outcome focused service will continue to provide the best possible support for people facing homelessness in Norwich.

Question 10

Councillor Lubbock to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

Congratulations to the council and officers for another successful 'One Planet Festival'. This year the Lord Mayor planted a tree and councillors were invited to a tour of the stalls and a chance to thank the stallholders for taking part; so an improvement on last year's event with regard to councillors' involvement.

However, I still feel there is more of a role that councillors could play. Please could the cabinet member give assurances that if the event is repeated next year then councillors will have a meaningful role?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

I am sure officers will appreciate your kind comments. I know they put a lot of hard work in to making it such a success.

Officers have been developing the One Planet Norwich format to accommodate more member involvement since the first festival in 2015.

As you say, the One Planet Norwich festival involved the Lord Mayor and members from all political parties this year following discussions at the sustainable development panel.

A report will be taken to the next panel which will allow members to discuss any further ideas they may have. However, it is important to note that the festival's principal aim is to make citizens more aware of ways in which they can improve their sustainability. Therefore, we need to ensure that we maximise the space available to deliver this objective.

We would obviously still welcome members who are active in sustainable living community groups such as Norwich in Bloom and CHAIN as these activities are complementary to the objectives of the festival.

Question 11

Councillor Neale to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

The cabinet member for environment and sustainable development recently told Look East that air pollution in Norwich is “Not dangerous [...] but slightly exceeding EU limits.” He also said that “It seems shocking, but the reality is what you feel when you are there, and the reality is there are some small exceedances in Norwich.”

The figures show that nitrogen dioxide emissions at Castle Meadow exceed EU limits by 37.5%, which - by any stretch of the imagination - could not be called ‘small’ or ‘slight’, especially as the EU limits are themselves unambitious and are the absolute minimum acceptable for public health.

Does the cabinet member stand by his claim that consistently illegal levels of air pollution are “not dangerous”?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development’s response:

Firstly, the responsibility for air quality is the responsibility of the city council but it has to work hard with partners to get changes. For example:

- the problems on the streets with nitrogen dioxide is transport-related and the Highway Authority is Norfolk County Council, and has been since 1974, over 40 years ago.
- The buses are privatised and there are a large variety of providers with some coming in from the rural areas using very old buses with equally old, polluting engines.
- The Taxis and Hire Cars are another private source of pollution, as well as the mass of private cars in the City. And it was not that long ago that diesel was seen as better than petrol and some diesel vehicles were badged as Eco Cars!

The city council, working as an agency for the county - and working with our county highway colleagues - has had a very successful programme of taking out the through traffic from the city centre, making fabulous changes to the environment because all through-traffic was contributing was noise, jams and pollution.

Sadly there are some myths and some frank un-truths about air quality in Norwich, but what I do think is happening is that some people are scaremongering, trying to frighten people, maybe even deliberately trying to drive people away from coming to Norwich. So let me repeat from a previous

council question; that Norwich city centre does NOT have “a very bad problem with air pollution”.

Although the whole city centre has been declared an air quality management area, it is only at a number of relatively localised places in or adjacent to the city centre where EU limit values for nitrogen dioxide have been exceeded. The highest levels recorded have been at Castle Meadow but they do not even hint at the exceedances of places like London and here there have been great improvements. If progress continues, and we believe it should, we could see the figures below the EU guidance figures.

The next myth that needs to be dispelled is “the pollution is worse than London”. That is so wrong it’s silly, yet something similar was said at ETD Committee at County Hall only this month. A claim was made, stating that some places in Norwich City centre “are worse than London”. Yes, a few places worse than the London average but not worse than London. I love London and love to go there as much as I can but I can only assume people who say that haven’t travelled! The situation is no way as severe as in London, contrary to what has been reported. Exceedances of the annual mean EU limit value are widespread in London and in some locations, for example, the levels of nitrogen dioxide were double that found in Castle Meadow based on the 2013 high figure.

As you can see, the city and county councils believe that air quality is a serious health issue and are committed to addressing and as reported before, the county council has been offered a £416,060 grant by Government under the Clean Bus Technology Fund towards cleaning up exhaust emissions. The money will be used to retro-fit 15 Euro III buses and 9 Euro IV buses which are regularly operated by local bus companies along the street. The anticipated improvement will be to Euro 5/6 standard. When that is done the 24 buses that criss-cross the city and suburbs will be far less polluting and I am certain that the result will be far less nitrogen dioxide and particulates pollution in the City. And as always, that is not the end as there will be need to work on all the other old buses, taxis, hire cars and private vehicles polluting our City.

To cap all that hard work one political party had the effrontery to make false claims in a leaflet, saying that they had achieved it! They claimed that they had won “Cleaner Buses for Norwich”! The leaflet went on to say that the bid followed a request by one of their councillors to the Norwich Highways Agency Committee. They even went on to say that they “have persuaded the city council to request additional resources from the Government for healthy air quality and to work with local bus operators to meet stricter emission standards”. Officers were very angry when they saw this “.... *work of fiction*”. Even though they have been asked, the councillors involved still haven’t publically apologised for their work of fantasy.

Councillor Neale has asked about me talking on a local television programme and selected a small part of what was said during the interview and that what was broadcast was only a part of what was said in the interview. So it is important to understand that reporting data using percentages is not

recognised for the purpose of the local air quality management regime and that the levels of nitrogen dioxide are not “illegal” in terms of compliance as they are air quality objectives which the government has set to which all local authorities are working towards. The ratified data from Castle Meadow for example, shows that there was a good improvement between 2013 and 2015 for the annual mean nitrogen dioxide level and although the quality objective has not yet been achieved, the action being taken by the council shows that progress is being made. And I would assume that Councillor Neale and his Green colleagues would praise the officers for the work they have done to make these improvements.

Over the whole of Norwich in 2014, (the 2105 figures have yet to be fully ratified); there were 8 sites where the annual mean objective for Nitrogen Dioxide was exceeded, meaning that the vast majority of the city has air quality compliant with national standards. So do I think that coming into the city is dangerous? No I don't, but there are people who are scaremongering, frightening the vulnerable, possibly trying to stop people coming to enjoy the work, to shop, to involve themselves in the fabulous leisure activities in the city. If I thought it was dangerous I would stop meetings like this in the City centre, put up barriers etc. If it was dangerous how did you get here, how did we all make it here in one piece?

From a dictionary I have got this: **danger, hazard, risk**

Danger is the most general word for a possibility of suffering harm or injury (*they were in great danger*). It can also refer to a likely cause of harm or injury (*he is a danger to himself and others*) or, in the plural, to the quality of potentially causing harm (*the dangers of smoking*). *Danger* can have connotations of excitement (*the Prince has always enjoyed flirting with danger*). **Hazard** is principally used to describe an actual source of danger (*lead pipes are a serious hazard to health*), as well as the dangers inherent in something named (*cuts and grazes are a hazard of life*). It is used in the plural when referring to the dangerous quality of something (*increased official recognition of the hazards of asbestos*). **Risk** denotes a more predictable possibility of harm arising from an action or a situation, or from an action or object that increases the likelihood of harm (*ozone depletion may increase the risk of skin cancer | going on holiday without insurance is always a risk*). A *risk* may often be a danger that someone chooses to incur because it is outweighed by some other consideration (*you're taking a risk by meeting me / you're taking a real risk if you vote Green – I put that in specially for Councillor Raby! It has a hint of humour but might fly past*).

Question 12

Councillor Raby to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

In an interview on Radio Norfolk on 1 March regarding levels of nitrogen dioxide in the city centre which breach EU emissions limits, the portfolio holder stated, “If we go out of the EU, we won't have to bother with them.”

Can the portfolio holder confirm that he advocates leaving the EU as his preferred way of dealing with nitrogen dioxide breaches of EU emission limits in the city centre?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

No. But I do have a sense of humour. As you have taken a small item from what was said and that wasn't the full transcript, if you listened to it all, there were more giggles but that part you quoted was a dig at those sad people who think anything coming from the EU is bad! Did you not understand that? How sad. As that is a clear answer to your closed question I can assume that there will be no supplementary.

Question 13

Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

A report to Norwich Highways Agency Committee (NHAC) on 23 July 2015 stated that the cycle track along the verges in The Avenues between Colman Road and Bluebell Road would have to be revised due to cost and the impact on trees.

The NHAC report also stated that the detailed design for verge works and parking areas was being revised to take account of the cycle track across the verges not going ahead and that they would be implemented as a second phase. No further report about such revisions came to NHAC, nor was further consultation undertaken. Instead, expensive and even bigger parking bays were installed and white lines painted on the road for accommodating two-way cycling and two-way traffic flows.

The substantial sums spent on parking measures along The Avenues could have funded other measures along the pink pedalway which were dropped or scaled down due to funds running out.

Does the portfolio holder think it appropriate that a considerable sum of money was spent on what is effectively a parking and traffic-calming scheme along The Avenues rather than a proper cycling scheme?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

All this was answered at a very interesting and effective Scrutiny Committee last Thursday. Did Councillor Carlo miss it? If she had attended she would have saved herself the bother of this question for the officers and others.

The Avenues is most definitely not a parking and traffic calming scheme alone as it is about safety. The biggest proportion of the budget was used at the

traffic signalled junction with Colman Road. Before we started work the junction saw **the most accidents involving cyclists of any junction in the city**. The re-phasing of the signals and the early release for cyclists should greatly improve the safety of cyclists at this point. We will need at least three years of monitoring before we can say for certain whether we have achieved this, but I am pleased to say that since the works have been completed there has been no recorded injury accident at the junction that involved a cyclist, or indeed anywhere along The Avenues.

I would also point out that we have also addressed the cycle safety problem at the George Borrow Road junction with The Avenues, **another accident cluster site for cyclists**. The implemented scheme had the same number of parking spaces in it as the agreed scheme and the traffic calming provision was the same. But the sinusoidal cycle friendly humps are really effective in bringing the traffic speeds down to 20mph or less - especially the buses, taxis and hire cars, meaning that the road is far safer for everyone.

Do you not know the benefits of 20mph? I am certain other members of the Green party know! And don't forget the extension of 20mph into all the residential roads between Earlham Road and North Park Avenue and Jessop Road; a benefit the residents of your Nelson ward have had for over 10 years.

Given that the only difference between the approved scheme and the implemented scheme was that the cycle lane was advisory rather than stepped, the traffic regulation orders all remained valid and there was no need to report back to the Highways Agency Committee.

With regard to the lack of consultation on the amended option, I would remind councillor Carlo that advisory cycle lanes with traffic calming was one of the three options that we originally consulted on in May 2014 and at the time it was the most popular. Looking back at the consultation, 25% wanted a full closure on The Avenues, 23% wanted a bus gate and 44% wanted the advisory cycle lane option (the other 8% did not express a preference).

Are you one of the Greens who believes that The Avenues between Colman Road should be closed to traffic for 100% of the time, 24/7, for peak time pressures of 300 hours in a year? That 100% for 3.4% I am certain you would agree that that would be stupid. At the time, officers believed that there was a better solution than the advisory cycle lanes which is why the hybrid lane idea was progressed. Unfortunately this proved not to be the case.

I would also like to bring to everyone's attention the pedalways area of our website, which includes a set of images which highlight the fantastic improvements that have been made using the first round of cycle ambition funding and I am sure that with the additional £8.4M that we have secured for the blue and yellow pedalways will deliver equally as good, if not better, benefits. But I assume that is of no interest to you as it doesn't touch your ward. And as usual, you don't seem to see all the work from the hospital in South Norfolk through to Sprowston in Broadland - and do not seem able to praise all that fantastic work creating an even greener Norwich.

Perhaps you could show us your evidence for 80% of trees gone from College Road, or apologise to the relevant officers for the utter fantasy in Green leaflets in your name about the £416,060 grant by Government under the Clean Bus Technology Fund towards cleaning up exhaust emissions.

Question 14

Councillor Schmierer to ask the cabinet member for housing and wellbeing:

Can the cabinet member guarantee that no tenant who has been served an eviction notice for antisocial behaviour will be able to purchase that particular property from the council?

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for housing and wellbeing's response:

Under the right to buy legislation, any tenancy which is subject to an order of the court seeking possession is not eligible for purchase while the order remains in place.

Where possible, the council seeks to address breaches of tenancy without formal action, but in situations where efforts at resolving issues informally have been unsuccessful - or the breach is very serious - a Notice of Seeking Possession (NSP) can be served.

In many cases the notice itself will encourage an improvement in behaviour, and under these circumstances a tenant's right to buy is not affected and they remain eligible to purchase.

If the NSP does not have the desired effect and the tenancy breaches continue without improvement, the council can apply to the court for a Possession Order. If an order is granted, the tenant's right to buy is removed. Eviction could then follow if behaviour does not improve.

Question 15

Councillor Price to ask the cabinet member for environment and sustainable development:

Following a suggestion by Green Party county councillors in 2012, Norfolk is now generating 50Mw of solar energy at the former RAF Coltishall site – enough to power about 15,000 homes. Other towns and cities are also making progress on solar: notably Swindon, where members of the public can now invest alongside the council in a 5MW community solar farm. This is something that I consider well worth replicating here in Norwich.

Does the cabinet member agree that the council should explore this possibility to help meet our future energy needs in a sustainable way?

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for environment and sustainable development's response:

It was good news to see this 33 MW project completed in time before the massive cuts to renewable energy subsidies this year. The project shows the determination of a number key partners to commercialise this project into reality.

Regretfully the scheme had to be delivered by an outside developer in the end but the scale of the project, the issues with costly grid connection upgrades and the FIT tariff changes made the programme very risky.

You may not be aware that Norwich City Council with 50 other councils made pledges to eradicate carbon emissions in their areas by 2050. This would cut the UK's carbon footprint by 10%.

The pledge says: "We have the ambition of making all our towns and cities across the UK 100% clean before 2050, in line with the commitments made nationally and internationally at the Paris climate change summit".

"We hope other towns and cities across the globe will join us to demonstrate that this transition will happen through acts of leadership by the many, not the few, and that a transition to a clean energy future is both viable and already beginning to happen in many towns and cities today. Our UK towns and cities are committed to making a better future for all."

Clearly, finding solutions for financing clean energy and energy efficiency schemes is going to be critical to making progress, particularly given the Chancellor's cuts to many of the national programmes in this area.

With this in mind our officers will continue to work with representatives who can access European funding for projects and work with finance institutions such as the European Investment Bank, UK's Green Investment Bank (GIB), pension funds or private businesses to commercialise ideas into reality.

Norwich has and will continue to show innovation in developing renewable energy projects. Only last year we assisted 1.5 million kWh of solar (7,000 PV panels) in Norfolk via Solar together. The UK's first ever council lead collective purchasing scheme for Solar PV.

In regards to replicating a community solar farm, it may be worth asking a non-urban authority as regretfully there is little land available for such programmes with the city.

We hope to continue our roof-top schemes as and when funding becomes available.

Question 16

Councillor Jones to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety:

Can the cabinet member for communities assure me that the People's Picnic - which provides food to the homeless and hungry of the city - will be supported and not closed down?

Councillor Driver, cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety's response:

The council is supportive of the work undertaken by the People's Picnic and other similar initiatives in the city.

The council's food safety team is currently working with the associates of the People's Picnic to ensure that their food businesses are registered and the food provided complies with the requirements of the food safety legislation thereby ensuring the public safety of those attending the event.

Question 17

Councillor Bögelein to ask the leader of the council:

Last year, residents from the section of Earlham Road, between the police station and Five Ways, held a number of meetings with council employees, local councillors and their local MP. They aimed to again explore ways to improve the traffic situation.

This is a long-running issue which has worsened through multiple developments in the city, to the point where houses are shaking, causing sleeping difficulties for residents.

On 2 December, I sent a message to the leader of the council on behalf of residents asking for leadership on the issue and requesting a meeting with the leader so he could understand their position. As of today, no response has been received. Could the leader of the council please provide a response to our email?

Councillor Waters, leader of the council's response:

Firstly I would like to apologise for not responding to Councillor Bögelein's email. It was a simple oversight for which I am sorry to both her and her constituents.

I am aware that the residents of the section of Earlham Road between Fiveways and the Outer Ring Road have raised concerns about the volume and speed of traffic using this section over many years; in particular, issues about heavy goods vehicles. Since these concerns were first raised

improvements have been made including the provision of a signalled crossing and three pedestrian refuges which have had a speed reducing affect.

Officers have shared with me the report that was produced about traffic volumes ahead of your meeting with them last summer and the follow up report looking at the actions that came from the meeting. I believe that they have carried out a very thorough assessment of the situation. It is interesting to see that the traffic volumes have fallen marginally in recent years and that the proportion of HGVs is less than would be expected on a B class road, which is what Earlham Road, is.

From what I have seen officers have spent considerable effort in assimilating factual data about the traffic situation in Earlham Road. As officers they have a duty to look at issues on a city wide basis. As the facts show that the traffic situation is no worse, and in fact better, on Earlham Road than on other comparable roads it would seem remiss to promote improvements at this location over other areas with greater need. I appreciate that this will disappoint residents but I hope they will understand the need to ensure that our very scarce resources are used as wisely as possible.

Question 18

Councillor Howard to ask the leader of the council:

Over one hundred people recently attended a meeting addressing the county's response (or lack thereof) to the refugee crisis. In an email sent to the meeting's organisers, the leader of the city council seemed to feel that the negotiation process was being delayed by central government and the lead authority.

Given that other counties are now well ahead of us in welcoming those fleeing Syria, what more does the leader feel he can do to ensure the pledges this council agreed back in September are kept?

Councillor Waters, leader of the council's response:

As the housing authority, we remain absolutely committed to our pledge to receive the 50 Syrian refugees once the negotiations between the county council (as the lead authority) and the home office are successfully completed. This is consistent with our motion to council on this subject last year.