



Council

19:30 to 21:35

20 July 2021

Present: Councillors Maguire (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Bogelein, Brociek-Coulton, Carlo, Champion, Driver, Davis, Everett, Fulton-McAlister (E), Fulton-McAlister (M), Galvin, Grahame, Hampton, Harris, Haynes, Huntley, Kendrick, Lubbock, Manning, Maxwell, Oliver, Osborn, Packer, Price, Schmierer, Stonard, Stutely, Waters, Wright and Youssef

Apologies: Councillors Button, Giles, Jones, Peek, Sands (M), Sands (S), Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

1. Lord Mayor's Announcement

The Lord Mayor explained the procedures for this informal meeting of the council that was being held remotely, on public health grounds, in response to the increasing Covid rates of infection in Norwich. Members would discuss the items on the agenda and then a vote taken. The votes cast would be ratified and used to inform decisions made at an in person meeting of a quorum of members of the council (Council, 21 July 2021).

The Lord Mayor said that he had attended several engagements and specifically mention was made to a virtual meeting with Year 1 pupils at Lakenham Primary School and a prize giving at St Edmunds where he had been accompanied by the Sheriff. Members could follow his engagements on Twitter.

2. Declarations of interests

Councillor Stonard declared an other interest in item 6 (below) Adjustments to the Capital Programme 2021-22, as a director and chair of the Norwich Regeneration Ltd board.

3. Public questions/petitions

The Lord Mayor announced that no public questions or petitions had been received.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2021.

5. Questions to Cabinet Members/Committee Chairs

The Lord Mayor said that fifteen questions were received from members of the council to cabinet members/committee chairs for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of the council's constitution.

The questions are summarised as follows:

- Question 1:** Councillor Huntley to the deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for housing on the progress of the development of the Kings Arms Public House site, following compulsory purchase order.
- Question 2:** Councillor Fulton-McAlister (E) to the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth on the deterioration of grass cutting on roundabouts and grass verges following the transfer of the highways services to Norfolk County Council.
- Question 3:** Councillor Peek to the deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for housing on the application of the Charter for Social Housing Tenants to tenants in privately rented accommodation.
- Question 4:** Councillor Everett to the cabinet member for resources on the disposal of land at Norwich Airport industrial estate.
- Question 5:** Councillor Manning to the leader of the council regarding the investment in CityFibre to improve access to broadband in the Norwich.
- Question 6:** Councillor Maxwell to the cabinet member for sustainable development and inclusive growth on the Article 4 Direction to give powers to the council to protect office accommodation being converted to residential use under permitted development.
- Question 7:** Councillor Bogelein to the deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for housing on whole house retrofitting of council dwellings.
- Question 8:** Councillor Price to the cabinet member for sustainable development and inclusive growth on the council's position to the Western Link.
- Question 9:** Councillor Youssef to the leader of the council on the administration's position on voter ID.
- Question 10:** Councillor Osborn to the leader of the council about the provision of Recycle-to-go bins in the city.

- Question 11:** Councillor Carlo to the cabinet member for sustainable development and inclusive growth on the Transport for Norwich Strategy and the council's influence on the setting of the local transport plan.
- Question 12:** Councillor Galvin to the cabinet member for health and wellbeing requesting a further biodiversity assessment of Heigham Park prior to the installation of hard tennis courts.
- Question 13:** Councillor Grahame to the leader of the council regarding arrangements to extend food waste collections to residents in privately rented accommodation.
- Question 14:** Councillor Lubbock to the cabinet member for resources with her concern that a request to Norwich Norse Building Services to remove a metal barrier across a footpath in Custance Lane has not been actioned.

(The Lord Mayor permitted the following second question from a member, as the time taken by questions had not exceeded thirty minutes in accordance with the constitution (Part 3, paragraph 53).

- Question 15:** Councillor Galvin to the chair of audit committee regarding the application of policies and procedures underpinning the project to replace the grass tennis courts at Heigham Park.

(Details of the questions and responses were available on the council's website prior to the meeting and attached to these minutes at Appendix A, together with a minute of any supplementary questions and responses.)

6. Adjustments to Capital Programme 2021-22

(Councillor Stonard had declared an interest in this item.)

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

Following debate it was,

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the following adjustments to the capital programme:

- (1) an increase to the General Fund capital programme of £2m in 2021/22 and £2m in 2022/23 to provide loan finance and share capital to Norwich Regeneration Ltd.
- (2) an increase to the HRA capital programme of £0.152m in 2022/23 and £0.006m in 2023/24 to provide the necessary funding to proceed with the development of the Kings Arms Public House site at 100 Mile Cross Road.

7. Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) – Submission to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination

Councillor Stonard moved and Councillor Waters seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, with 17 members voting in favour, and 10 members abstaining from voting, to:

- (1) agree that the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is sound and to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination, subject to an agreement in principle being reached with Natural England, in the form of a signed statement of common ground, in relation to the mitigation necessary to protect sites protected under the Habitat Regulations;
- (2) agree to request that the appointed independent inspector make any Main Modifications necessary to make the plan sound and legally compliant; and,
- (3) delegate authority to the executive director for development and city services, in consultation with the cabinet portfolio holder for sustainable and inclusive growth to:
 - (a) agree minor modifications to the GNLP prior to its submission, and,.
 - (b) negotiate any main modifications necessary to make the GNLP sound as part of the independent examination.

8. Members Code of Conduct and Complaints Hearing Procedure July 2021 - Update

(An additional Appendix C, Complaints, Investigation and Hearings Procedure had been circulated prior to the meeting.)

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

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to adopt the revisions to the Member Code of Conduct in Appendix B and the Complaints, Investigation and Hearings Procedure set out in Appendix C, as recommended by the Standards Committee, for inclusion in the Constitution.

9. Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2020-21

Councillor Price moved and Councillor Driver seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to receive the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2020-21.

10. Motions

(Notice of the following motions, 10(a) to 10(c), as set out on the agenda, had been received in accordance with the council's constitution.)

10 (a) Motion: Stop Fire and Re-Hire in Norwich

Councillor Huntley moved and Councillor Maxwell seconded the motion.

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

“There is a concerted attack on workers' rights taking place. Workers are being given an ultimatum to either accept reduced pay, terms and conditions or face the sack.

This strategy of 'fire and re-hire' has already been perpetrated against British Gas workers, a restructuring that has seen the workers offered the choice of accepting longer working hours or receiving dismissal notices.

This concerted attack on the trades unions and workers' rights has been condemned by TUC leader Frances O'Grady, and Labour Party leader Keir Starmer. It is an attack on workers that must be resisted.

Council resolves to:

- (1) Recognise that some UK companies are using the cover of Covid-19 to embark upon a concerted attack on employee pay and benefits. A poll published by the TUC reveals that nearly one in ten (9%) workers have been told to reapply for their jobs on worse terms and conditions since the first lockdown in March 2020. 'Fire and Re-hire' strategies are being put into operation by some of the UK's largest employers to reduce workers' pay, overtime and holiday benefits. Thousands of British workers are facing a 'levelling down' in pay and working conditions, in stark contrast to the Government's stated promises.
- (2) Condemn local companies that use fire and re-hire attacks on workers in our city.
- (3) Support local unions in any strike action against fire and re-hire and call on the companies to instead enter meaningful negotiations with the unions.
- (4) Refuse to enter contracts doing business with companies using these tactics, insofar as this is legally possible, utilising and updating our ethical procurement and social value policy to achieve this.

- (5) Thank Norwich South MP Clive Lewis for supporting British Gas workers and signing the letter to Chris O'Shea, the Chief Executive of Centrica, British Gas' parent company.
- (6) Call upon both local Members of Parliament in Norwich to:
 - (a) condemn the tactics of those businesses using these methods to assault local workers' terms and conditions;
 - (b) write to the Minister of Employment, Mims Davies, to demand the British Government follow countries such as Ireland and Spain in making the practice of fire and re-hire illegal."

10(b) Motion: The Future of Work

The Lord Mayor announced that he had received written notice from Councillor Bogelein that she would like the motion "The Future of Work" to be withdrawn.

(Two hours having passed the Lord Mayor moved that the following item be taken as unopposed business.)

10(c) Motion: Access to Cash

(Proposer Councillor Ackroyd, seconder Councillor Lubbock. Unopposed business)

RESOLVED that:

"Over the last few years there has been a decline in the access to cash. The decline is particularly felt by small businesses and the most vulnerable in our communities who rely on cash to survive.

Small businesses rely on cash and proximity of service to avoid being left behind, particularly those businesses reliant on time dependent services or typically cash-in-hand professions including the likes of carers, tradesmen, babysitters, barbers and beauticians. For small and medium enterprises, being able to deposit their takings into business accounts at the end of the day or week, conveniently and safely – near to where they live and work – is a lifeline.

Many vulnerable and financially excluded people depend on cash for safe deposits, to-the-penny withdrawals, the ability to budget and a friendly face to help with transactions. For people experiencing financial control and other forms of domestic abuse, being able to save and use cash can mean the ability to escape perpetrators and seek refuge. It is crucial for the 1.4 million people in the UK who don't have bank accounts, and many more who don't use online banking.

Post Office provides an existing network for cash to be accessed easily and safely.

In fact, it is the only existing cash network in the UK with the infrastructure, robust scalability and security in place to manage this role.

The council must support the Post Office's Save Our Cash campaign which highlights the importance of access to cash, noting that:

- (a) Due to bank branch closures and the loss of free-to-use ATMs across the UK, millions are at risk of losing access to cash;
- (b) all communities should be guaranteed a legal right to cash services including withdrawal and deposits, and that these services should be available to the penny and free at the point of use, recognising the importance of cash to those most vulnerable and small businesses.

To do this, council resolves to ask group leaders to write to:

- (1) the appropriate Government Minister, asking the Government to introduce legislation to ensure access to cash is protected by law;
- (2) our local MPs asking them to sign Early Day Motion 293 – 'Access to cash' which also back the Post Office's campaign."

As there was no objection, the meeting was closed.

LORD MAYOR

Council 20 July 2021 Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 1

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

“The site of the old Kings Arms public house on Mile Cross Road is imminently to be developed, with five new properties planned, including family homes. Since the pub closed in 2000 the site has long been an eyesore and now the council has gone through the painstaking process of a Compulsory Purchase Order this derelict area will be transformed. This proactive work by the council is excellent to see, and the increased provision of much-needed housing is also to be welcomed. Could the cabinet member for social housing comment on the progress of the site?”

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

“I am pleased to say that cabinet has now approved the awarding of a contract to deliver five much needed family homes on this site, assuming the budget is approved later tonight we will be in a position to proceed with the development so far.

The builders should be on site in September. Delivering 5 family council homes using a fabric first approach with good space standards and allowing for future adaptations and wheelchair access. The housing mix on the Kings Arms site was agreed with the home options team to meet the highest need in this part of the city. I look forward to handing over the key to tenants next year.”

(Councillor Huntley did not have a supplementary question.)

Question 2

Councillor Erin Fulton-McAlister to ask the cabinet member for sustainable and inclusive growth the following question:

“Since the loss of the Norwich Joint Highways Agreement, I have noticed how the grass cutting along main roads and particularly the major roundabouts have noticeably deteriorated, in line with the level of service which the rest of the county receive. Residents in my ward, like everyone across this city, want to see Norwich well maintained and their local environment kept presentable. Will the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth comment on this issue and raise this concern through his channels at County Hall?”

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

"City council officers are aware of the concerns of the city's elected members and residents. We have been working with our colleagues at the county council to improve maintenance standards, and they have put in place performance improvement measures with their contractors. These have resulted in an improvement in grass cutting in the short term, and officers will continue to monitor this between now and the end of the grass cutting season. In addition, £60,000 has been made available through the opening up fund to improve landscaped areas within the city. Work is now underway to clear overgrown shrub and flower beds to improve their appearance, and this work will be completed by the end of the summer. We are also in preliminary discussions with the county council to identify how reduced grass cutting at appropriate locations could contribute to biodiversity in the city."

(Councillor Fulton McAlister (E) did not have a supplementary question.)

Question 3

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

"As a councillor who is very proud to represent a ward which contains social housing, I am pleased by the efforts taken to not only build, maintain and develop council housing in the city, but also ensure the standards, rights and protections provided are to the highest level. I am aware of the new 'Charter for social housing tenants' being introduced by this government, following the disaster at Grenfell in 2017, and would welcome the cabinet member for social housing's view on its application to Norwich and whether she agrees it should also apply to the private rented sector too?"

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

"The charter for social housing tenants sets out the government's intentions as part of its response to the Grenfell tragedy. It has been broadly welcomed by local authorities, registered providers and tenants' organisations. It places more responsibilities and scrutiny on housing providers, more recourse for tenants. Disappointingly, there was no mention of any planned legislation in the Queen's speech earlier this year and no timetable for implementation.

This council is doing many of things contained in the charter. we have built and will build award-winning new homes. We have invested significant sums of money to ensure our homes are of a 'Norwich Standard'. There should be an emphasis on making sure that the voice of the tenant is heard and respected whether they be in the social rented sector or the private rented sector."

(No supplementary question.)

Question 4

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

“Investing in creating the facilities for businesses to develop and prosper in the city has long been an objective of this council, and practically delivered through the provision of industrial estates within our boundaries. The proposed sale of the airport industrial estate, initiated through the decision of the majority shareholder, which is Norfolk County Council, has been covered heavily in the Evening News in recent weeks. Can the cabinet member for resources outline the positive reasons why this disposal can offer the chance for potential new investment and much needed upgrading to this facility while providing a capital receipt for this council?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources’ response:

“Disposal of the estate would bring significant inward investment as well as resource, expertise and capital into the city. The scale of the estate is expected to attract an experienced commercial property investor who will be able to realise the wider economic benefits that would follow from such an investment. This would help renew and refresh this area whilst generating much needed jobs and economic growth.

This delivers a capital receipt to the council which would have a material impact in meeting future budget challenges. Additionally, accelerated investment in the estate by a commercial investor would also realise greater tax receipts to the council.

We will seek to work with a new investor via our economic development and planning teams to ensure we have continued influence over the future of the estate to ensure it is delivering the best for the city in terms of jobs and sustainable economic growth.”

(Councillor Everett did not have a supplementary question.)

Question 5

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

“Like most councillors and residents in my ward I have had to work from home more often and use the internet heavily for meetings. The importance of good quality internet provision to both reducing digital exclusion but also enhancing our capacity to deliver a socially inclusive economy in the city remains a core corporate objective. Thanks to the efforts of our economic development strategy, we now have a significant opportunity through City Fibre to invest

and enhance our internet capacity in Norwich. With work starting imminently to enhance services can the leader comment on the next steps to deliver this £50m investment project?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"Improving broadband capacity in the city is an important part of our Covid 19 recovery plan and we are making good on that commitment. The investment by CityFibre will allow 97,000 homes and businesses in Norwich to embrace full fibre Broadband technology.

A local delivery team has been recruited and contractors are in place to start in September 2021. The build will be delivered in sections with each completed section being "switched on" as work commences on the next, meaning some areas of the city will go live early in 2022.

CityFibre will inform residents and businesses around two weeks before works in their area start, with follow-up communication once works are complete explaining how to connect to the new services.

Whether using Broadband to drive businesses, access healthcare, education, entertainment, or homeworking opportunities this provides a significant economic boost to Norwich, its residents and business community."

(Councillor Manning did not have a supplementary question.)

Question 6

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

"I was pleased to see the cabinet report on an article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of offices to residential units receive support earlier in the month. As a city we have seen the consequences, most visibly through the appalling private sector accommodation at St Faith's Lane and subsequent legal enforcement, where conversion is carried out inappropriately and unsafely. Given the commitment and desire of this Labour council to protect and adapt our strategic office accommodation in Norwich, can the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth comment on his hopes that this directive will be successful and the likely consequences for Norwich if it is not?"

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

"The introduction of an article 4 direction will give the council greater control over changes of use from office to residential to help stem the loss of office accommodation and promote a balanced mix of uses in the city centre. Whilst this approach may fail given that the government appears intent on requiring a very high standard of evidence, our case is supported by overwhelming evidence and is geographically limited.

Failure to introduce an article 4 direction is likely to result in continued loss of office floorspace, with negative impacts for the health of the city centre and the local economy. Although the government now allows more issues to be considered under prior approval this does nothing to achieve affordable housing or decent design so I hope the article 4 direction can be introduced to maximise the prospects of delivering the genuinely sustainable and inclusive growth the city deserves.”

(Councillor Maxwell did not have a supplementary question.)

Question 7

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

“At April cabinet I asked about the need to have a whole house approach to retrofitting council-owned properties. The Retrofit Academy ([What does Whole House Retrofit mean to me? | Retrofit Academy](#)) advises that a whole house retrofit plan is required to ensure a “logical highly effective pathway towards an energy-efficient, well-ventilated home”, taking into account issues such as ventilation, damp and bridging. The portfolio holder for housing indicated that the council already draws up plans for whole-house retrofitting for council properties and I have been promised a few examples of these plans. Could the cabinet member please provide an example of a whole-house retrofit plan for a council property and clarify the number or percentage of council-owned properties for which such a whole-house assessment exists?”

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

“Since we declared a climate emergency in 2019 we have been aiming to be operationally carbon neutral by 2030, with plans for the city to follow suit by 2050 or sooner. We have already achieved a 63% reduction in carbon emissions. We are committed to energy efficiency focussing on affordable warmth as much as environmental considerations. This has included insulation, upgrading windows and doors, thermodynamic hot water systems and installing energy efficient heating systems.

The council also has an on-going programme of whole house improvements to modernise and bring vacant properties up to date, with larger ongoing projects such as the renewable heating scheme at Barnards Yard. Our head of housing will email you an example of a whole house retrofit project.

We will build on our experiences and expertise and develop fully costed plans for our stock following the return of the asset management functions to the City Council.”

(Councillor Bogelein by way of a supplementary question asked what percentage of the council’s assets, including its housing stock, had a whole-house retrofit plan in place. Councillor Harris said that she could not provide an answer to this question

but would ask the head of neighbourhood housing to forward Councillor Bogelein any information that is available. It was not a simple project and she suggested that as a way forward, a meeting was arranged for herself, Councillors Bogelein and Osborn, the head of neighbourhood housing and a senior member of NPS.)

Question 8

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

“The city council's Air Quality Action Plan, approved by cabinet, states that 'The Broadland Northway is expected to further divert traffic away from Norwich as a whole, and especially when the final link-up with the A47 is completed.' It is also noted that the city council is not among the objectors to the Western Link as listed in the recent county council report on the scheme. Can the cabinet member confirm that the city council does oppose the Western Link road and ensure that all Norwich City Council policy documents are updated accordingly?”

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

“The city council's position on the Norwich Western Link remains the same as that given in my detailed answer in Cabinet on 20 January this year. Expressed succinctly, I have not seen anything to confirm that the rigorous conditions I listed in January have been fulfilled which means that we are not supporting the project at the present time.”

(As a supplementary question, Councillor Price asked when the council's Air Quality Action Plan would be updated to reflect the council's change of position on the Western Link. Councillor Stonard said that he had answered the question on the council's position on the Norwich Western Link and that all council policy documents were kept under regular review. The council's policy on Air Quality would be reviewed within its normal timescale.)

Question 9

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

“In May 2021, the Conservative Government released plans for mandatory photo ID's at elections, citing concerns over voter fraud. However, this plan disproportionately risks hitting older, disabled and homeless voters, who are less likely to have such documents. These vulnerable people are the voices which need to be heard the loudest at the ballot box, and these plans risk stripping them of this fundamental right. Does the leader agree with my concerns and will he write to the Prime Minister highlighting them?”

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

“Thank you for your question. I do share your concerns. The legislation is fixing a problem that doesn't exist. Between 2010 and 2016 there were less than 150 allegations of voter fraud, spanning two General Elections and the

EU referendum -with only 7 convictions. The pilot schemes resulted in over 2,000 potential electors being turned away from the polls and less than half returned. That excludes any voters who were put off from attending their polling station in the first place. The Chief Executive, as Returning Officer, has already written to the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution expressing concerns about the proposals. I will reinforce our profound opposition to these changes, with a letter to the Prime Minister showing that as many as 2 million people in the UK could be excluded because they do not have the required forms of voter ID."

(In reply to Councillor Youssef's supplementary question, Councillor Waters said that he would be happy for the letter to the Prime Minister to be signed by the other group leaders and that this would demonstrate collective opposition to this proposal which would disenfranchise groups of voters across all political parties. The issue had been discussed at the Norfolk Leaders meeting and there was concern across all parties that democracy would be weakened unless local councillors cooperated to oppose it.)

Question 10

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

"There is a lack of public recycling bins in many parts of the city centre, including around Colegate where the litter bins are frequently overflowing with litter that could be recycled, causing distress for nearby residents. Officers have informed me that 'The litter bin provision is reviewed on a regular basis and will be looked at again in due course.' No timescale or clear objectives for this review have been provided. Can the cabinet member confirm that when the provision of litter bins is reviewed, there will be an effort to ensure that areas of the city where there are no recycling bins will be provided with them?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"The Recycle on the Go facilities referred to by Councillor Osborn enable people to recycle materials like bottles, cans and newspapers in public places. As we strive to increase household recycling, it is important that recycling behaviour can be replicated when people are out and about. Increasing the number of facilities for people to recycle in public places supports our aim of encouraging positive change in public behaviours towards litter and recycling in public places.

Any ongoing or strategic review of litter bins will consider the possibility of providing Recycle on the Go facilities in areas where these are not currently available."

(Councillor Osborn as a supplementary question asked whether there was a review of Recycle on the Go facilities and when it would be. Councillor Waters in reply said that there was a logic and benefit to increase opportunities for recycling from the

provision of these facilities and confirmed that the review was high in the council's priorities.)

Question 11

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

"The past decade has seen a welcome fall in city centre traffic due to traffic reduction policies. Beyond the centre, traffic has risen in the absence of demand management, especially around Norwich's outskirts where further major road building is planned. Households reliant on foot, cycle and bus suffer social inequality and Norfolk's transport carbon emissions continue growing. Norwich City Council submitted an excellent list of transport measures to Norfolk County Council for influencing an updated Transport for Norwich Strategy. However, the county stated the strategy will support Local Transport Plan 2021-36 which emphasises connectivity, journey reliability and reducing traffic dominance. This represents business as usual and suggests the county council has not responded favourably to the city's suggested measures. Would the cabinet member like to see a transport strategy for Greater Norwich based on less traffic in line with the list of measures it submitted to the county?"

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

"It's good to hear Councillor Carlo reiterate the support we received for our response to the Local Transport Plan. We made it clear that business as usual cannot continue and we have been working since then to influence the county council's thinking around the new Transport for Norwich Strategy. We are expecting a draft document to be published soon, ahead of the meeting of the Transport for Norwich Joint Committee on 29 July. That committee will be invited to support the document being put out for public consultation. We will be comparing how the version published for consultation measures up to our transport agenda and plan to submit a formal response to the consultation, which will be taken to cabinet in September. County should be in no doubt that we are prepared to criticise the document if it fails to serve the city, its environment and wellbeing of its residents."

(Councillor Carlo referred to the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, published on 14 July 2021, and said that there would need to be bold decisions on how people travel, including congestion and parking management to meet these challenges, and her concern was that the local transport plan advocated policies to encourage traffic growth. Councillor Stonard referred to his written response and said that the council had made radical proposals as part of the consultation on the Transport for Norwich Strategy and early indications in response were encouraging. The public would have the opportunity to comment on the strategy when it went out to consultation. There needed to be significant changes to modes of transport and there should be no backsliding.)

Question 12

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

“Meadows are cornerstones of biodiversity, powering food chains, collecting energy from the sun and pumping it into ecosystems. They are important in cities because they have been squeezed out elsewhere: we have lost 97% since the 1930s.

Heigham Park tennis courts, surveyed by ecologists in 2018, were ‘well mown’. Since then they have not been cut, and species have re-emerged to make a flourishing wildflower meadow where butterflies and moths lay eggs and bumblebees nest. Song thrush and hedgehog also call it home.

The survey in 2018 was done visually. Recent night-time bat recording with monitors has confirmed the presence of several types of bats including Soprano, Common Pipistrelle and Noctule, hunting for moths breeding and living off the expanse of dark meadow.

Will the cabinet member step in to order a resurvey of this new meadow wildlife site in order to protect this mosaic of rare and threatened species?”

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

“The council commissioned extensive ecology assessment of the Heigham Park Tennis Courts, as part of the Planning Applications in 2017 and 2018. The report stated that the grass courts had:

- negligible intrinsic value, and that the surrounding park had more significance;
- low ecological quality, and the impact of the scheme on habitats is negligible;
- amenity grassland (sports turf) of negligible biodiversity value.

The report also noted that the project would not directly affect any trees or structures potentially used by roosting bats, and that it was not in a location likely to be significant for any commuting bats.

Finally, the scheme includes an area of grassland outside the all-weather courts which could be managed in a way that provides biodiversity benefits alongside the tennis courts. The Council will continue to use expert ecologists to guide the development, but it is not appropriate to commission a further survey.”

(Councillor Galvin as a supplementary question asked the cabinet member whether he was aware that the situation at the park had changed and the biodiversity study was 4 years out of date and did not protect the diversity of species there. Councillor Packer confirmed that a professional ecologist would verify the survey and identify any changes to the species on the site. He pointed out that as part of the tennis court development, close to 60 per cent of Heigham Park would remain and

park users would have an opportunity to say how it should be used, including proposing the retention of part of the park as a meadow. The council took biodiversity, which was essential to the health of its residents, very seriously.)

Question 13

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

“The Environment Bill is due to make food waste collection compulsory for all properties by 2023. It is good to know that Norwich is already ahead of many councils in offering food waste collection. However, residents in non-council flats are currently unable to recycle their food waste due to the council saying that it is unable to clean the food waste bins. What steps are being taken by the council to ensure that it will be ready to offer food waste collection by at least 2023, or ideally sooner?”

Councillor Waters, the leader’s response:

“The Government expects all households to have food waste collections from

1. 2023/24 in those local authorities where there is currently some level of food waste collections, or
2. 2024/25 where they are not currently delivered.

Assuming there are no further delays to the implementation of the Bill, all households in Norwich would be required to have food waste collections by 01 April 2024.

The households currently not in receipt of food waste collections are primarily in privately owned flats or properties. Before we can introduce the service to these properties, we will need to conduct an options appraisal on the most effective and efficient way to deliver Food Waste collection taking into account

1. Ease of use
2. Hygiene, and
3. Cost

This process can start once the Government’s intentions and funding for expanding Food Waste collections have been clarified.”

(In reply to Councillor Grahame’s supplementary question, Councillor Waters confirmed that the city council had been in the vanguard of food waste collection and had recognised its benefits to the environment. The Government was proposing a comprehensive system of food waste collection across England as part of the Environment Bill. The council could demonstrate the benefits of expansion of this scheme but it would require additional.)

Question 14

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

“Metal barriers are blocking a footpath and denying access for those using motorised scooters on Custance Lane in Eaton, just next to a Norwich City Council sheltered housing complex.

On 28 April I asked through the normal Councillor email process that these barriers receive attention to allow access for all.

I received a reply on 5 May to say that ‘NPS have raised an order with Norwich Norse Building to request that a surveyor goes out to look at the area and assess if and potentially what adaptations can be made so that the access through the metal barriers at Custance Lane is made easier for those using mobility scooters.’

To date, 2 months later the barriers remain, and I have not heard another word.

Does the portfolio holder agree with me that this level of service is unacceptable in terms of its communications and its delivery?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for resources’ response:

“Following the instruction of NNB the matter was looked into, but it does appear in the hand offs between the different organisations no-one has kept you informed. I will ask officers to write to you separately to do this.

I agree that this level of service is not ideal, and the responsiveness of the service and level of communication is one of the things we hope to address by bringing the service back in house or into NCSL shortly.”

(Councillor Lubbock thanked Councillor Kendrick for his response but expressed her concern that it had taken 10 weeks without any actions being taken or any communications from NPS or Norwich Norse Building, and asked how elected members could represent their communities when our contractors were providing such a poor service. Councillor Kendrick acknowledged this and said that this was one of the reasons that the council had taken the decision to bring these services in house where it would be in a situation to deal with matters more satisfactorily.)

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

Question 15

Councillor Galvin to ask the chair of audit committee the following question:

“After numerous attempts to gather information into council policies and procedures regarding the proposed changes to the tennis courts at Heigham

Park; the process informing the decision to proceed with the project; the identity and nature of the company/entity which will be the responsible body and provider of the service; and the nature of the relationship and checks and balances with Norwich City Council and the said company I have the following request:

That the chair of audit committee ask officers to investigate the policies and procedures that have underpinned the project, and report back to ward councillors, so that we can be assured that due process was followed and that the process and all entities involved provide best value and are robust and fit for purpose?"

Councillor Price, the chair of audit committee's response:

"I would be very happy for the Audit Committee to discuss examining the policies and procedures you're interested in from a control, risk and governance perspective as lessons can be learned for the future and the committee's role is to protect the council from reputational and financial risk, even when risks are the result of past decisions. For the item to be included on the internal audit annual work programme, the head of finance audit and risk would need to be made aware of the specific issues so they can be considered, as the internal audit plan is agreed by CLT. I would support you proceeding in this way. CLT can then check the work requested is consistent with the organisation's priorities, objectives, and risk management framework and if deemed appropriate, report back to the committee.

Scrutiny members could also request that the topic is explored by that committee"

(Councillor Galvin said that there had been an issue in sharing the information with her either as a pdf, or viewing documents in person at City Hall, and asked for assistance in obtaining the information. Councillor Price said that he was sure that officers could facilitate her request and that he would be happy to assist. Regarding the general context of her question, to help him as chair of audit committee, and members of the audit and scrutiny committees, there would be an interactive workshop for all members on the council's policies and procedures and the constitution.)