



Council

Members of the council are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the council to be held in the council chamber, City Hall, Norwich, on

Tuesday, 24 September 2024

19:30

Agenda

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| 1 | Lord Mayor's announcements | |
| 2 | Declarations of interest | |
| | (Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting) | |
| 3 | Public questions/petitions | |
| | To receive questions / petitions from the public which have been submitted in accordance with the council's constitution. | |
| 4 | Minutes | 5 - 34 |
| | To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024. | |
| 5 | Questions to cabinet members | |
| | (A copy of the questions and replies will be available on the council's website prior to the meeting) | |
| 6 | Treasury Management Review and Outturn 2023-24 | 35 - 52 |
| | Purpose - This report sets out the Treasury Management Review and Outturn for the year to 31 March 2024. | |
| 7 | Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-2024 | 53 - 100 |

Purpose - This report presents the draft Annual Report of the audit committee 2023-25 to Council.

8 Appointments of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2024-25 101 - 106

Purpose - To consider appointments to outside bodies for the 2024-25 Civic Year.

9 Motions

To consider motions for which notice has been given in accordance with the council's constitution.

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Emily Yule

Executive Director of Resources (Interim Monitoring Officer)

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19:30 to 21:45

16 July 2024

Present: Councillors Thomas (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Bolton, Calvert, Carrington, Champion, Davis, Driver, Fox, Fulton-McAlister, Galvin, Giles, Hampton, Hoechner, Huntley, Jones, Kendrick, Kidman, Lubbock, Maguire, Oliver, Osborn, Packer, Price, Prinsley, Sands (M), Sands (S), Schmierer, Smith, Stonard, Worley, Wright and Young

Apologies: Councillors Caine, Catt, Francis, Harper, Haynes and Padda

1. Lord Mayor's Announcements

The Lord Mayor announced that she had attended a large number of events since she had been elected as Lord Mayor. She highlighted the Lord Mayor's weekend and thanked participants, officers, community groups, schools, food vendors and organisations that had made the Lord Mayor's weekend possible. The weekend had been a showcase of everything the city had to offer.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public questions/petitions

The Lord Mayor announced that two public questions had been received within the provisions of Part 3 of the council's constitution.

Question 1 – Cost of Bins

Mr Cole Davis, asked the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich the following question:

"I would like to bring to the attention of the Council an apparently rather large financial discrepancy. According to email correspondence between myself and Norwich City Council, over £100,000 per year is spent on waste bins. A recent promotional magazine from the Council, however, refers to new homes built over the last few years numbering only in thousands. Given that bins appear to cost somewhere between forty and seventy pounds per unit, with discounts for bulk purchases, there seems to be a huge difference between the money spent and the money required. While I understand that accounting categorisation may complicate matters could I please ask for clarification on the discrepancy?"

Councillor Hampton, the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich, gave the following response:

“Thank you for your question. Our current budget for the maintenance and provision of new domestic wheelie bins for the waste, recycling, and garden waste services along with food waste containers is £32K per annum.

The Council works closely with its waste management contractor (BIFFA) to continually improve the processes to collect, refurbish and recycle damaged bins whenever possible to avoid the requirement to purchase new bins. Furthermore, where we do need to purchase new bins we have been able to achieve a significantly discounted price through using BIFFA’s national purchasing power.

Through measures such as this we have been able to significantly reduce the amount the Council spends on new bins in recent years.”

In reply to Mr Davis’ supplementary question the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich said that she would ask officers to respond to Mr Davis with the figures and re-iterated that £32,000 was the cost of providing bins for new homes but also replacing lor or damaged bins and the costs associated with administering this.

Question 2 – Nutrient Neutrality offsetting scheme

Mr Tristan Gordon asked the cabinet member for planning and regulatory services the following question:

“Norwich is a welcoming, beautiful, city that we are all proud to call home. It's thriving growing city with constant pressure and demand on the housing stock.

Housing stock which when built contributes hundreds of thousands of pounds to the council in CIL payments, that allows first time buyers and university students with their acquired knowledge to stay here.

Natural England introduced Nutrient Neutrality in March 2022 stopping any new planning applications being granted creating overnight accommodation to halt additional nutrients entering the Norfolk Broads. Whether you wish to extend to create a bedroom, build new homes or homes for those in need - all are on hold and are required to demonstrate nutrient neutrality.

Currently there are 70+ applications waiting, each would contribute to Norwich and employ local trades.

Can I ask whether, and when, a Nutrient Neutrality Offsetting scheme will be available that locals can use”

Councillor Packer, the cabinet member for planning and regulatory services gave the following response:

“Thank you for your question, Mr Gordon,

Nutrient Neutrality is the biggest challenge the development system in Norfolk has faced in years. It is vital that we work to improve the water quality in our rivers, but we must also support the housebuilding industry to deliver.

In December 2022 the City Council adopted its own mitigation scheme based around retrofitting of water efficiency measures in our housing stock. This work is on-going and mitigation is being realised. A number of options for how any arising credits would be utilised were considered by cabinet and it was agreed that a criteria-based policy-led approach would be utilised. Priority sites were identified at the time, with a focus on delivery of affordable housing, wider regeneration benefits associated with the development of the site, and finally ranked according to number of dwellings. Permissions for these sites are being granted and credits drawn down.

As a council we are committed to supporting desperately needed housing to be built and want to see more applications being granted based upon meeting our responsibilities.

As further mitigation is produced through the Council's scheme, we will consider which of the remaining sites held up by nutrient neutrality can be released further.

The Council's mitigation scheme won't address the entire housing need for Norwich though, and in recognition of this, we are also considering our position regarding the Norfolk wide Joint Venture, Norfolk Environmental Credits. We are positively engaged with the JV and meet them on a regular basis. We are also exploring other potential mitigation options with Natural England.

In January 2024 the Norfolk authorities were awarded £9.6m of government funding to kick start nutrient mitigation schemes. The Nutrient Mitigation Fund was launched in May and bids for funding have been submitted for many schemes across Norfolk. This money will help the authorities support those who can provide mitigation schemes to get them underway with capital funding and provide vital revenue funding to support feasibility work to understand the potential of other schemes. Joining the Norfolk-wide Joint Venture is being considered and if it is felt is the right fit, would be another option to enable planning permission to be granted for more schemes. I am optimistic that the options being explored will help reduce the number of applications held back as a result of nutrient neutrality.

Being new to this portfolio, I will be doing all I can to build upon the work carried out to date and enable the Council to grant more planning permissions."

Mr Gordon, by way of a supplementary question, asked whether there was a timeline for the Council to be able to offer something to individual or smaller developers. In response the cabinet member for planning and regulatory services said that there was no timeline at the moment but he would be happy to meet with Mr Gordon and officers outside of the meeting.

The Lord Mayor confirmed that no petitions had been received for this meeting.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2024 and the annual meeting held on 21 May 2024.

5. Questions to Cabinet Members

The Lord Mayor announced that 21 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members, for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of Part 3 of the council's constitution.

The questions are summarised as follows:

- Question 1 Councillor Driver to the cabinet member for an open and modern council on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Question 2 Councillor Carrington to the cabinet member for an open and modern council on the higher council tax bands for more expensive properties
- Question 3 Councillor Huntley to the cabinet member for housing on the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership.
- Question 4 Councillor Mike Sands to the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich on the installation of solar panels at Riverside Leisure Centre.
- Question 5 Councillor Maguire to the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich on the installation of secure communal bin enclosures.
- Question 6 Councillor Oliver to the cabinet member for an open and modern council on the Carrow House Unity Hub.
- Question 7 Councillor Smith to the cabinet member for a prosperous Norwich on the Lord Mayor's Procession
- Question 8 Councillor Hoechner to the leader of the council on an update based on the Investment Petition.
- Question 9 Councillor Price to the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich on the street cleaning within Thorpe Hamlet.
- Question 10 Councillor Galvin to the cabinet member for housing on the fence on Gladstone Street
- Question 11 Councillor Haynes to the cabinet member for housing on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- Question 12 Councillor Francis to the cabinet member for housing on the communication with sheltered housing tenants.
- Question 13 Councillor Champion to the cabinet member for housing on responses to damp and mould questions.

- Question 14 Councillor Fox to the leader of the council on the funding for the Norwich Western Link Road.
- Question 15 Councillor Calvert to the cabinet member for an open and modern council on the recruitment of officers.
- Question 16 Councillor Worley to the cabinet member for an open and modern council on four-day week trials
- Question 17 Councillor Young to the cabinet member for housing on the capacity within the home options team.
- Question 18 Councillor Catt to the cabinet member for housing on reducing the housing waiting list under a Labour government.
- Question 19 Councillor Osborn to the cabinet member for housing on the scheduling of repairs in communal areas.
- Question 20 Councillor Bolton to the cabinet member for an open and modern council on the meeting of working groups and other committees.
- Question 21 Councillor Caine to the cabinet member for housing on house building under a Labour Government.

(Full details of the questions and responses were available on the council's website prior to the meeting. A revised version is attached to these minutes at Appendix A and includes a minute of any supplementary questions and responses.)

6. Appointment of statutory officers

(Emily Yule, executive director of resources left the room for the debate and vote on this item).

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

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously to:

- 1) Appoint Alistair Rush as interim director of finance and section 151 officer from 17 July 2024.
- 2) Appoint Janice Robinson as head of legal and governance and monitoring officer from 30 September 2024.
- 3) Appoint Emily Yule as monitoring officer from 3 September to 29 September 2024

(Emily Yule was readmitted to the council chamber.)

7. Appointments to other committees 2024-25

The Lord Mayor announced that under delegated authority, the Monitoring Officer had agreed the appointments to other committees and working groups as detailed within the report in line with the wishes of the political groups following the meeting of the annual council held on 21 May 2024

RESOLVED, to note the appointments to other committees 2024-25.

8. Appointments to outside bodies 2024-25

(This item was withdrawn).

9. Motions

The Lord Mayor announced that there had been four motions that had been deferred from the meeting on 12 March 2024 due to insufficient time. Confirmation had been received from the mover and seconder of motion 9(c) – Democratic models of governance was being deferred. Confirmation had also been received from the mover and seconder of motion 9(d) – The future of Anglia Square that the motion had been withdrawn.

Motion 9(a) – Multi-faith working

Councillor Jones moved and Councillor Kidman seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

“Norwich has a proud and positive history of welcoming people to the city, which also includes creating an environment in which people of all faiths can practice without fear or persecution. As far back as the 14th century, Norwich became home to those fleeing religious persecution and today as a City of Sanctuary we are proud to continue to welcome those escaping persecution.

But sadly, recent years has seen a rise of politics of the hate, with far-right groups fuelling fear. We must take every opportunity to challenge this within our city, celebrating the benefits that come from diversity and the important role different faiths play in our city.

Religious or faith-based hatred is one of the most common motivations for hate crimes in the UK. As recent as 2022/23 religious hate crime reported to the police has more than doubled. As hate crimes increase and religious divisions heighten, there has never been a more important time to ensure that we elected members are listening and responding to all faith groups in our city.

There is no space for hate crime of any form in our city and as elected members and leaders in our community, it is crucial that we reject this in all forms. As elected representatives, we should actively engage in promoting

community cohesion and engaging inclusively with all faith groups in our city and in doing so, gaining a better understanding of the challenges they face.

Council **RESOLVES** to

- 1) Invite representatives of the city's diverse faith groups to a multi-faith working group to collaborate with the council on:
 - a. supporting its engagement with members of faith groups throughout the city
 - b. better understanding the challenges faced by faith communities in our city.
 - c. promoting community cohesion across the city
- 2) Work collaboratively with religious or faith representatives to explore opportunities to support and share the celebration of faith-based festivals, recognising the diversity of faith groups in the city and their contribution.
- 3) To explore other forums where the city council can engage with all faiths in the city and continue to work with local faith partners, networks, and forums, aligning this with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Action Plan when next agreed by the council."

Motion 9(b) – Anglia Square

Councillor Stonard amended his own motion, which therefore became the substantive motion, to replace the text of the motion with the following:

"Anglia Square is a key site for Norwich's communities and for our city's economic potential. The current site provides a vital place for people to meet and is a centre of the north city centre community, with affordable shops, cafes, and space for artists and independent businesses. Unfortunately, many businesses in Anglia Square have closed their doors in recent months and years, which has been met with dismay by local people who often say that they value the shops at Anglia Square.

Weston Homes decision to withdraw from the purchase and regeneration of the site and Columbia Threadneedle's subsequent decision to put the Anglia Square on the market presents an opportunity for the city council to seek to purchase the land and take a more proactive role in delivering the comprehensive regeneration of the site than has hitherto been possible. However, the timescale and disposal approach Columbia Threadneedle are pursuing may make it impossible for the city council to submit a financially tested bid.

Owning the Anglia Square site would allow the city council to work with partners to produce a viable plan for redevelopment that serves the local community and brings benefits in sustainable economic growth, affordable housing, and the potential to unlock development of other brownfield sites. While there have been differences in opinion over previous plans for Anglia

Square, the purchase of the site by the city council could promote a positive way forward, that can best serve the needs and interests of Norwich and our residents.

The site also has a role to play in the broader regeneration of the city centre. Served as it is with many bus routes and in close proximity to the station, it is one of the best-connected regeneration and development sites at city level.

If Anglia Square is not purchased by the city council, there is a risk it could, instead, be divided into sub-lots which would severely hinder any future chances of redevelopment. This would also be a missed opportunity for a council-led redevelopment of this very important site.

The costs involved in purchasing the Anglia Square site are such that Government funding will be needed.

Council therefore resolves to:

- 1) Ask Cabinet to formally apply to Homes England for support and to work with the city council on acquisition and development given the sites nature, strategic importance and viability challenges, which are beyond the city council's direct means.
- 2) Continue to request that Columbia Threadneedle pause the sale to allow the time for the city council to undertake financial due diligence and receive confirmation of any Homes England funding.
- 3) Ask Cabinet to continue to work with interested parties to assess potential opportunities for the site.
- 4) Engage with local and city-wide stakeholders to ensure that potential opportunities for the site take account of the local area's needs, including:
 - a) Local residents and residents' groups
 - b) Existing businesses
 - c) Medical and educational providers at all levels.
- 5) Express its intention to achieve a redevelopment of Anglia Square that will:
 - a) Provide a mixed tenure development which seeks to achieve 33% affordable or social housing, in order to address the housing emergency in Norwich. The affordable housing element of any redevelopment should be a priority and should be carried forward in Phases 1 and 2 rather than being left to the end of the work.
 - b) Provide space for businesses and seek to link the shopping street of St Augustines to the thriving shopping street of

Magdalen Street, in order to enhance the city's attractiveness as a centre for retail.

- c) The development should be as resilient as possible to climate change, and support the changes needed to reach net zero
 - d) Respect and enhance the heritage of the local area while supporting connectivity for the city.
- 6) Ask Cabinet to ensure regular and two-way communication with businesses in Anglia Square and the surrounding areas to ensure certainty and confidence for businesses.
 - 7) Establish a cross-party working group which will be informed and engaged in proposals, and ensure that there is cross-party and cross-stakeholder engagement.
 - 8) Write to the leaders of Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council regarding the benefits that a redevelopment of Anglia Square along the principles outlined above would bring, and to engage with these council leaders so that any future devolution settlement can support positive plans for Anglia Square.
 - 9) Examine opportunities for further brownfield site redevelopment in the north city centre that could be aided by progress at Anglia Square, including the St Saviours Lane carpark and sites around Oak Street.
 - 10) Consider the city council's options in regard to compulsory purchase of the whole site, if its sale does not propose comprehensive regeneration of the site."

Councillor Stonard moved, and Councillor Osborn seconded the motion as amended.

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

"Anglia Square is a key site for Norwich's communities and for our city's economic potential. The current site provides a vital place for people to meet and is a centre of the north city centre community, with affordable shops, cafes, and space for artists and independent businesses. Unfortunately, many businesses in Anglia Square have closed their doors in recent months and years, which has been met with dismay by local people who often say that they value the shops at Anglia Square.

Weston Homes decision to withdraw from the purchase and regeneration of the site and Columbia Threadneedle's subsequent decision to put the Anglia Square on the market presents an opportunity for the city council to seek to purchase the land and take a more proactive role in delivering the comprehensive regeneration of the site than has hitherto been possible. However, the timescale and disposal approach Columbia Threadneedle are

pursuing may make it impossible for the city council to submit a financially tested bid.

Owning the Anglia Square site would allow the city council to work with partners to produce a viable plan for redevelopment that serves the local community and brings benefits in sustainable economic growth, affordable housing, and the potential to unlock development of other brownfield sites. While there have been differences in opinion over previous plans for Anglia Square, the purchase of the site by the city council could promote a positive way forward, that can best serve the needs and interests of Norwich and our residents.

The site also has a role to play in the broader regeneration of the city centre. Served as it is with many bus routes and in close proximity to the station, it is one of the best-connected regeneration and development sites at city level.

If Anglia Square is not purchased by the city council, there is a risk it could, instead, be divided into sub-lots which would severely hinder any future chances of redevelopment. This would also be a missed opportunity for a council-led redevelopment of this very important site.

The costs involved in purchasing the Anglia Square site are such that Government funding will be needed.

Council therefore **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Ask Cabinet to formally apply to Homes England for support and to work with the city council on acquisition and development given the sites nature, strategic importance and viability challenges, which are beyond the city council's direct means.
- 2) Continue to request that Columbia Threadneedle pause the sale to allow the time for the city council to undertake financial due diligence and receive confirmation of any Homes England funding.
- 3) Ask Cabinet to continue to work with interested parties to assess potential opportunities for the site.
- 4) Engage with local and city-wide stakeholders to ensure that potential opportunities for the site take account of the local area's needs, including:
 - a) Local residents and residents' groups
 - b) Existing businesses
 - c) Medical and educational providers at all levels.
- 5) Express its intention to achieve a redevelopment of Anglia Square that will:
 - a) Provide a mixed tenure development which seeks to achieve 33% affordable or social housing, in order to address the

housing emergency in Norwich. The affordable housing element of any redevelopment should be a priority and should be carried forward in Phases 1 and 2 rather than being left to the end of the work.

- b) Provide space for businesses and seek to link the shopping street of St Augustines to the thriving shopping street of Magdalen Street, in order to enhance the city's attractiveness as a centre for retail.
 - c) The development should be as resilient as possible to climate change, and support the changes needed to reach net zero
 - d) Respect and enhance the heritage of the local area while supporting connectivity for the city.
- 6) Ask Cabinet to ensure regular and two-way communication with businesses in Anglia Square and the surrounding areas to ensure certainty and confidence for businesses.
- 7) Establish a cross-party working group which will be informed and engaged in proposals, and ensure that there is cross-party and cross-stakeholder engagement.
- 8) Write to the leaders of Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council regarding the benefits that a redevelopment of Anglia Square along the principles outlined above would bring, and to engage with these council leaders so that any future devolution settlement can support positive plans for Anglia Square.
- 9) Examine opportunities for further brownfield site redevelopment in the north city centre that could be aided by progress at Anglia Square, including the St Saviours Lane carpark and sites around Oak Street.
- 10) Consider the city council's options in regard to compulsory purchase of the whole site, if its sale does not propose comprehensive regeneration of the site."

Motion 9(c) – Democratic models of governance

(This motion had been deferred)

Motion 9(d) – The future of Anglia Square

(This motion had been withdrawn)

Motion 9(f) – Protect workers' rights

Councillor Hoechner moved, and Councillor Stonard seconded the motion as set out in the agenda.

Following debate it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

“This Council:

1) notes:

- i) the right to strike is a fundamental freedom which is protected by international law; this can be seen in the Human Rights Act, Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Labour Organisation’s Convention 87 and Article 6(4) of the European Social Charter;
- ii) the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 sets out that when employees in relevant sectors democratically vote to strike, they can be required to work and then lawfully sacked if they don’t comply;
- iii) the legislation is clear that issuing a work notice is at the discretion of an employer, as confirmed by Ministers in Parliament;
- iv) minimum service levels are not applicable for non-strike days, where service delivery has been decimated by public service cuts over the last 14 years, which suggests the Act is therefore not primarily concerned with minimum service levels as it purports;
- v) the Joint Committee on Human Rights has expressed concern that this legislation is not compatible with the UK’s commitments to human rights for workers and trade union members; and
- vi) the Regulatory Policy Committee has determined that the impact assessment for this Bill was "not fit for purpose".

2) Believes

- i) the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 is a direct attack on the right to strike as a fundamental freedom;
- ii) that consecutive Conservative Governments had been carrying out brutal attacks on trade unions for decades, culminating with this most recent attack on the right to strike;
- iii) that the previous Government, instead of tackling the causes of the cost-of-living crisis, had attempted to cut through the recent wave of strikes by trying to shift the blame from profiteering bosses on to ordinary workers who are exercising their right to fight for dignity and fair pay at work and in their lives;
- iv) the regime initiated by the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 is draconian, unnecessary, and unworkable;
- v) the Act undermines constructive industrial relations and is likely to inflame and prolong disputes;

- vi) in addition to ethical implications, there is also a risk of legal challenges arising from issuance of work notices; and
- vii) this Act is a direct attack on the freedoms of the ordinary, hardworking residents of our City;

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Instruct the Chief Executive to consider how the Council will continue to protect the rights of its workers to strike, including by agreeing to exercise its discretion to not issue work notices; and how this should be reflected in our policies;
- 2) Continue to work constructively with our trade union colleagues on maintaining harmonious industrial relations, which includes the opposition to this draconian legislation;
- 3) Note that the Labour Government has pledged to repeal this legislation, and to write to Keir Starmer to ask that he further pledges that the Labour Government to reverse fines and other measures taken against any union under the terms of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, if any were taken; and
- 4) Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Leadership of Norfolk County Council encouraging them to take the same steps this Council resolves to take.”

(The Lord Mayor closed the meeting.)

LORD MAYOR



Council 16 July 2024

Questions to cabinet members

Question 1

Councillor Driver to ask the cabinet member for an open and modern council the following question:

“Could the cabinet member comment how the 100% Council Tax Reduction Scheme for our poorest residents supports the collection rate of Council Tax raised by Norwich City Council?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for an open and modern council's response:

“At the start of this financial year the Council Tax gross debit figure was c£125m.

After reductions such as Council Tax Reduction, exemptions and discounts, the net collectable debit figure is currently c£93m.

The collection rate is then calculated based on the net collectable debit less payments received.

As at 1 July 2024 we have 12,751 residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction. Of this, 10,120 residents are in receipt of 100% Council Tax Reduction.

As at the 2 July 2024 the total amount of Council Tax Reduction awarded is £15.36m.

If the 100% Council Tax Reduction Scheme was reduced to a lesser % we may need recover small debts from those already on low incomes with little ability to pay, which could impact the collection rate and may also mean we need more resource to collect the debt.”

(There was no supplementary question)

Question 2

Councillor Carrington to ask the cabinet member for an open and modern council the following question:

“There are owners of mansions in Mayfair that pay less Council Tax than the tenants of terraced houses in Hartlepool, would you support reforms to add higher bands of Council Tax for the most expensive houses?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for an open and modern council's

response:

“Yes, I would like to see what the Labour Government in Wales has done, which introduced more council tax bands for the most expensive houses. Extra money raised should be collected on a national level and shared out so that councils such as Norwich which represent poorer areas can benefit.”

(There was no supplementary question.)

Question 3

Councillor Huntley to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

“I’ve been pleased to see community policing initiatives in the Mile Cross ward recently. With the “Safer Norwich strategy” now over a year old, could the cabinet member comment on the new arrangements of a partnership approach and the impact this is having for the city?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

“It is really positive to see the continued development of partnership working with the implementation of the Safer Norwich Strategy and Safer Norwich Board.

Of particular note is the involvement of the Board in determining the quarterly policing priorities for the city. This has seen additional focus on not only the Mile Cross ward, but also other areas leading to improvements in tackling crime and antisocial behaviour being experienced by our residents and visitors.

There is always more to do, and I look forward to realising the further improvements we can collectively drive with this partnership approach.”

(There was no supplementary question.)

Question 4

Councillor Mike Sands to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich the following question:

“I was delighted to hear the council has been successful in bidding for funds to install solar panels at Riverside Leisure Centre. Can the cabinet member comment on the importance of this scheme, especially in terms of financial and carbon savings?”

Councillor Hampton, the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich's response:

“I am pleased to confirm that we have received £520,000 of funding from Sport England, match funded with £375,000 from the Council’s budgets, to install solar panels at Riverside Leisure Centre.

This investment demonstrates our continuing focus on delivering a Climate Responsive Norwich, as set out in our Community Led Plan, “We are Norwich”. It will also support the delivery of our Fairer Norwich priority by ensuring people have continuing and cost-effective access to these leisure

facilities, supporting better health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents. According to Sport England data the centre has provided a social value of

£2.4 million over the last 12 months, which represents support for those in our community who may need additional help to access leisure facilities such as these, for example via reduced rates, or delivery of tailored classes for residents with a disability.

The project is expected to save approximately 80 tons of carbon per annum – equivalent to 24 economy class trips to Hong Kong or five brand new family cars – and will reduce utility costs by a projected £50,000 annually.”

(There was no supplementary question.)

Question 5

Councillor Maguire to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich the following question:

“Knowland Grove in my Ward has recently seen the installation of new, secure bin enclosures. Can the cabinet member comment on how this and other measures the council is taking will help to keep communal bin stores tidy?”

Councillor Hampton, the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich's response:

“Over the past year the Council has been rolling out various measures to improve the maintenance and appearance of a number of areas across the City with the aim of increasing civic pride and safety in our neighbourhoods.

As part of this new Metrostor bin enclosures were installed earlier in the year at Knowland Grove and Douro Place. These are fully enclosed units which encourage proper disposal of refuse and recycling. The bins are designed to restrict larger items not considered household waste being placed into the bins and reduce contamination as recycling bin lids cannot be forced open.

The bins have not been installed in isolation and revised signage, CCTV cameras and a more active approach to enforcement has also been undertaken. Scrutiny was updated on progress on the programme of activities in March.

No single measure will ever provide a magic bullet to resolve issues of waste storage and collection in high density housing areas but through constantly learning from experience and trialling new measures I’m confident that we will be able to drive significant improvements to appearance of these areas in the months and years to come.”

(By way of supplementary question Councillor Maguire asked the cabinet member to acknowledge and thank the former Councillor Peek for raising the issue and helping to move forward such an initiative. The deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich said she endorsed the comments.)

Question 6

Councillor Oliver to ask the cabinet member for an open and modern council the following question:

“The Unity Hub is a collective of charities and community interest companies all working for the benefit of the people of Norwich and beyond. I visited Carrow House with council officers and members of the Unity Hub in summer of 2023 where there was much excitement about the prospect of the group taking on this empty building as their base. As well as enabling these vital groups to continue with their excellent work, it would also mean that Carrow House would be maintained rather than standing empty. Since that time, plans appear to have come to a sudden halt, and I have had no reply as to why this might be. Please could the Cabinet Member enlighten me.”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for an open and modern council's response:

“Thank you to Councillor Oliver for this question, however the suggestion that the project has come to a sudden halt comes as somewhat of a surprise to me given there is a recommendation to Cabinet tomorrow night to grant a 3- year lease of Carrow House to Norwich Unity Hub.

Carrow House forms part of our plans for the redevelopment of East Norwich. Whilst those plans progress, the Norwich Unity Hub project provides an exciting and innovative opportunity over the next three years for Carrow House to be used as a base for the charitable organisations. These organisations deliver a considerable amount of social value for Norwich and the prospect of using one of our largest assets in this way demonstrates our recognition of the impact that these organisations have on the city and our commitment to partnering with them to deliver our community-led plan.

The first visit by Unity Hub to Carrow House was in October 2023 rather than Summer as you have suggested. Council officers have put in considerable work to move this project forward. Thanks to a very productive working relationship, together we have been able to ensure that there is a robust business plan for the project and that all the practical considerations in undertaking a major project such as this have been satisfactorily dealt with.

Given the level of public subsidy for this proposal, it will require determination by Cabinet. As you will understand, local and national elections have meant there has not been a Cabinet meeting since March, but I’m pleased to say this proposal will be considered at the first available opportunity – namely, as I said, by Cabinet tomorrow”

(By way of a supplementary question Councillor Oliver asked whether in future

responses to enquiries are made in a timely manner. In response Councillor Kendrick said that officers had been working closely with Norwich Unity Hub on a number of complex matters which meant initial informal targets had not been met. There had been no delay as officers had been working to bring the decision forward at the earliest convenience.)

Councillor Oliver raised a point of personal explanation to state that her question was related to the lack of progress and was not a reflection of the officers who had been working to make this happen.

Question 7

Councillor Smith to ask the cabinet member for a prosperous Norwich the following question:

“The Lord Mayors Procession is taking place again this July. What is so special about this event and what can Norwich residents and visitors to Norwich expect this year regarding an event that's taken place, bar the pandemic, every year for decades?”

Councillor Kidman, the cabinet member for a prosperous Norwich's response:

“The Lord Mayor's Procession has a long history and is the second oldest street procession in the UK, dating back to medieval times.

The Lord Mayor's Weekend is the largest free event in the city and provides an opportunity for our residents to come together to celebrate and enjoy the vibrant colours and sounds of the carnival parade, along with lots of family activities and an open-air music festival.

This year, the procession included school and community groups who danced, pedalled and walked their way from the Cathedral to Chapelfield Gardens. People lining the route saw giant puppets, including those made by students from Norwich University of the Arts and the Norwich Puppet Theatre, wonderful costumes, samba bands, brass bands, singing and lots more. The family-friendly entertainment and activities continued in Chapelfield Gardens with live music, performances and dance acts, stalls and games, a bar area and a food arena. People were able to join workshops and try new skills and the bandstand, which was programmed by The Garage and Young Norfolk Arts Festival, showcased some of our local, emerging talent.”

(In response to Councillor Smith's supplementary question the cabinet member for a prosperous Norwich said that a number of actions had been taken to lessen the impact of large scale of events on the environment. This included the ban of generators which negatively affected air quality were not allowed within Chapelfield Gardens, to facilitate this the Council had worked with the Norfolk and Norwich Festival had installed mains power to Chapelfield Gardens. Within the procession itself the Council no longer allowed petrol or diesel fuelled motorised floats.)

Question 8

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

“Nearly 400 people signed a petition asking the Council to screen arms investments out of our treasury management and Norfolk Pension fund. It was presented to Council on 12 March and the response given was no more than 'Thank you for your petition '. Will the Cabinet member please respond to the requests to screen the arms industry out of our treasury management and Norfolk Pension scheme as far as possible. If there is no intention to take action, will they please say so and explain why?”

Councillor Stonard, the leader's response:

“The most significant area of investment by local authorities in financial markets is by way of their pension funds and we have recently written to Norfolk County Council as Administering Authority of the Norfolk Fund Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in respect of their

‘Disinvestment/Exclusion & ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) Aspects of Investment Strategy’. The pension fund response highlighted that the Pensions Committee regularly reviews its approach to ethical investment and over the years has taken a considerable amount of legal advice in relation to its fiduciary responsibility. It should be noted that the pension funds ESG approach leads to a portfolio with characteristics substantially better than the benchmark global equity indices.

In respect of the City Council’s own investments in financial markets, these are limited to our day-to-day treasury management activities and are invested in approved counterparties which does not include directly investing in equities (companies). However, broader money market funds or on-lending by financial institutions does present a secondary risk of indirect investment in companies which are involved in the arms trade. We have specifically considered ethical investments in our Treasury Management Strategy, which is published alongside the budget each year, and, through our use of money market funds, we have now capacity to invest in money market funds which have been identified as having environmental and ethical investment purposes. With our advisors help they are also supporting the council to invest in Money Market Funds that are Article 8 compliant (part of European Union, Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulations). Screening strategies can be used for Article 8 funds to include characteristics whereby companies involved in controversial weapons are screened out of compliant investment products.”

(By way of supplementary question Councillor Hoechner asked whether the leader supported the aims of the petition and that the leader of the council raise this matter with the pensions committee. In response the leader of the council said that he did support the signatories of the petition. The pensions committee already had ethical investments on their agenda and were making progress towards this.)

Question 9

Councillor Price to ask the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich the following question:

“Pavements and gulleys in the Harbour Triangle and across Thorpe Hamlet

have a proliferation of weeds growing. The main cause is inadequate sweeping which allows silt to build up and for weeds to establish. Weeds damage the hard surfacing, leading to an unnecessary and avoidable increase in repair costs. It results in a waste of public money. Can the cabinet member explain why this problem has not been picked up through the monitoring of contractor agreements and what steps are they going to immediately take to rectify it?"

Councillor Hampton, the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich's response:

"Thank you for your question. This issue has been picked up by Council Officers whilst carrying out ongoing inspections in the area and responding to enquiries. The Street Cleaning team at NCSL are currently working to identify different methods of removing the seed bed from the highway and the pavements. Weed spraying in the area is carried out by Norfolk County Council and there have been issues with the completion of this task in the past few years meaning the weeds are harder to remove. There are ongoing discussions between Council Officers and Highways Staff to improve the co- ordination of services in future"

(In response to Councillor Price's supplementary question the deputy leader and cabinet member for a climate responsive Norwich confirmed that she would ask officers to provide evidence of the roads that had been swept and whether the work had been checked with the council to Councillor Price.)

Question 10

Councillor Galvin to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

"Since February residents in several households in Gladstone Street have been waiting for the council to give them an answer on a site visit regarding mending a council fence which is now in a dangerous condition which the council put up on its land behind their properties. They are rightly concerned about anti-social behaviour and security. As a local councillor I have assisted them but have so far been involved in a dozen emails and calls and no progress is forthcoming from the council. Is six months an acceptable wait, especially when security is compromised?"

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

"It is not acceptable that residents have had to wait for a resolution for six months and experienced poor communication. The repair works have now been costed and work will commence on 18 July. Delays in processing this work were avoidable and I have sought reassurance that matters such as this are resolved swiftly in the future and communication about progress, including any delays and reasons for delays, are improved."

(By way of supplementary question Councillor Galvin asked how many repairs were avoidably delayed. In response the cabinet member for housing said that she would provide the information. She was keen to share more information around housing repair and performance data to increase transparency and would

address this with officers outside this meeting.)

Question 11

Councillor Haynes to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

“During 2023-24 the council commissioned a market research organisation to carry out an independent satisfaction survey of its tenants. One of the questions asked respondents “how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Norwich City Council’s housing service complaint handling?”. Of the 224 respondents who answered this question, just 21% were satisfied. Would the cabinet member for housing explain the reasons behind this clearly unacceptable figure?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

“This survey is carried out in line with new requirements from the Regulator of Social Housing to collect Tenant Satisfaction Measures. This specific result falls short of our own aspiration and tells us we are not meeting the standard that residents expect from us in handling their complaint.

As the Tenant Satisfaction Measures are new, we are not yet able to directly compare our result with other similar housing providers, although early generalised benchmarking results indicate that the median satisfaction score for complaint handling is 33.8%, which is low across the housing sector. This does not make it acceptable, and we recognise the need for improvement.

Our complaint handling performance from April 2024 is already showing an upward trend and we will continue to monitor this and the Tenant Satisfaction Measure results during the current financial year.”

(There was no supplementary question)

Question 12

Councillor Francis to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

“Some residents in council sheltered housing found their annual heating costs trebled and sheltered housing costs doubled in March. Together with the council rent increase they had to cope with a steep hike in weekly costs totalling nearly 25%. It is especially distressing when on a fixed income, with no warning of this sudden and frankly unmanageable increase. Some then tried to make contact with the council but found it hard due to the costs of phone calls. We understand these increases are across the board. Will the cabinet member commit to giving advance information, and back up support, to sheltered housing tenants in future regarding such hikes?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

“Service charges in sheltered housing are based on actual expenditure

during the previous year. Energy costs have increased dramatically, and we were aware that there would be a greater than usual increase. For this reason, the charges were capped to be less than 70% of the actual cost.

Tenants all received the £60 per month energy credit as part of the government scheme during the previous year and, for those on district heating, this was applied to their electricity account.

A leaflet was sent with the letters confirming the increase which gave additional information about the service charge calculation including details of the council's cost-effective energy tariff. Tenants would have received this by 4 March 2024.

We encourage anyone who is struggling to speak with their sheltered housing support officer for advice and support. The team has supported many eligible tenants to access the Household Support Fund or access other services throughout the cost-of-living crisis.

Customer contact team can be reached on an 0344 number which is charged at local rate or included in most mobile packages. Tenants have the option to request a call back if the line is busy."

(There was no supplementary question.)

Question 13

Councillor Champion to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

"In March the council was asked how many payments have been made to residents as compensation for damp and mould issues per year. The council did not respond to the query, then finally in early June said it would "be handled under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)" and then, because the statutory deadline of 20 working days for this had actually passed, that it would be "treated as an overdue EIR". Still no answer has come though, more than 3 months on. Does the cabinet member agree that damp and mould in people's homes is important enough to merit a timely response?"

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

"Addressing damp and mould in people's homes is an incredibly important issue for the city council.

With regards to the specific request, compensation payments have been paid to tenants due to damp and mould issues. These have been funded from a budget which also supports other costs, which means it is not possible at this time, to provide an accurate figure of just damp and mould related payments. I have asked that changes are made to enable these costs to be identified and reported from next quarter."

A response to the request for information should have been provided within the council's agreed timeframe."

(In response to Councillor Champion's supplementary question the cabinet member for housing reiterated that it was not currently possible to separate the amount of compensation given to residents within the budget. In regard to addressing damp and mould issues as they happen there was ongoing development on how the council responded and this would be shared with members in the following months.)

Question 14

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

"In light of the city council's earlier stated opposition to the Norwich Western Link Road (NWL) we trust that the council will be objecting to the NWL planning application and asking the secretary of state to call in the planning application and hold a public enquiry. Will the council call on the new government to withdraw the 85% funding for the NWL and invest the money instead in sustainable transport alternatives?"

Councillor Stonard, the leader's response:

"The proposed Norwich Western Link Road, although entirely outside of our administrative area, is a very significant strategic road scheme that will have long term impacts on transport in the City and County. With the submission of the planning application, it has reached an important stage, and it is important that this Council considers its response carefully.

It is intended to prepare a report to Cabinet for 11 September for this response to be agreed. Officers are engaging with staff at the County Council to ensure that flexibility in the timetable will be allowed to enable us to undertake this proper consideration.

Until Cabinet has been able to consider relevant information and reaches a decision on the proposed response to the consultation our position on the scheme remains as set out in January 2022 when it was resolved not to support either the Transport for Norwich Strategy or the Western Link project contained within it."

(By way of supplementary question Councillor Fox asked whether the leader stood by his confirmation from January 2023 that the council did not support the Norwich Western Link. The leader of the council confirmed that this with the case.)

Question 15

Councillor Calvert to ask the cabinet member for an open and modern council the following question:

"We are currently paying agencies over 4 times the going rate for interim staff, often for very extended periods, with some middle managers on day rates of £850 per day. What is it about this council, as an employer, that means we need to pay so far over the odds to attract qualified staff?"

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for an open and modern council's response:

“The use of interims in the public sector is not unusual and is not in any way, as suggested by Councillor Calvert’s question, a reflection on Norwich City Council as an employer. Our pay policy statement – agreed annually by full Council, outlines our recruitment approach and the use of interims.

Like many employers both in the public and private sector we have seen challenges in recruiting to some roles, including hard to fill roles where there is a national shortage. This alongside a need for additional temporary resources with specific specialist skills to deliver priority projects, means that we need to use agency and interim resources to supplement establishment roles.

At the end of June interims and agency workers represented only 7 % of our total workforce. The majority of agency workers placed with the Council are paid in line within the established grades for the roles with a small proportion being paid on a day rate, which includes an agency mark up. It should also be remembered that these roles do not include pension and holiday pay elements that are included within salaries for permanent roles.

Day rates reflect the market rates for interim resources - the council is not paying agencies over four times the going rate.”

(By way of supplementary question Councillor Calvert reiterated his question. In response the cabinet member for an open and modern council said that wages in the public sector had declined in the past 14 years. Increasingly individuals were moving across to the interim market and this was causing issues with the recruitment of suitably qualified senior staff. Vacancies were filled as inexpensively as possible while ensuring the appropriate skills were available to the Council)

Question 16

Councillor Worley to ask the cabinet member for an open and modern council the following question:

“The four-day working week campaign has had some incredibly positive strides over recent weeks. An article in The Guardian outlined the indisputable success of the largest public sector trial in South Cambridgeshire. Unison, the Union for public service, NHS and Police staff voted through a motion to “demand the next government takes action to ensure more employers adopt this new way of working”. And the change in government has taken away the threat of repercussions for councils who trial this massive improvement in conditions for their staff. Would the cabinet member therefore agree that now is the perfect time for Norwich City Council to commit to a trial of a four-day working week?”

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for an open and modern council's response:

“Thank you for your question.

The new Government have pledged to introduce a ‘New Deal for Working People’ which contains key employment reform proposals. These proposals

reference flexible working and in particular tackling one sided flexibility, however, at this time the position on the four-day week isn't specifically referenced and there is no indication from the current Government that the position on the matter will change. In fact, a spokesperson for the Government confirmed on 10 July that "this isn't Government's planned policy".

I would anticipate that the next steps in respect of the employment reform proposals are likely to mean a legislative Bill in the Autumn. The Government have committed to full and comprehensive consultation on any proposed legislative changes.

The city council continues to be an exemplar in terms of the flexible working arrangements within our workforce – we have a broad range of different working arrangements and patterns in place.

We plan to develop a new People Strategy during the next 12 months – on which, we will consult fully. In developing this strategy, we will consider all options for flexible working, (including a four-day working week) considering the needs of our residents and workforce.

We will continue to monitor the Government's legislative agenda"

(In response to Councillor Worley's question the cabinet member for an open and modern council said that the previous Government had been opposed and no official changes had been made. The Council was a flexible employer and would look at this in line with Government advice and guidance.)

Question 17

Councillor Young to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

"A council tenant who is disabled and in poor health can no longer get in and out of their flat due to access issues with stairs. However home options turned down their request for a move, saying there was no documentation. The tenant had however sent in many records, so they are now appealing. This will take 2 months, they are told. They already waited 9 months. In this time their physical capacity has diminished due to not being able to get out.

Another person known to us has been waiting many months for housing options to see him and has had to sleep rough. These are just two examples but we have more. Could the cabinet member please look into if there is a capacity issue in the home options team leading to these unacceptable delays?"

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

"Understandably I am unable to address specific cases however should you wish to discuss these matters directly, please contact the Housing Options Teams. In the meantime, I can confirm that the Home Options team is fully resourced in terms of its established posts and there are no delays in processing medical assessments."

(As a supplementary question Councillor Young asked how the communication issues, she had been made aware of would be addressed. In response the cabinet member for housing asked that the specific examples were shared with her. Communication between agencies could be challenging and the Council was looking at ways it could improve this.)

Question 18

Councillor Catt to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

“With the election of a new government last week, I expect we are all relieved to see an end to 14 years of Conservative government that has gutted our public services and local government, with the most vulnerable taking the brunt. One of the biggest issues here I often raise is the housing crisis. Can the Cabinet Member explain to me how Norwich City Council intends to reduce the ever-growing waiting list, that currently stands at over 4,000, under a Labour government that will stick to the Conservative’s fiscal rules?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

“Norwich, like the rest of the country has suffered under the previous conservative government from a chronic under supply of housing across all sectors. As a result, it has been those least able to afford it who have suffered most, priced out of the market both in terms of purchasing a home or inflated private rents and at the mercy of insecure tenancies subjected to no fault evictions.

Whilst the King’s Speech on 17 July will provide more detail, I believe there are many ambitious plans within the manifesto on which this Labour government was elected that will significantly improve access to housing and look forward to their delivery.

These commitments include:

- A commitment to build 1.5 million new homes
- Deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housing in a generation
- An overhaul of the planning system
- A brown field first approach to housing – which will be beneficial for Norwich
- Working with councils to create a cross government strategy to end homelessness
- Abolish Section 21 no fault evictions, which increases protection for private renters to challenge poor quality landlords

Some of these will be able to be delivered quicker than others, reversing the impact of 14 years of conservative rule will not be achieved over night but I

am confident that this will be sustainable change that ensures, that unlike under the previous government those most in need are not ignored.”

(There was no supplementary question)

Question 19

Councillor Osborn to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

“Residents in Langley Walk have been affected by a leaking communal gutter, which is causing damp in their properties. When this has been reported to the council, residents have been told that a repair will be scheduled but have not been given a date for the repair. Does the Cabinet Member agree that residents should be given a repair date when reporting issues in council properties?”

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

“Residents should be provided with a date for any repair that is inside an individual property. Repairs to communal areas are not booked in at the time of call. This is because they do not require any specific resident to be present to provide access. This gives the scheduling team at NCSL the ability to schedule these works wherever there is a gap in the operatives’ work. These works may then be moved if higher priority works arise. However, the overall time frame should always be adhered to which in most cases will be either five working days or 60 days depending on priority. Any works that are categorised as emergency should be attended within 24 hours.

In the case of Langley Walk, the repair was raised on the 6 June with a target date of the 5 August.”

(By way of a supplementary question Councillor Osborn asked how ward members and residents could be informed of repairs in communal areas. In response the cabinet member for housing said that there was room for improvement as to how the Council communicated with residents and looking at creative ways to achieve this.)

Question 20

Councillor Bolton to ask the cabinet member for an open and modern council the following question:

“The councillor development working group last met in February 2020: yet there are a lot of aspects to councillor training that need work. Similarly, the constitution working group last met in February 2023, but there are clearly many aspects of the constitution that need updating or changing so that we can function better as a council for the benefit of the people of Norwich.

Furthermore, one of the council's 5 key priorities is to be a climate responsive Norwich. Despite requests for the Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel meeting in June to be rearranged no such

measure has been put in place, leaving the next meeting for October. Is agreeing to the formation of committees and then not scheduling any meetings part of a deliberate strategy to avoid democratic accountability or simply a matter of chaotic mismanagement?"

Councillor Kendrick, the cabinet member for an open and modern council's response:

"Working groups meet on an ad hoc basis as and when there is business to discuss. The recent Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel was cancelled due to the elections. An update note has been prepared and will be sent round to Councillors. This note covers the key areas of work over the last period."

(In response to Councillor Bolton's supplementary question the cabinet member for an open and modern council said that he was open to the councillor development working group meeting to discuss the development needs of councillors.)

Question 21

Councillor Caine to ask the cabinet member for housing the following question:

"Norwich has a proud history of council housing, with some of the first council housing in the country being built here over a hundred years ago, giving a way to lift the most vulnerable out of the slums and provide an alternative to exploitative slum landlords and private interest. We didn't just provide affordable quality housing to those at the very bottom – by the end of the 1970s in Norwich, over 50% of the population lived in a council house.

Successive Conservative and Labour governments have stripped us of this right. We see thousands languishing on Norwich's waiting lists while many more are condemned to the private rental market. We often hear from the Labour benches that they would love to build more council housing, but when the Labour government refuses to commit any money to this, how can we ever build a city with truly secure and affordable housing?"

Councillor Jones, the cabinet member for housing's response:

"The Labour manifesto is clear in its commitment to the delivery of the biggest increase in both social and affordable housebuilding in a generation. This is to be delivered through the strengthening of planning obligation, changes to the affordable homes programme to ensure more is delivered from existing funding, a commitment to support councils and registered providers to build.

There is a clear commitment to both the prioritisation of building new socially rented homes and better protecting those we are building to be there for future residents.

We continue to be committed to safe and affordable housing for all our residents, and I am looking forward to working with both Clive Lewis our re-elected Labour MP for Norwich South and Alice MacDonald the new Labour

MP for Norwich North to advocate for the support Norwich needs to fulfil this. I know they will both be strong voices for Norwich within the Labour government.”

(There was no supplementary question.)



Committee Name: Council

Committee Date: 24/09/2024

Report Title: Treasury Management Review and Outturn 2023/24

Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for an open and modern council

Report from: Interim Chief Finance Officer (S.151)

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

This report sets out the Treasury Management Review and Outturn for the year to 31 March 2024.

Recommendation:

That Council;

- i) approves the treasury activity for the year to 31 March 2024.
- ii) notes the change to table 5.9 in the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy.

Policy Framework

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- A prosperous Norwich.
- A fairer Norwich.
- A climate responsive Norwich.
- A future-proof Norwich.
- An open and modern council.

This report meets the “An open and modern council” corporate priority.

This report meets the Treasury management strategy policy adopted by the Council.

Report Details

Background

1. The Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual review of its treasury management activities and the final prudential and treasury indicators for each financial year. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
2. This report details the results of the council's treasury management activities for the financial year 2023/24. It compares this activity to the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2023/24, approved by Full Council on 21 February 2023. It will also detail any issues that have arisen in treasury management during this period.

Introduction

3. Treasury management relates to the policies, strategies and processes associated with managing the cash and debt of the Council through appropriate borrowing and lending activity. It includes the effective control of the risks associated with the lending and borrowing activity and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with the risks.
4. For the 2023/24 financial year the Code required Council's to report quarterly Treasury Management activity to Council. The reporting requirements were met as follows:
 - an annual Treasury Management Strategy in advance of the year (Council 21 February 2023).
 - a Quarter 1 and mid-year Treasury Management Review report (30 January 2024).
 - A Quarter 3 Treasury Management Review report (12 March 2024).
 - an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report).

All Treasury Management activity is reported through Treasury Management Committee and Cabinet prior to consideration by Council.

5. The regulatory environment places responsibility on members to review and scrutinise treasury management policy and activities. This report is therefore important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the council's policies which have previously been approved by members. This report summarises the following:
 - Capital activity during the year (paragraphs 6 - 10)

- The impact of this activity on the Council's underlying indebtedness (the Capital Financing Requirement) (paragraphs 11 - 17)
- The 2023/24 performance against the approved prudential and treasury indicators (paragraphs 18 - 24)
- The overall treasury position identifying how the Council has borrowed in relation to this indebtedness, and the impact on its investment balances (paragraphs 25 - 30)
- The council's borrowing strategy and detailed debt activity (paragraphs 31-41)
- The council's investment strategy and detailed investment activity (paragraphs 42 - 53)

The Council's Capital Expenditure and Financing 2023/24

6. The 2023/24 capital programme budgets were approved as part of the budget papers approved by full Council on 21st February 2023. Subsequent to this there were approved revisions to the 2023/24 capital budgets to include the 2022/23 capital carry forwards and new capital schemes approved during the year. The final capital programme budget for 2023/24 is shown in **Table 1** below.
7. Actual capital spending was under budget for the year by £15.241m. The actual level of resources needed to finance the expenditure was also less than that originally estimated. Capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. **Table 1** shows the estimates and then the actual capital expenditure for 2023/24 and how this was financed in the year:

Table 1: Capital Programme Financing

	2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Final Budget	2023/24 Actual Outturn	Variance from Final Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure				
General Fund capital expenditure	25.595	21.285	15.128	(6.157)
General Fund capital loans	3.000	1.000	-	(1.000)
HRA capital expenditure	35.656	33.544	25.459	(8.085)
Total Expenditure	64.251	55.829	40.588	(15.241)
Financed by				
Capital receipts	22.09	6.910	5.600	(1.310)
Capital grants/contributions	16.503	16.029	12.459	(3.570)
Capital & earmarked reserves	15.918	20.656	13.148	(7.508)
Revenue	6.740	7.228	6.843	(0.384)
Total Financing	61.251	50.823	38.050	(12.773)
Borrowing need for the year	3.000	5.006	2.537	(2.469)

8. Lion Homes (Norwich) Ltd (LHL) is a private limited company wholly owned by Norwich City Council. In order to finance its housing development, LHL borrows money at commercial interest rates from the council. During 2023/24 LHL did not repay any of its loans and no new loans were made. Therefore, as at 31

March 2024 the company had a loan outstanding with the council of £6.150m (2022/23 £6.150m).

9. Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL) is a private limited company wholly owned by Norwich City Council. To finance the set-up of the company including capital works on its depot building, the council has provided NCSL with both loan and equity financing. Equity investment was made into the company of £0.370m. A 20-year capital loan of £1.140m was also advanced to the company as well as a working capital loan of £0.500m. In 2021/22, the council loaned a further £0.180m to NCSL. No new loans were taken by NCSL in 2022/23. Repayments of £0.040m and £0.060m were made in relation to the loans during 2022/23 and 2023/24 respectively, in addition to a further loan of £0.500m, bringing the balance of the loans to £2.220m as at 31 March 2024 (2022/23 £1.780m). The council receives income relating to loan interest and services provided by the council to the company as part of a service level agreement. The impact of these capital loan movements on the capital financing requirement is shown in **Table 2**.
10. Capital expenditure may either be:
 - Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (e.g. capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which does not impact on the council's borrowing need; or
 - Financed by either external or internal borrowing, if there is insufficient financing available, or a decision is taken not to immediately apply resources.

Council's overall borrowing need

11. The council's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR increases as the council incurs capital spending and then if it does not apply resources immediately to finance the capital spend, (i.e. capital receipts, capital grants, capital reserves or revenue), a borrowing need arises. The 2023/24 CFR year-end balance is the cumulative total of the 2023/24 unfinanced capital expenditure and prior years' unfinanced capital expenditure.
12. Treasury management includes addressing the funding requirements for this borrowing need; it also includes maintaining a position to ensure sufficient cash is available to meet the capital expenditure as they occur. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies, e.g. the Government through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) or the money markets, or utilising temporary cash resources within the council (known as internal borrowing).
13. The Council's (non-HRA) underlying borrowing need (CFR) is not allowed to rise indefinitely. Statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset. This requirement is met by making an annual revenue charge, called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), to reduce the CFR. This is effectively a repayment of the non-HRA borrowing need (there is no statutory requirement to reduce the HRA CFR). During 2023/24 following a review by the council's treasury advisors (Link Asset

Services) the Council agreed and adopted revised minimum revenue provision policy.

14. The total CFR can also be reduced by either:
 - the application of additional capital financing resources (such as unapplied capital receipts)
 - charging more than the statutory MRP each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).
15. This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External borrowing can be taken or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR.
16. The Council's CFR for the year is shown below and is a key prudential indicator. It includes leasing schemes on the balance sheet, which increase the Council's borrowing need. No borrowing is actually required against these schemes as a borrowing facility is included in the contract. During 2023/24 the council agreed to apply useable Capital receipts totaling £25m to reduce the CFR and reduce the MRP charge.

Table 2: Capital Financing Requirement

	2023/24 Original Estimate £000	2023/24 Revised Estimate £000	2023/24 Outturn (unaudited) £000
Opening General Fund CFR	112,652	112,112	112,062
Movement in General Fund CFR	3,384	(416)	(20,893)
Closing General Fund CFR	116,036	111,696	91,169
<i>Movement in CFR represented by:</i>			
Application of capital receipts			(25,000)
Borrowing need (capital programme)	3,000	1,000	2,538
Additional loan			500
Loan repayment	(16)	(16)	(60)
Less MRP and other financing adj.	400	(1,400)	1,129
Movement in General Fund CFR	3,384	(416)	(20,893)
Opening HRA Fund CFR	208,533	208,532	208,533
Movement in HRA CFR	690	0	0
Closing HRA CFR	209,223	208,532	208,533
TOTAL CFR	325,259	320,228	299,702

17. Borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.

The prudential and treasury indicators

18. **Gross borrowing and the CFR** - to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the council should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the

total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2023/24) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2023/24) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allows the Council some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs. The table below highlights the Council's gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Council has complied with this indicator.

Table 3: Gross Borrowing

	2023/24 Original Estimate	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2023/24 Actual
	£m	£m	£m
Gross borrowing	206.648	206.648	206.648
CFR	325.259	320.228	299.533
Over Borrowed/(Under Borrowed)	(118.611)	(113.580)	(92.885)

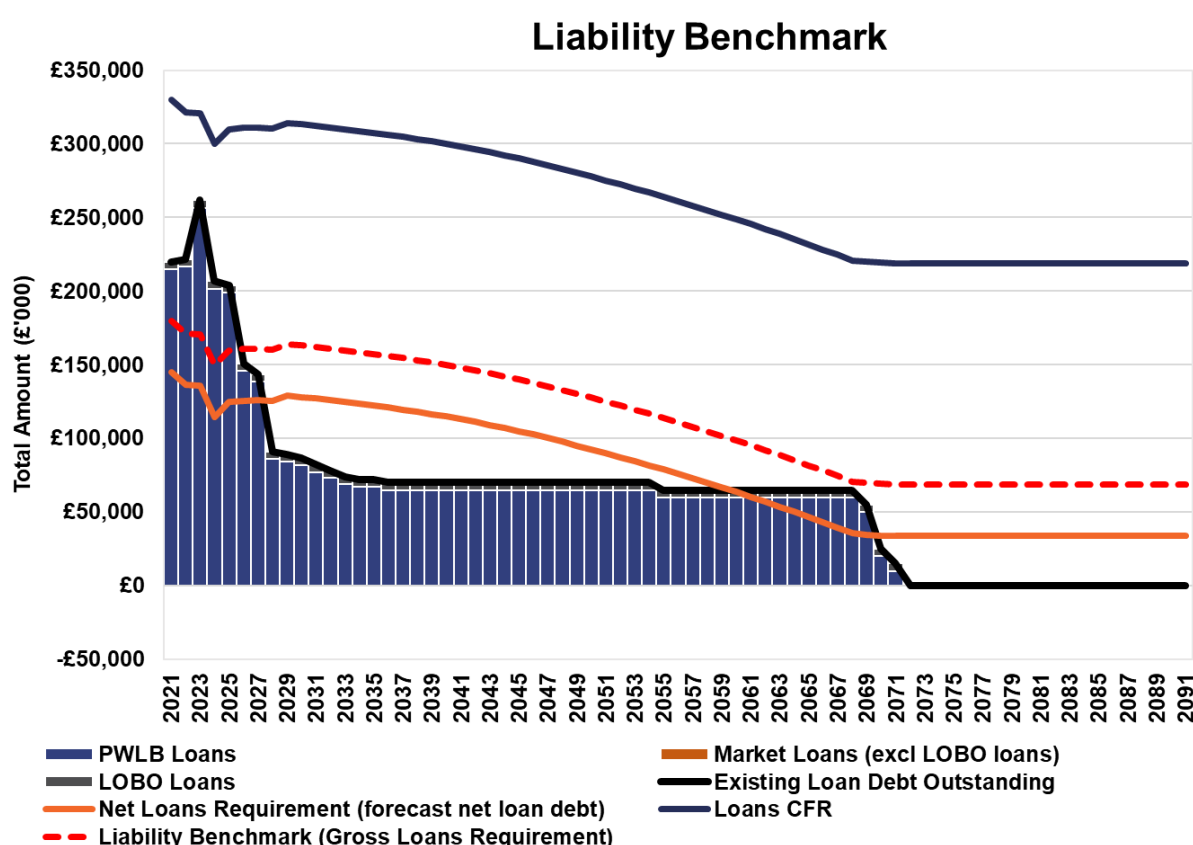
19. **The authorised limit** - the authorised limit is the “affordable borrowing limit” required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Council does not have the power to borrow above this level. **Table 4** below demonstrates that during 2023/24 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.
20. **The operational boundary** – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary is acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached. **Table 4** below demonstrates that during 2023/24 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its operational boundary.

Table 4: Authorised Limit & Operational Boundary

	2023/24 Original Estimate (TMS)	2023/24 Revised Estimate (Mid-Year Review)	2023/24 Actual (Unaudited)
	£m	£m	£m
Authorised Limit for external debt			
Borrowing	355.123	355.259	329.695
Other long-term liabilities	0.136	0.136	0.136
Total Agreed Authorised Limit	355.259	358.259	329.831
Operational boundary for external debt			
Borrowing	325.123	325.259	299.695
Other long-term liabilities	0.136	0.136	0.136
Total Agreed Operational Boundary	325.259	325.259	299.831
External debt (including other long-term liabilities e.g. finance leases)			207.282

21. Liability Benchmark

Following the release of the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Guidance Notes, CIPFA introduced the liability benchmark as a new Prudential Indicator for 2023/24. The guidance states that “the liability benchmark is a projection of the amount of loan debt outstanding that the authority needs each year into the future to fund its existing debt liabilities, planned prudential borrowing and other cash flows.”



The liability benchmark is presented as a chart of four balances which are:

- Existing loan debt outstanding: the authority’s existing loans which are still outstanding in future years;
- Loans CFR: calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code, and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP taking account of approved prudential borrowing;
- Net loans requirement: the authority’s gross loan debt, less treasury management investments, at the last financial year end, projected into the future based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other forecast major cash flows and;
- Liability benchmark (or Gross Loans Requirement) = Net loans requirement + short term liquidity allowance.

Any years where actual loans are less than the benchmark indicate a future borrowing requirement; any years where actual loans outstanding exceed the benchmark represent an overborrowed position which will result in excess cash requiring investment.

The graph above is in line with the Approved MTFS which also includes the Treasury Managements Strategy.

Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream

22. The authority is required to report on the ratio represented by its net financing costs to its net revenue stream. For the general fund net revenue is represented by the amount that is funded by government grants and council tax payers, while for the HRA it is the rental income paid by tenants. This is intended to be a measure of affordability, indicating how much of the authority's revenue is taken up in financing its debt.
23. Table 5 shows that the general fund outturn is lower than the estimate mainly due to higher than budgeted investment income, the policy change to the minimum revenue provision and that there are no capital financing costs. The HRA affordability ratio is higher than estimated mainly due to the inclusion of capital costs which have been written back to revenue where the essential adaptations and enhancements to properties carried out did not add value to the asset, offset by higher than budgeted investment income.

24. Table 5: Affordability Ratio

	2023/24	2023/24
Affordability of financing costs	Estimate	Actual
General fund - financing costs as a percentage of net revenue	5.44%	0%
HRA - financing costs as a percentage of rental income	35.38%	40.17%

Treasury Position as at 31 March 2024

25. The Council's debt and investment position is managed by the in-house treasury management team. All activities are undertaken primarily to ensure security for investments, to ensure that there is adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through member reporting detailed in the summary, and through officer activity.
26. The Council has implemented a pooling arrangement for all its bank accounts with Barclays. Interest is now earned on all remaining balances without the need to move these to an interest-bearing account. The Pooling arrangement improves the overall interest income return as cash held in the Barclays accounts to meet cash liquidity profiling still earns interest.
27. The council's actual borrowing position at 31 March 2024 and activity during 2023/24 is detailed in the table below. Borrowing has remained within the authorised limit of £329.831m throughout the year.

Table 6: Borrowing activity 2023/24 (excluding finance leases)

	PWLB loans £m	Market loans £m	Total £m	Average interest rate %
Opening balance (1 April 2023)	205.648	5.000	210.648	
New borrowing taken	-	-	-	
Borrowing matured/repaid	(4.000)	-	(4.000)	
Closing balance (31 March 2024)	201.648	5.000	206.648	3.44
Authorised limit for external debt			329.831	

28. The maturity structure of the debt portfolio was as follows:

Table 7: Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

	%	31-Mar-24 £m
Under 12 months	1.24	2.500
Between 12 months and 2 years	26.38	53.200
Between 2 years and 5 years	30.75	62.000
Between 5 years and 10 years	7.35	14.830
Over 10 years	34.28	74.118
Perpetually irredeemable stock		0.130
Total borrowing		206.778

29. Table 8 shows the movement in investments in the year.

Table 8: Investment Movements

	31 March 2023 £m	Net movement £m	31 March 2024 £m
Short term			
Banks	25.000	(5.000)	20.000
Building Societies	0.000	0.000	0.000
Local Authorities	20.000	26.000	46.000
Cash Equivalents			
Banks	14.600	(3.154)	11.446
Non-UK Banks	5.000	(5.000)	0.000
Building Societies	10.000	(10.000)	0.000
Local Authorities	45.000	(40.000)	5.000
Money Market Funds	12.000	(5.700)	6.300
UK Government	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total Internally Managed Funds	131.600	(42.854)	88.746

30. The maturity structure of the investment portfolio was as follows:

Table 9: Maturity Structure

	31 March 2023	31 March 2024
	£m	£m
Under 1 year	131.600	88.746
Over 1 year	0.000	0.000
	131.600	88.746

Borrowing Strategy for 2023/24

31. The council maintained an under-borrowed position in 2023/24. This means that the capital borrowing need (the CFR) has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure.
32. Table 10 below shows the interest rate forecast to March 2027 as at the end of 2023-24. These forecasts have been provided by the Council's treasury advisor, Link Asset Services and show a gradual reduction in medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates over the next two financial years. Variable, or short-term rates, are expected to be the cheaper form of borrowing over the period.

Table 10: Interest Rate View

Link Group Interest Rate View	28.05.24											
	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
BANK RATE	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	5.30	4.90	4.40	3.90	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.20
12 month ave earnings	5.10	4.80	4.30	3.80	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.20	3.30	3.40
5 yr PWLB	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.90
25 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.30
50 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10

Source: Link Treasury 2024 (PWLB rates include adjustments for Certainty rate discounts)

33. The Authority has continued the prudent approach of utilising internal borrowing to fund its borrowing requirement where cash levels permit or interest rates mitigate against taking on external debt; overall the strategy is designed to reduce external borrowing costs.
34. Long-term fixed interest rates are initially expected to remain the same before falling over the five-year treasury management planning period. The Council's S.151 Officer, under delegated powers, will take the most appropriate form of borrowing depending on the prevailing interest rates or opportunities at the time, taking into account the associated risks e.g. counterparty risk, cost of carry and impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy as well as risk of future more significant interest rate increases. Any further decisions to borrow will be reported to Cabinet at the next available opportunity.
35. The Council is due to repay £2.5m of maturing PWLB in September 2024. However, given the current higher interest rates and forecasts showing rates starting to fall in the new year, officers are considering options to delay borrowing in order to fix any loans at lower rates.

PWLB rates

36. PWLB rates are based on, and are determined by, gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through HM Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. As the interest forecast table for PWLB rates above shows, there is likely to be a steady rise over the forecast period, with some degree of uplift due to rising treasury yields in the US.
37. The Council has previously relied on the PWLB as its main source of funding; however, the council will consider alternative sources of borrowing as appropriate and in line with the treasury management strategy. We will continue to liaise closely with our treasury advisors, monitor the borrowing market and update Members as this area evolves.
38. The Municipal Bond Agency are now offering loans to local authorities. This Authority may make use of this emerging source of borrowing as and when appropriate. This is within the existing approved Treasury Management Strategy.

Forward borrowing considerations to mitigate expected future interest rate increases

39. The Council may also look to arrange forward borrowing facilities should the future borrowing risk rise, although the recent increase in rate may mitigate against this in the short term. The policy on forward borrowing has been complied with in 2023/24.

Debt Rescheduling

40. No debt rescheduling was undertaken during 2023/24. Opportunities for debt restructuring will be continually monitored alongside interest rate forecasts. The council retains some higher rate borrowings and if rates continue to rise there may be some opportunities for debt rescheduling if this proves cost effective. Until borrowing rates fall the Council is unlikely to consider additional loans to finance its unfinanced borrowing. Action will be taken when the council's S.151 officer considers it is most advantageous.

Borrowing Outturn for 2023/24

41. During 2023/24 the Council repaid £4m PWLB debt and there was no new borrowing. The council paid £6.823m in interest costs on external loans, this compares to a budget of £6.972m. The reduction against budget was due to the repayment of maturing debt and the use of internal borrowing rather than external borrowing as a result of holding sufficient cash balances.

Investment Strategy for 2023/24

42. The TMS for 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the council on 21 February 2023. It sets out the Council's investment priorities as being Security of capital, Liquidity; and Yield.
43. No policy changes have been made to the investment strategy, the Council will continue to aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity.

44. This report does not cover the Council's investment strategy in regard to non-financial investments. These investments which include the purchasing of commercial property and lending to third parties were covered under the Non-Financial (Commercial) Investment Strategy published in February 2023 as part of the Budget papers.
45. As part of the new Prudential and Treasury Management codes Councils are now required to review assets held for investment purposes against ongoing borrowing requirements. The code requires Councils to consider disposal of investments to finance borrowing where the sale of an investment is financially viable. The Council has implemented an ongoing a review of its investment property portfolio to determine assets returns and the potential cost of disposal.
46. The Treasury Management Strategy for each financial year is published on the Council's website.
47. As part of the recommendations included in the 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy the Council, has opened a 4th Money Market Fund. A briefing note setting out the selection process and the selected Sterling Liquidity Fund was circulated to the Treasury Committee in April.

Investment Outturn for 2023/24

48. The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Council had no liquidity difficulties.
49. Investment returns picked up throughout the course of 2023/24 as central banks, including the Bank of England, continued to respond to inflationary pressures. Starting in April 2023, Bank Rate moved up in stepped increases of either 0.25% or 0.5% reaching 5.25% in August. By the end of the financial year, no further increases were anticipated. The financial markets had been pricing in a first cut in Bank rate in late summer or early autumn of 2024. This has resulted in significantly higher interest rate returns available for the Council's cash deposits.

Table 11a below shows the interest income for 2023/24 against the 2023/24 budget.

Table 11a Investment Activity 2023/24

	Budget	Actual	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Interest Earned Invested Funds	(4,032)	(5,979)	(1,947)

The Item 8 share of the above £5.979m actual income recharged to the HRA was £2.309m resulting in a net General Fund additional income of £3.670m.

Reserves

50. The Council's cash balances comprise revenue and capital reserves and day to day cash flow monies.

Within the reserve figures below the main reduction year on year was against Useable Capital receipts as £25m was used to reduce the CFR and reduce the MRP charge.

The Council's reserves are shown in the draft 2023/24 statement of accounts and comprise the balances summarised in **Table 11b** below.

Table 11b: Balance Sheet Reserves

	31-Mar-23	31-Mar-24
	£m	£m
General Reserves	8.249	8.249
HRA	46.128	43.086
Earmarked Reserves	19.512	23.112
Useable Capital receipts	95.694	72.606
Capital grants Unapplied	4.249	2.388
Major Repairs Reserve	10.396	13.993
Total	184.228	163.435

* Unaudited figures

51. The Council's year-end balance of cash and short-term investments was £88.746m. These internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 5.44%.
52. The Council is part of a benchmarking group (facilitated by our treasury management advisors, Link Asset Services) across Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire. The table below shows the performance of the Council's investments when compared with this benchmark group, and also when compared with the non-metropolitan districts and all authorities that use Link's benchmarking group facility.

Table 12: Link benchmarking - position at 31 March 2024

	Norwich	Benchmark Group 7 (11)	Non met districts (82)	All authorities (230)
WARoR ¹	5.77%	5.34%	5.19%	5.17%
WA Risk ²	2.37	2.85	2.52	2.53
WAM ³	132	89	70	56
WATT ⁴	230	199	165	133

Source: Link Treasury March 2024

¹ **WARoR** Weighted Average Rate of Return This is the average annualised rate of return weighted by the principal amount in each rate.

² **WA Risk** Weighted Average Credit Risk Number Each institution is assigned a colour corresponding to a suggested duration using Link Asset Services' Suggested Credit Methodology.

³ **WAM** Weighted Average Time to Maturity This is the average time, in days, till the portfolio matures, weighted by principal amount.

⁴ **WATT** Weighted Average Total Time This is the average time, in days, that deposits are lent out for, weighted by principal amount.

53. The council's average investments return (5.77%) is higher when compared with that for the benchmark group (5.34%), the 82 non-met authorities (5.19%) and the population of 230 local authorities (5.17%). The WATT is higher and the

average investment return in 2023/24 is slightly higher than the benchmarking group and the other authorities whilst still allowing the authority to keep council funds readily available to pay make capital programme payments as they fell due.

Treasury Management Activity 2024/25

54. Due to the timings of Committee meetings it is not possible to include a Quarter 1 2024/25 Treasury Management review in this report. The Head of Finance will provide a verbal update at the meeting and include the Quarter 1 reporting along with the mid year review at the Treasury Management Committee meeting on 5th November.
55. As part of the operational delivery of the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) an administration error on table 5.9. As part of the 2023/24 TMS Council agreed an increase in the Money Market overall limit from £25m to £35m. The overall limit of £35m was left unchanged in the 2024/25 TMS. However table 5.9 still reflects the 2022/23 overall limit of £25m. Appendix A shows the current and amended table 5.9.

Consultation

56. The report is the outturn position statement to ensure that the council is kept informed of treasury activity. No additional consultation has been undertaken.

Implications

Financial and Resources

57. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources however it does report on the performance of the council in managing its borrowing and investment resources which have significant financial implications for the council.

Legal

58. The Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual review of its treasury management activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2022/23. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).

Statutory Considerations

Consideration:	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	n/a
Health, Social and Economic Impact	n/a
Crime and Disorder	n/a
Children and Adults Safeguarding	n/a
Environmental Impact	<p>Sustainable investment products are an area of growth in the market. These options will be considered where the investments are in line with approved Treasury Management Strategy.</p> <p>Security, liquidity and yield remain the cornerstones of the council's Treasury Management Strategy, and it is vital that all investments ensure the security of council funds as a priority and remain compatible with the risk appetite of the council and its cash flow requirements.</p>

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Future interest rate changes can offer both opportunity and risk.	Future interest rate changes need to be assessed against the cost of borrowing.	To mitigate the risk, we will continue to work closely with the council's advisors to review interest rate forecasts to assess when we would look to borrow.

Other Options Considered

59. No other options to be considered. The report is to inform council of the treasury activity for the year to 31 March 2024.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

60. To ensure that council are kept informed of treasury activity.

Background papers: None

Appendices: Appendix A

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Appendix A

Extract from the current 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy – table 5.9

Counterparty/Financial instrument	Minimum Long-term Credit Criteria or Equivalent	Specified Investments		Non-specified Investments	
		Maximum duration	Counterparty Limit (£m)	Maximum duration	Counterparty Limit (£m)
DMAF - UK Government	n/a	3 months	£30m	n/a	n/a
UK Government gilts	UK Sovereign rating	12 months	£15m	3 years	£5m
UK Government Treasury bills	UK Sovereign rating	6 months	£10m	n/a	n/a
Money Market Funds - CNAV	AAA	Liquid	£10m per fund £25m overall limit	n/a	n/a
Money MARKET Funds - LVNAV	AAA			n/a	n/a
Money Market Funds - VNAV*	AAA			n/a	n/a
UK Local Authority term deposits (LA)**	n/a	12 months	£13m per LA	5 years	£5m per LA
Term Deposits with UK Building Societies	Assets worth at least £2.5bn but do not meet the minimum Bank/Building Society credit Criteria	12 months	£5m	n/a	n/a
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	AAA	12 months	£20m	2 years	£10m
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	AA+	12 months	£17m	12 months	£5m
	AA				
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	AA-	12 months	£10m	n/a	n/a
	A+				
	A				
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	A-	6 months	£5m	n/a	n/a
The Authority's own banker	A-	12 months	£15m (for day to day operational working capital requirements – not for investment purposes)	Non-specified investment if banker fails to meet the minimum credit criteria	balances will be minimised as far as is possible.
Property Funds	Credit loss analysis, financial and legal due diligence	n/a	n/a	n/a	£5m per fund
Loan Capital and other third party loans including parish councils	Subject to financial & legal due diligence	considered on individual basis	n/a	considered on individual basis	n/a

Proposed amendment to the current 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy – table 5.9

Counterparty/Financial instrument	Minimum Long-term Credit Criteria or Equivalent	Specified Investments		Non-specified Investments	
		Maximum duration	Counterparty Limit (£m)	Maximum duration	Counterparty Limit (£m)
DMAF - UK Government	n/a	3 months	£30m	n/a	n/a
UK Government gilts	UK Sovereign rating	12 months	£15m	3 years	£5m
UK Government Treasury bills	UK Sovereign rating	6 months	£10m	n/a	n/a
Money Market Funds - CNAV	AAA	Liquid	£10m per fund £35m overall limit	n/a	n/a
Money MARKET Funds - LVNAV	AAA			n/a	n/a
Money Market Funds - VNAV*	AAA			n/a	n/a
UK Local Authority term deposits (LA)**	n/a	12 months	£13m per LA	5 years	£5m per LA
Term Deposits with UK Building Societies	Assets worth at least £2.5bn but do not meet the minimum Bank/Building Society credit Criteria	12 months	£5m	n/a	n/a
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	AAA	12 months	£20m	2 years	£10m
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	AA+	12 months	£17m	12 months	£5m
	AA				
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	AA-	12 months	£10m	n/a	n/a
	A+				
	A				
Banks/UK Building Societies (Term deposits, CD, Call & Notice accounts)	A-	6 months	£5m	n/a	n/a
The Authority's own banker	A-	12 months	£15m (for day to day operational working capital requirements – not for investment purposes)	Non-specified investment if banker fails to meet the minimum credit criteria	balances will be minimised as far as is possible.
Property Funds	Credit loss analysis, financial and legal due diligence	n/a	n/a	n/a	£5m per fund
Loan Capital and other third party loans including parish councils	Subject to financial & legal due diligence	considered on individual basis	n/a	considered on individual basis	n/a



Committee name: Council

Committee date: 24/09/2024

Report title: Annual Report of Audit Committee 2023-2024

Chair of Audit Committee Councillor Price

Report from: Executive Director of Resources

Wards: All wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

This report presents the draft Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-24, appended to this report, to Council.

Recommendation:

That the Council adopts the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-24.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- A prosperous Norwich.
- A fairer Norwich.
- A climate responsive Norwich.
- A future-proof Norwich.
- An open and modern council.

This report meets the open and modern council corporate priority.

Report Details

1. On 11 March 2014, the Audit committee resolved to approve new procedures for the audit committee in line with CIPFA guidance. In line with good practice the committee agreed to produce an annual report for council. The Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-24 is the tenth annual report of the committee.
2. The Audit Committee approved the attached report at its meeting on 17 July 2024.
3. The report has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA¹ Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2022 edition).
4. The committee has assessed its compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement as in need of minor improvement and will take actions to improve this during the year. The committee recognises that its terms of reference need to be reviewed to explicitly address the core areas identified in the CIPFA Position Statement.
5. The report includes the report to the committee on its self-assessment exercise and proposed actions for improvement.
6. The report sets out the work of the Audit Committee over the last financial year as set out in the committee's terms of reference.

Conclusion

7. The committee has been effective in undertaking the functions set out in its terms of reference, in accordance with the council's procedure rules and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Consultation

8. This report has been written in consultation with the chair and vice chair of the committee and based on discussions minted at meetings of the committee.

Implications

Financial and Resources

Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and Budget.

9. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources.

Legal

10. The annual report of the committee is considered to be good practice and is reflected in the council's constitution.

¹ CIPFA stands for the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
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Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	None
Health, Social and Economic Impact	None
Crime and Disorder	None
Children and Adults Safeguarding	None
Environmental Impact	None

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Include operational, financial, compliance, security, legal, political or reputational risks to the council	Not applicable	Not applicable

Other Options Considered

11. This report is for information and consolidates information set out in minutes to the Audit Committee meetings held during the 2023-24 Civic Year.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

12. To provide an annual report to council.

Background papers: None


Appendices:

Appended Report: Draft Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-24
Appendix A - Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement
Appendix B – Audit Committee Self-Assessment Exercise
Appendix C – How the committee has fulfilled its terms of reference and key issues escalated in the year

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Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-2024

Introduction

This is the annual report of the Audit Committee and advises the Council of the work of the committee for the period of the 2023-24 Civic Year

Councillor Ben Price

Chair, Audit Committee

Councillor Keith Driver

Vice-chair, Audit Committee

Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Audit Committee for the financial and civic year 2023-24. This report purports to adhere to the guidance set out in the *CIPFA Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police* (2022 edition), to produce annual reports that demonstrate how the committee aligns with recommended practice and follows the CIPFA Position Statement 2022.
2. The committee undertook its third self-assessment exercise on 5 February 2024 facilitated by Teresa Sharman, Head of Internal Audit, and was reported to committee on 19 March 2024.
3. The committee has agreed that its annual report should include:
 - (a) Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022;
 - (b) Results of the annual evaluation, development work undertaken and planned improvements;
 - (c) How it has fulfilled its terms of reference and the key issues escalated in the year.

Section A - Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022

4. The CIPFA Position Statement 2022 represents CIPFA's view on audit committee best practice and principles that local government bodies in the UK should adopt to provide effective audit committee arrangements and meet their statutory responsibilities for governance and internal control arrangements, financial management, financial reporting, and internal audit.
5. The committee has assessed its compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement as in need of minor improvement and will take actions to improve this during the year. The committee recognises that its terms of reference need to be reviewed to explicitly address the core areas identified in the CIPFA Position Statement.
6. Appendix A2 sets out our assessment against current compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022.

Section B - Results of the Annual Evaluation, Development Work Undertaken and Planned Improvements

7. The Head of Internal Audit's report on the self-assessment exercise to committee is attached at Appendix B1. The report provides an explanation of the process that the committee undertook in making its assessment and sets out the results in its Appendix 1.
8. The committee will revisit the evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the committee and progress against actions with a score less than 5 during the 2024-2025 Civic Year during the year. The actions list is included in the work programme report which is a standing item on the agendas for all meetings of the committee.
9. The key actions agreed by the committee are:

- (a) The guidance suggests that audit committees are advisory. The committee has therefore asked for a review of the committee's decision-making powers, so that the committee recommend the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement to full council for approval, instead of making that decision being delegated to the committee.
 - (b) In line with best practice, the committee considers that the terms of reference should be updated to explicitly address the core areas of the CIPFA Position Statement, and include the purpose of the committee.
 - (c) Ensure that the committee's work plan covers the core areas of the CIPFA Position Statement over the year.
 - (d) To ensure the independence of the committee, evaluate the committee's skills and training needs every two years and provide training to address this.
10. An outstanding action from the committee's 2022/23 Self-Assessment is the appointment of a second independent person, with a view to enhancing the committee's skill base and compliance with current best practice. The committee recognises the value of members receiving training and achieving a level or competence and therefore have asked for a review of the use of substitute members.

Section C- How the committee has fulfilled its terms of reference and key issues escalated in the year

- 11. As stated above the committee has asked that its terms of reference are reviewed to explicitly address the core areas in the CIPFA Position Statement. The committee is keen to follow best practice.
- 12. Appendix C1 sets out how the committee has fulfilled its current terms of reference and highlights the key issues escalated in the year.
- 13. The information contained Appendix C1 is drawn from the minutes and reports considered at committee meetings held during the year. Agendas, reports, and minutes for the meetings are available on the [council's website](#).

Conclusion

- 14. The committee has been effective in undertaking the functions set out in the terms of reference in accordance with the council's procedure rules and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 15. The committee recognises that it can improve its impact and effectiveness and will assess this during the year and work towards its identified actions.

Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement

Purpose of the Audit Committee

The CIPFA Position Statement sets out the purpose of an audit committee which is:

“Audit Committees are a key component of an authority’s governance framework. Their purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements. The committee’s role in ensuring that there is sufficient assurance over governance, risk and control gives greater confidence to all those charged with governance that those arrangements are effective. In a local authority the Full Council is the body charged with governance. The Audit Committee may be delegated some governance responsibilities but will be accountable to Full Council. The committee has oversight of both internal and external audit together with the financial and governance reports, helping to ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place for both internal challenge and public accountability.”

Independent and effective model

The CIPFA Position statement states that:

“The audit committee should be established so that it is independent of executive decision making and able to provide objective oversight. It is an advisory committee that has sufficient importance in the authority so that its recommendations and opinions carry weight and have influence with the leadership team and those charged with governance.”

The following is an assessment of our Audit Committee’s performance against the core functions in the Position Statement:

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council’s Position
<p>The committee should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be directly accountable to the authority’s governing body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Audit Committee is authorised by Council to approve the annual statement of accounts, including subsequent amendments on behalf of the council.• It is an independent committee with roles and functions as set out in the council’s constitution.

Audit Committee – Annual Report 2023-2024
Appendix A

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council's Position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In local authorities be independent of both the executive and the scrutiny functions. • Have rights of access to and constructive engagement with other committees/functions, for example scrutiny and service committees, corporate risk management boards and other strategic groups. • Have rights to request reports and seek assurances from relevant officers. • Be of an appropriate size to operate as a cadre of experienced, trained committee members. Large committees should be avoided. <p>The audit committees of local authorities should include co-opted independent members in accordance with the appropriate legislation.</p> <p>Where there is no legislative direction to include co-opted independent members, CIPFA recommends that each authority audit committee should include at least two co-opted independent members to provide appropriate technical expertise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council's constitution, Part 4 Codes and Protocols Access to Information Rules sets out members rights of access to information. • The committee has the right to request additional reports to provide assurance and request the attendance from officers at meetings. • The committee comprises 8 members. In January 2024, following the review of political balance, the committee was increased to 10 members, but members considered that this was too large. • The committee has one Independent Person and is currently in the process of appointing a second independent member, in accordance with best practice.

Core functions

In order to deliver its purpose CIPFA sets out a number of criteria which audit committees should deliver. The following is an assessment of our Audit Committee's performance against the core functions in the Position Statement:

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council's Position
<p>Maintenance of governance, risk and control arrangements</p> <p>Support a comprehensive understanding of governance across the organisation and among all those charged with governance, fulfilling the principles of good governance.</p> <p>Consider the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements. It should understand the risk profile of the organisation and seek assurances that active arrangements are in place on risk related issues, for both the body and its collaborative arrangements.</p> <p>Monitor the effectiveness of the system of internal control, including arrangements for financial management, ensuring value for money, supporting standards and ethics and managing the authority's exposure to the risk of fraud and corruption.</p>	<p>The committee reviews the effectiveness of internal control across the council through its receipt of the Annual Governance Statement and associated action plan, the Code of Corporate Governance, Risk Management reports and the reports of internal audit and external audit.</p> <p>The council's constitution adopted in March 2021, formalised the committee's request to receive a report on the council's risk management policy, strategy and register twice a year. This provides the committee with assurance about the risk appetite of the council and an opportunity to ask questions on the application of scores to risks and raise concerns that the committee may have.</p> <p>Cabinet receives the risk register as part of its quarterly Corporate Assurance Reports. The Audit Committee's responsibilities differs from that of Cabinet members, who are the owners of the risk register. Members of the Audit Committee have an oversight capacity to provide assurance on the governance of risks. To do this the committee needs to be up to date with the council's risk profile and review the effectiveness of risk management options taken and to support good risk management practice. Members of the committee are aware that the risk register is regularly monitored by each</p>

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council's Position
	<p>directorate and the Executive Leadership Team and the process for escalating risks.</p> <p>The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion on the control environment is considered by the committee.</p>
<p>Financial and governance reporting</p> <p>Be satisfied that the authority's accountability statements, including the annual governance statement, properly reflect the risk environment, and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of the authority's objectives.</p> <p>Support the maintenance of effective arrangements for financial reporting and review the statutory statements of accounts and any reports that accompany them.</p>	<p>The AGS is prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) framework. The review of the Code of Corporate Governance is an important part of this process.</p> <p>The committee agrees the AGS, which is signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, at the time that the audited accounts are approved by the committee.</p> <p>The committee reviews the unaudited Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement .</p> <p>The committee is concerned that external audit has not been able to maintain effective arrangements to conduct audits of the statutory statements of accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23. The council's finance team has continued to submit statements in accordance with the statutory timescales, and work with our External Auditors to resolve this issue.</p>

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council's Position
<p>Establishing appropriate and effective arrangements for audit and assurance</p> <p>Consider the arrangements in place to secure adequate assurance across the body's full range of operations and collaborations with other entities.</p> <p>In relation to the authority's internal audit functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee its independence, objectivity, performance and conformance to professional standards. • Support effective arrangements for internal audit. • Promote the effective use of internal audit within the assurance framework. <p>Consider the opinion, reports and recommendations of external audit and inspection agencies and their implications for governance, risk management or control, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by external audit.</p> <p>Contribute to the operation of efficient and effective external audit arrangements, supporting the independence of auditors and promoting audit quality.</p> <p>Support effective relationships between providers of assurance, audit and inspections and the organisation, encouraging openness to challenge, review and accountability.</p>	<p>The committee agrees the Internal Audit Plan and monitors progress against plan at each committee meeting and reviews the recommendations arising from internal audit reviews.</p> <p>The committee receives an annual audit opinion from the Head of Internal Audit.</p> <p>The committee considers reports also from External Audit. There has been no External audit opinion received in the period covered by this report.</p> <p>The Audit Committee was consulted on the arrangements for the procurement and appointment of the External Auditors and appraised of the national position relating to external audits of local authorities. The External Auditors are invited and attend meetings of the committee.</p> <p>This can be evidenced from the minutes of the Audit Committee which demonstrate the breadth of discussion and engagements by committee members and officers.</p>

Audit Committee membership

The CIPFA Position Statement states that:

“To provide the level of expertise and understanding required for the committee, and to have an appropriate level of influence within the authority, the members of the committee will need to be of high calibre. When selecting elected representatives to be on the committee or when co-opting independent members, aptitude should be considered alongside relevant knowledge, skills and experience.”

The following is an assessment of our Audit Committee’s performance against the characteristics of audit committee membership as set out in the Position Statement:

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council’s Position
<p>Characteristics of audit committee membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A membership that is trained to fulfil their role so that members are objective, have an inquiring and independent approach and are knowledgeable.• A membership that promotes good governance principles, identifying ways that better governance arrangements can achieve the organisation’s objectives.• A strong, independently minded chair, displaying a depth of knowledge, skills and interest. There are many personal skills needed to be an effective chair, but key to these are:	<p>The committee comprises 8 members of the council and an Independent Person. The committee regularly conducts a skills audit to ensure that the membership has the necessary skills available and provide opportunities for development. Annual training is provided by an external facilitator. The committee undertakes regular training and briefing sessions.</p> <p>This can be evidenced through the minutes of the Audit Committee which demonstrate the breadth of discussion and challenge where appropriate and engagement by committee members and officers.</p> <p>Councillor Price has chaired the Audit Committee since May 2016, attends the Chairs of Audit Committees Eastern Region and takes every opportunity to attend internal and external training. He is a member of the Green Party.</p>

Audit Committee – Annual Report 2023-2024

Appendix A

[illegible]

Engagement and outputs

The CIPFA Position Statement states that:

“The audit committee should be established and supported to enable it to address the full range of responsibilities within its terms of reference and to generate planned outputs.”

The following is an assessment of our Audit Committee's performance in relation to this section of the Position Statement:

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council's Position
<p>To discharge its responsibilities effectively, the committee should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet regularly, at least four times a year, and have a clear policy on those items to be considered in private and those to be considered in private. • Be able to meet privately and separately with the external auditor and with the head of internal audit. • Include, as regular attendees, the chief finance officer(s), the chief executive, the head of internal audit and the appointed external auditor; other attendees may include the monitoring officer and the head of resources (where such a post exists). These officers should also be able to access the committee members, or the chair, as required. • Have the right to call on any other officers or agencies of the authority as required. 	<p>There were four formal meetings of the committee during the 2022/2023: 23 July 2023 21 November 2023 23 January 2024 19 March 2024, which was adjourned and reconvened on 14 May 2024</p> <p>The committee is due to meet informally with the External Auditor and Head of Internal Audit on 17 September 2024, before the formal committee meeting where the committee will consider the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>In 2023-2024, the committee is currently supported by the key officers as follows: Neville Murton, Interim Chief Finance Officer & S151 officer Alistair Rush, Interim Director of Finance Robert Mayes, Head of Finance, Audit and Risk Teresa Sharman, Head of Internal Audit Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement & Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and members of ELT and Heads of Service also attend meetings as required.</p>

Audit Committee – Annual Report 2023-2024
Appendix A

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council's Position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support transparency, reporting regularly on its work to those charged with governance. • Report annually on how the committee has complied with the position statement , discharged its responsibilities and include an assessment of its performance. The report should be available to the public. 	<p>The committee produces an annual report which is received at full Council.</p>

Impact

The CIPFA Position Statement considers that the impact of an audit committee:

“As a non-executive body, the influence of the audit committee depends not only on the effective performance of its role, but also on its engagement with the leadership team and those charged with governance.”

The following is an assessment of our Audit Committee’s performance in relation to this section of the Position Statement:

CIPFA Position Statement	Norwich City Council's Position
<p>The committee should evaluate its impact and identify areas for improvement.</p>	<p>This is the third year that the committee has conducted a self-assessment exercise.</p> <p>The “Audit Committee Self-Assessment Exercise” (Audit Committee, 19 March 2024), appended to this report at Appendix B , sets out the details of the evaluation and identification of areas for improvement and the action plan to achieve it.</p>



Committee name: Audit

Committee date: 19/03/2024

Report title: Audit Committee Self-Assessment Exercise

Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, Cabinet member for resources

Report from: Head of Internal Audit

Wards: All Wards

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Purpose

This report outlines the results of the self-assessment review completed on 5th February 2024.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

That Members agree the final scores for the first tool assessment, the 'Self-assessment of good practice' attached at **Appendix 1**.

That Members consider whether the second tool assessment, 'Evaluating the effectiveness of the audit committee' attached at **Appendix 2** should also be completed and how they would like this to be done.

That Members review the action plan in **Appendix 3** and consider whether all the improvement actions for scores below 5 have been captured.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report helps to meet all above corporate priorities.

Report details

1. The Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) document on “Audit committees – practical guidance for local authorities and police 2022” sets out the guidance on the function and operation of audit committees. It represents CIPFA’s view of best practice. The guidance states the purpose of an audit committee “is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements.”
2. In 2022 CIPFA updated its advice and guidance for Local Authority Audit Committee’s and a new Audit Committee self-assessment template is now available.
3. Good audit committees are characterised by; objective, independent knowledgeable and properly trained members, a membership that promotes good governance principles, a strong, independently minded chair, an unbiased attitude, the ability to challenge when required.
4. It is good practice for Audit Committee members to review their knowledge and skills – for example, as part of an annual self-assessment process or training needs analysis.
5. In addition, the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards also call for the Audit Committee to assess their remit and effectiveness, in relation to Purpose, Authority and Responsibility, to facilitate the work of this Committee.
6. The guidance provides two tools against which the Committee can assess itself. The first, ‘Self-assessment of good practice’ support an assessment against recommended practice to inform and support the Committee under the areas of ‘purpose and governance’, functions of the Audit Committee’, ‘membership and support’, and ‘effectiveness of the committee’. Scores of 0-5, does not comply / major improvement to fully complies / no further improvement are the available options for the questions.
7. A TEAMs meeting took place on 5th February 2024. Those Members in attendance were asked to discuss the questions within the ‘Self-assessment of good practice’ document and agree scores for the assessment. These scores can be found in Appendix 1. Members are asked to agree the final scores.
8. An action plan has been developed as a result of the self-assessment and is detailed in Appendix 3. Members are asked to consider whether all the improvement actions for scores below 5 have been captured.
9. Members are asked to consider whether the second tool assessment, in Appendix 2, ‘Evaluating the effectiveness of the audit committee’ should also be completed and how they would like this to be done.

Consultation

10. Not applicable for this report.

Implications

Financial and resources

11. There are no specific financial implications from this report.
12. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources.

Legal

13. There are no specific legal implications from this report.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	Not applicable for this report
Health, social and economic impact	Not applicable for this report
Crime and disorder	Not applicable for this report
Children and adults safeguarding	Not applicable for this report
Environmental impact	Not applicable for this report

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
There is a risk that the Audit Committee may not fulfil its role and purpose because an evaluation of itself is not undertaken, and improvements not considered.	The Audit Committee does not fulfil its duties. Poor governance.	Self-assessment exercise added to work programme, and relevant meeting agendas. Members understand importance of the exercise and the need to complete this.

Other options considered

14. Not applicable for this report.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

15. Completion of a self-assessment provides feedback on the effectiveness of the current arrangements and ensures that best practice is followed by the Governance and Audit Committee, and good corporate governance is achieved.

Background papers:

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Self-Assessment of Good Practice (containing scores)

Appendix 2 - Evaluating the effectiveness of the audit committee

Appendix 3 – Action Plan

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‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*			Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement	No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3	5

Audit committee purpose and governance						
1	Does the authority have a dedicated audit committee that is not combined with other functions (eg standards, ethics, scrutiny)?					5
2	Does the audit committee report directly to the governing body (PCC and chief constable/full council/full fire authority, etc)?					5
3	Has the committee maintained its advisory role by not taking on any decision-making powers?				3	
4	Do the terms of reference clearly set out the purpose of the committee in accordance with CIPFA’s 2022 Position Statement?	0				
5	Do all those charged with governance and in leadership roles have a good understanding of the role and purpose of the committee?				3	

‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*				Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement		No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3		5
6	Does the audit committee escalate issues and concerns promptly to those in governance and leadership roles?						5
7	Does the governing body hold the audit committee to account for its performance at least annually?						5
8	Does the committee publish an annual report in accordance with the 2022 guidance, including:						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022 				3		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of the annual evaluation, development work undertaken and planned improvements 				3		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How it has fulfilled its terms of reference and the key issues escalated in the year? 				3		
Functions of the committee							

‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*			Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement	No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3	5

9	Do the committee’s terms of reference explicitly address all the core areas identified in CIPFA’s Position Statement as follows?					
	Governance arrangements			2		
	Risk management arrangements			2		
	Internal control arrangements, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial management Value for money Ethics and standards Counter fraud and corruption 			2		
	Annual governance statement				3	
	Financial reporting				3	
	Assurance framework		1			
	Internal audit				3	

‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*				Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement		No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3		5
	External audit				3		
10	Over the last year, has adequate consideration been given to all core areas?				3		
11	Over the last year, has the committee only considered agenda items that align with its core functions or selected wider functions, as set out in the 2022 guidance?					5	
12	Has the committee met privately with the external auditors and head of internal audit in the last year?		1				
Membership and support							
13	Has the committee been established in accordance with the 2022 guidance as follows?						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separation from executive 					5	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A size that is not unwieldy and avoids use of substitutes 				3		

‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*			Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement	No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3	5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of lay/co-opted independent members in accordance with legislation or CIPFA's recommendation 					5
14	Have all committee members been appointed or selected to ensure a committee membership that is knowledgeable and skilled?				3	
15	Has an evaluation of knowledge, skills and the training needs of the chair and committee members been carried out within the last two years?					5
16	Have regular training and support arrangements been put in place covering the areas set out in the 2022 guidance?				3	
17	Across the committee membership, is there a satisfactory level of knowledge, as set out in the 2022 guidance?				3	

‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*			Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement	No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3	5
18	Is adequate secretariat and administrative support provided to the committee?					5
19	Does the committee have good working relations with key people and organisations, including external audit, internal audit and the CFO?					5
Effectiveness of the committee						
20	Has the committee obtained positive feedback on its performance from those interacting with the committee or relying on its work?		1			
21	Are meetings well chaired, ensuring key agenda items are addressed with a focus on improvement?					5
22	Are meetings effective with a good level of discussion and engagement from all the members?					5

‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*				Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement		No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3		5
23	Has the committee maintained a non-political approach to discussions throughout?						5
24	Does the committee engage with a wide range of leaders and managers, including discussion of audit findings, risks and action plans with the responsible officers?						5
25	Does the committee make recommendations for the improvement of governance, risk and control arrangements?						5
26	Do audit committee recommendations have traction with those in leadership roles?						5
27	Has the committee evaluated whether and how it is adding value to the organisation?				3		
28	Does the committee have an action plan to improve any areas of weakness?						5

‘Self-assessment of good practice’ (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

	Good Practice Questions	Does not comply	Partially complies and extent of improvement needed*			Fully complies
		Major improvement	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Minor improvement	No further improvement
	Weighting of answers	0	1	2	3	5
29	Has this assessment been undertaken collaboratively with the audit committee members?				3	
	Total score					
Maximum possible score						142/200

* Where the committee does not fully comply with an element, three options are available to allow distinctions between aspects that require significant improvement and those only requiring minor changes

‘Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee’- (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

Areas where the audit committee can have impact by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can demonstrate its impact	Key indicators of effective arrangements	Your assessment score (plus any strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions)
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Assessment Key:

5 - Clear evidence is available from a number of sources that the committee is actively supporting the improvement across all aspects of this area. The improvements made are clearly identifiable.

4 - Clear evidence from some sources that the committee is actively and effectively supporting improvement across some aspects of this area.

3 - The committee has had mixed experience in supporting improvement in this area. There is some evidence that demonstrates their impact but there are also significant gaps.

2 - There is some evidence that the committee has supported improvements, but the impact of this support is limited.

1 - no evidence can be found that the audit committee has supported improvements in this area.

Promoting the principles of good governance and their application to decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the development of a local code of governance. Providing a robust review of the AGS and the assurances underpinning it. Supporting reviews/audits of governance arrangements. Participating in self-assessments of governance arrangements. Working with partner audit committees to review governance arrangements in partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected members, the leadership team and senior managers all share a good understanding of governance, including the key principles and local arrangements. Local arrangements for governance have been clearly set out in an up-to-date local code. The authority’s scrutiny arrangements are forward looking and constructive. Appropriate governance arrangements established 	
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‘Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee’- (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

Areas where the audit committee can have impact by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can demonstrate its impact	Key indicators of effective arrangements	Your assessment score (plus any strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions)
		<p>for all collaborations and arm’s-length arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The head of internal audit’s annual opinion on governance is satisfactory (or similar wording). 	
<p>Contributing to the development of an effective control environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging ownership of the internal control framework by appropriate managers. • Actively monitoring the implementation of recommendations from auditors. • Raising significant concerns over controls with appropriate senior managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The head of internal audit’s annual opinion over internal control is that arrangements are satisfactory. • Assessments against control frameworks such as CIPFA’s FM Code have been completed and a high level of compliance identified. • Control frameworks are in place and operating effectively for key control areas – for example, information security or procurement 	

‘Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee’- (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

Areas where the audit committee can have impact by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can demonstrate its impact	Key indicators of effective arrangements	Your assessment score (plus any strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions)
Supporting the establishment of arrangements for the governance of risk and for effective arrangements to manage risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing risk management arrangements and their effectiveness, eg risk management maturity or benchmarking. • Monitoring improvements to risk management. • Reviewing accountability of risk owners for major/ strategic risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust process for managing risk is evidenced by independent assurance from internal audit or external review 	
Advising on the adequacy of the assurance framework and considering whether assurance is deployed efficiently and effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the adequacy of the leadership team’s assurance framework. • Specifying the committee’s assurance needs, identifying gaps or overlaps in assurance. • Seeking to streamline assurance gathering and reporting. • Reviewing the effectiveness of assurance providers, eg internal audit, risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority’s leadership team have defined an appropriate framework of assurance, including core arrangements, major service areas and collaborations and external bodies 	

‘Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee’- (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

Areas where the audit committee can have impact by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can demonstrate its impact	Key indicators of effective arrangements	Your assessment score (plus any strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions)
Supporting effective external audit, with a focus on high quality and timely audit work.	<p>management, external audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and supporting external audit arrangements with focus on independence and quality. • Providing good engagement on external audit plans and reports. • Supporting the implementation of audit recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of liaison between external audit and the authority is satisfactory. • The auditors deliver in accordance with their audit plan and any amendments are well explained. • An audit of high quality is delivered 	
Supporting the quality of the internal audit activity, in particular underpinning its organisational independence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the audit charter and functional reporting arrangements. • Assessing the effectiveness of internal audit arrangements, providing constructive challenge and supporting improvements. • Actively supporting the quality assurance and improvement programme of internal audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit that is in conformance with PSIAS and LGAN (as evidenced by the most recent external assessment and an annual self-assessment). • The head of internal audit and the organisation operate in accordance with the principles of the CIPFA <u>Statement on the Role of the Head of</u> 	

‘Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee’- (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

Areas where the audit committee can have impact by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can demonstrate its impact	Key indicators of effective arrangements	Your assessment score (plus any strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions)
Aiding the achievement of the authority’s goals and objectives by helping to ensure appropriate governance, risk, control and assurance arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing how the governance arrangements support the achievement of sustainable outcomes. • Reviewing major projects and programmes to ensure that governance and assurance arrangements are in place. • Reviewing the effectiveness of performance management arrangements 	<p><u>Internal Audit</u> (2019).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection reports indicate that arrangements are appropriate to support the achievement of service objectives. • The authority’s arrangements to review and assess performance are satisfactory 	
Supporting the development of robust arrangements for ensuring value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that assurance on value-for-money arrangements is included in the assurances received by the audit committee. • Considering how performance in value for money is evaluated as part of the AGS. • Following up issues raised by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External audit’s assessments of arrangements to support best value are satisfactory 	

‘Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee’- (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

Areas where the audit committee can have impact by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can demonstrate its impact	Key indicators of effective arrangements	Your assessment score (plus any strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions)
	external audit in their value-for-money work.		
Helping the authority to implement the values of good governance, including effective arrangements for countering fraud and corruption risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing arrangements against the standards set out in the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014). • Reviewing fraud risks and the effectiveness of the organisation’s strategy to address those risks. • Assessing the effectiveness of ethical governance arrangements for both staff and governors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good ethical standards are maintained by both elected representatives and officers. This is evidenced by robust assurance over culture, ethics and counter fraud arrangements). 	
Promoting effective public reporting to the authority’s stakeholders and local community and measures to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with key members/ the PCC and chief constable to improve their understanding of the AGS and their contribution to it. • Improving how the authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority meets the statutory deadlines for financial reporting with accounts for audit of an appropriate quality. • The external auditor 	

‘Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the audit committee’- (CIPFA – Practical Guidance for LAs and Police 2022)

Areas where the audit committee can have impact by supporting improvement	Examples of how the audit committee can demonstrate its impact	Key indicators of effective arrangements	Your assessment score (plus any strengths, weaknesses and proposed actions)
improve transparency and accountability	<p>discharges its responsibilities for public reporting – for example, better targeting the audience and use of plain English.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing whether decision making through partnership organisations remains transparent and publicly accessible and encourages greater transparency. • Publishing an annual report from the committee 	<p>completed the audit of the financial statements with minimal adjustments and an unqualified opinion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority has published its financial statements and AGS in accordance with statutory guidelines. • The AGS is underpinned by a robust evaluation and is an accurate assessment of the adequacy of governance arrangements 	

Action Plan

Action	Owner	Date for completion	Progress
1. Review the decision-making powers of Audit Committee with Cabinet with a view to the Audit Committee recommending the AGS and Financial Statements to Full Council for approval. (Q3)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer	July 2024	
2. Update the Audit Committee's terms of reference to include the purpose of the Audit Committee. (Q4)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer	July 24	
3. For the next annual report of the Audit Committee ensure the following are included: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement 2022 • Results of the annual evaluation, development work undertaken and planned improvements 	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer	July 2024	

Action Plan

Action	Owner	Date for completion	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How it has fulfilled its terms of reference and the key issues escalated in the year. (Q8) 			
4. Update the Audit Committee's terms of reference to explicitly address all the core areas identified in CIPFA's Position Statement. (Q9)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer Jackie Rodgers	July 2024	
5. Ensure that Audit Committee's agenda covers all of the core areas in its terms of reference over the year. (Q10)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer Section 151 Officer Chair and members of the Committee	2024/25	
6. Audit Committee to meet privately with the external auditors and head of internal audit each year. (Q12)	Audit Chair and audit Committee members	During 2024/25	Proposed that this will take place
7. Audit Committee to consider whether the use of substitutes should continue. (Q13)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer	July 2024	

Action Plan

Action	Owner	Date for completion	Progress
8. Audit Committee members to undertake an evaluation of their knowledge, skills and training needs every two years. (Q15)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer	To do in 2024/25	
9. As a result of the evaluation in 7 above, arrange training to address training needs of Audit Committee Members. (Q16)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer		
10. As a result of 7 above, if training cannot address any skills or knowledge gaps to a satisfactory level, consider revising the membership of the Audit Committee to address this. (Q14 & Q17)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair and Group Leaders	2024/25 – if necessary	
11. Obtain feedback on Audit Committee's performance from those interacting with the committee or relying on its work. (Q20)	Sameera Khan, Interim Head of Legal and Procurement / Monitoring Officer	By end of Oct 24.	

Action Plan

Action	Owner	Date for completion	Progress
12. Evaluate whether and how the Audit Committee is adding value to the Council by completing the 2 nd CIPFA assessment tool, 'evaluating effectiveness of the audit committee' (Q27)	Teresa Sharman, Head of Internal Audit to facilitate a session	By end of Oct 24	
13. Review results of Self-Assessment of Good Practice exercise at a committee meeting. (Q29)	Is on the agenda	March 24	
14. Ensure all Members participate in the 2 nd CIPFA assessment tool, 'evaluating effectiveness of the audit committee' exercise. (Q29)	Audit Chair	When the exercise is scheduled	

How the committee has fulfilled its terms of reference and key issues escalated in the year

Report to full council on the committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference and effectiveness of the committee in meeting its purpose.¹

1. This report covers the work of the Audit Committee for the financial and civic year 2023-24 and will be presented at Council in September 2024. The production of an annual report by the committee is considered good practice.

Review the effectiveness of internal control across the council and the adequacy of actions taken to address any weaknesses or control failures.

2. The committee reviews the effectiveness of internal control across the council through its receipt of the Annual Governance Statement and associated action plan, the Code of Corporate Governance, Risk Management reports and the reports of internal audit and external audit.
3. The Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion (Audit Committee, 11 July 2023) sets out the work undertaken by Internal Audit during the year 2022/23. The level of assurance

Review, consider and agree the Annual Governance Statement, including the adequacy of the corporate governance framework and improvement action plan contained within it.

4. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires the council to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). It summarises the extent to which the council complies with its Code of Corporate Governance and details, as appropriate, any significant actions needed to improve the governance arrangements in the year ahead. It provides a public facing statement on how well the council has delivered on governance over the course of the previous year and accompanies the Statement of Accounts (Soa).
5. The committee considered the Draft Annual Statement 2022/23 at its meetings in July 2023 and November 2023 which enabled a full discussion and comment before the committee endorsed it.
6. On 11 July 2023, the Head of Internal Audit presented the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion 2022/23. This was the first year that Eastern Internal Audit Services (EIAS) had provided internal audit services to the council. The Head of Internal Audit awarded a reasonable level of assurance to the council.

Consider the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's arrangements for the identification and management of the organisation's business risks, including the risk management policy, strategy, and risk register.

¹ Taken from the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference, Norwich City Council Constitution

7. The committee considered the Corporate Risk Register at its meetings on 21 November 2023 and 19 March 2024.

Receive and consider regular reports at least twice a year on the risk environment, corporate risk register and associated management actions.

8. Members were concerned that actions to mitigate risks had been omitted from the report to the November meeting, which was partially addressed in the subsequent report.
9. The committee had considerable discussion on the risk register at its meeting on 19 March 2024, resulting in a set of recommendations for the executive leadership team to consider. The committee considered that inherent risk scores should be included on the Corporate Risk Register and that consideration should be made to the use of specialist software for risk management. Members have also been advised that the council is in the process of reviewing the corporate risk management approach and risk appetite.

Review and ensure the adequacy of the anti-fraud and corruption policy and strategy and the effectiveness of their application.

10. The committee received an Annual Report on Counter Fraud Arrangements (July 2023) and considers the Internal Audit progress report at every meeting. Members have received confirmation that Counter Fraud and Whistleblowing policies will be reviewed during 2024-2025.

Review and ensure that adequate arrangements are established and operating to deal with situations of suspected or actual fraud and corruption.

11. Members requested a detailed report on an incidence of Fraud Activity (March 2024) and were satisfied that it had been identified during normal processes. The committee however suggested that the council considered using specialist software for electronic signatures to provide further assurance.

Receive periodic updates on improvement actions taken.

12. Work of internal audit is reported to every meeting throughout the year. The reports contain updates on any overdue recommendations with a management response and new implementation dates, going forward.
13. At its meeting on 23 January 2024, the committee noted that there was a need to ensure that actions arising from internal audit reviews over 12 months out of date needed to be closed-off. It was agreed that any manager or head of service with outstanding actions over 12 months by the end of the first quarter in 2024/2025 would be required to attend the July committee to provide an explanation. The committee is grateful to the Head of Finance, Audit and Risk for his work in escalating this to the Executive Leadership Team, and the Head of Internal Audit for their work in clearing this backlog.

Internal and external audit

Approve the internal audit charter.

14. The committee approved the Internal Audit Charter and the Internal Audit Strategy at its meeting on 14 May 2024 (reconvened from 19 March 2024). The Charter is a mandatory document which sets out how Eastern Internal Audit Services (EIAS) will deliver internal audit services to the council, and outlines the internal audit purpose, authority, and responsibilities of the internal auditors. The committee approves the Internal Audit Charter annually.
15. At the reconvened meeting on 14 May 2024, the committee asked that provision to be made in the Charter to include the council's two wholly owned companies, Norwich City Services Limited and Lion Homes (Norwich) Limited.

Approve and monitor delivery of the internal audit strategy.

16. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require that "a relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance".
17. The strategy is a strategic high-level statement on how the internal audit service will be delivered and developed in accordance with the charter and how it links to the organisational objectives and priorities. The strategy includes the annual internal audit work plan, and long-term plan, to provide a rolling programme.
18. The committee approved the Internal Audit Strategy, Strategic Internal Audit Plans 2024/25 to 2026/27, and Annual Internal Audit Plan at its reconvened meeting on 14 May 2025 (19 March 2024).

Consider, endorse, and monitor delivery of the internal audit annual work programme, including any significant in-year changes to the programme or resource requirements.

19. The committee monitors the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan through quarterly progress reports. The progress of the plan is also overseen by the Head of Internal Audit and the S151, and considered by the executive leadership team and heads of service.
20. A protocol is now in place to address the issue of officers not responding to Internal Audit in a timely manner which had caused delays to the internal audit process. Expectations are clearly stated to Heads of Service when the 2024/2025 Internal Audit Plan is circulated.

Ensure adequate resourcing of the internal audit function, approving any significant additional consulting services requested from internal audit not already included in the internal audit annual work programme.

21. The Head of Internal Audit presents any changes to the agreed internal audit work plan to the committee as part of the quarterly progress reports. The three-

year programme allows for the plan to be re-prioritised to provide the assurance needs of the council so that internal audit focuses on the most strategic risks in year and make best use of its resources. The committee is asked to consider if there are any other areas of strategic risk which could form part of the discussion with Executive Leadership Team.

22. Delivery against the Internal Audit Plan is measured by the allocation of days. Members have suggested an alternative way of measuring progress against the plan was by percentages achieved in each quarter which is being considered. The plan is risk based and can be changed if required.

Receive and consider the annual internal audit report and opinion on behalf of the council.

23. The committee received the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion 2022/2023 at its meeting on 11 July 2023. The level of assurance provided by the Head of Internal Audit was reasonable. The report sets out the work undertaken by internal audit during the year 2022/23, including advisory work. This was the first year that Eastern Internal Audit Services (EIAS) had provided services to the council.

Oversee the annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit, to include the performance of the internal audit function, compliance with standards and delivery of improvement actions.

24. The committee reviews and comments on the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion, the Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance, and the quarterly progress reports.
25. Members are aware advised of changes to the Internal Audit Plan and can make recommendations on areas where the committee requires further assurance. The committee has supported officers in ensuring that improvement actions are delivered and to call to management or heads of service where improvements have not been implemented within agreed timescales.

Contribute to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place every five years.

26. Eastern Internal Audit Services (EIAS) was fully assessed by the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors in October 2022. The conclusion of the review was:

“EIAS conforms with the vast majority of the Standards, as well as the Definition, Core Principles and the Code of Ethics, which form the mandatory elements of the PSIAS and the Institute of Internal Auditors’ International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), the globally recognised standard of quality in Internal Auditing”.

27. The next External Quality Assessment is scheduled for October 2027.

Commission work from internal and external audit and consider the resulting reports.

28. The Head of Internal Audit facilitated the committee's self-assessment exercise at an informal meeting in January 2023. The exercise indicates that the committee is acting in line with best practice in most areas and can demonstrate that it is adding value to the council through its role. This exercise is conducted annually, and improvement actions tracked in the committee's workplan.
29. The committee requests reports where it considers further assurance is necessary. Members of the committee were provided with the full internal audit review report for Safeguarding and have requested reports relating to the governance arrangements for Norwich City Services Limited.
30. At its meeting on 21 November 2023, the committee considered a report it had requested "Learning Lessons from Failings in Other Authorities" as it was considered prudent that members were aware of the reasons that had led other councils into financial predicaments.
31. The committee receives twice yearly reports Cyber Security Assurance.

Comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and ensure it gives value for money.

32. Norwich City Council has prepared Statements of Accounts for both 2021/22 and 2022/23 in accordance with the statutory timescales. There is a national situation where there is a backlog of external audits of local authorities' accounts. Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources, our External Auditors have been unable to conduct an audit of these accounts.
33. On 23 January 2024, the External Auditor attended the committee to explain the sector wide situation regarding local government external audits and the proposed actions to move forward to get back on track (Statement of Accounting Policies and State of External Audit, Audit Committee, 23 January 2024). The proposal is that external auditors provide a value for money statement on the accounts that they were unable to audit.
34. The committee held further discussion about the situation at the meeting of the committee at the meeting reconvened from 19 March to 14 May on the "DLUHC Consultation Response – Addressing the Local Audit Backlog in England". This report contains proposals to provide a disclaimer for the years where the accounts have not been audited, to enable external auditors to get back on track for this and future years. Members are concerned about the reputational risk to the council and that despite the accounts being prepared and submitted within statutory deadlines, public perception of the disclaimer would lead to unfair assumptions based on the financial failures of other councils. Members are also concerned that a lack of external validation of the accounts creates a risk.
35. There is effective communication between the external audit team and the council's finance team to ensure a smooth audit. The committee values the assurance provided by an independent external audit.

Ensure that there are effective relationships between external and internal audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted.

- 36. The committee is satisfied that the relationship between external and internal audit is effective and that audits are conducted in accordance with the relevant requirements.
- 37. The committee will meet independently with the Head of Internal Audit and the External Auditor on 17 September 2024 in line with CIPFA best practice.

Seek assurance that action has been taken to implement the recommendations arising from the findings of significant audit and inspection work.

- 38. Actions arising from internal and external audit reviews are followed up as part of the AGS and internal audit plans.
- 39. The committee monitors actions through the internal audit quarterly reports.

Statement of Accounts

Discuss the annual audit plan for the audit of the financial statements with external audit.

- 40. There was no external audit plan received in the period covered by the report.

Consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the report to those charged with governance.

- 41. The council has not received an External Auditors' Annual Letter or audit results report during the period covered by this report.
- 42. The chair responded to a letter from the External Auditor regarding the committee's understanding of the governance arrangements of the council.

Review and approve the annual statement of accounts, including subsequent amendments on behalf of the council.

- 43. The committee considered the unaudited Annual Statement of Accounts 2022/23 at its meetings on 11 July 2024 and 21 November 2023. There is no requirement for the committee to approve the unaudited accounts, but this gives an opportunity for members to understand the process. Members also attended an informal briefing in September. It was noted that the accounts demonstrate prudent, financial-management and accountancy and a good level of reserves.
- 44. The financial statements for 2021/22 and 2022/23 have not been audited. Members acknowledge that external validation is important to our residents and council taxpayers.

Referral Powers and Accountability Arrangements

Make recommendations for due consideration on all matters described above.

Report to those charged with governance on the committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit functions.

45. The committee's discussions and recommendations relating to the effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit, are recorded in the minutes of the meetings. Where appropriate the committee's recommendations on any of these matters are referred to Cabinet or the Chief Finance Officer, as set out in the terms of reference. Meetings are attended by the key officers and other members of the executive leadership team and senior managers, internal and external audit, who contribute to the discussions and are accountable for ensuring that the committee's recommendations are given consideration.
46. The chair and vice chair meet with the key officers to discuss agenda items and the committee's work plan. The Work Programme is a standing item on agendas and considered at each meeting of the committee.
47. The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council (formerly resources) also attends all meetings of the audit committee.

Committee Name: Council

Committee Date: 24/09/2024

Report Title: Appointments of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2024-25

Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, Cabinet member for an open and modern council

Report from: Executive Director of Resources

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To consider appointments to outside bodies for the 2024-25 Civic Year.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council:

- 1) Approve the appointments to non-executive outside bodies for 2024-25, as set out in appendix A to this report; and
- 2) Delegate to the Head of Legal and Governance, in consultation with the leaders of the political groups, to make any changes to the appointments arising during the year.

Policy Framework

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- A prosperous Norwich.
- A fairer Norwich.
- A climate responsive Norwich.
- A future-proof Norwich.
- An open and modern council.

This report meets the “An open and modern council” corporate priority.

This report addresses the reserve and strengthen confidence in the Council’s governance framework, providing the foundations for a high performing council that is compliant with its statutory obligations action in the Corporate Plan

Report Details

1. There are many outside bodies to which the Council appoints representatives. The Council is only required to confirm those appointments in relation to non-executive functions, with the Leader nominating appointees to executive functions. A list of nominations for 2024-25 is attached as Appendix A to this report.

Consultation

2. The nominations included within the Appendix were nominated by the administration group. The Leaders of the other Political Groups have been consulted.

Implications

Financial and Resources

3. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or, alternatively, increase income must be made within the context of the Council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and budget.
4. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources.

Legal

5. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	Neutral impact
Health, social and economic impact	Neutral impact
Crime and disorder	Neutral impact
Children and adults safeguarding	Neutral impact
Environmental impact	Neutral impact

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
No risk	No risk	No risk

Other Options Considered

6. No other options were considered.

Reasons for the Decision/Recommendation

7. The Council's Constitution specifies that appointments to outside bodies shall be made by Council where it relates to non-executive functions and by the Leader where it relates to executive functions.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix A – Representation on Outside Bodies 2024-25

Contact Officer:

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If you would like this agenda in an alternative format, such as a larger or smaller font, audio or Braille, or in a different language, please contact the committee officer above.

REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2024-25**Outside bodies**

Organisation	Representation
Broads Authority	Cllr Padda
District Councils Network Assembly	Cllr Stonard
The Forum Trust Limited	Cllr Kidman
Legislator 1656 Limited	Mark Brown
Legislator 1657 Limited	Mark Brown
Lilian Armitage Charity (4 year term of office)	David Fullman (2026) Sally Button (2026) Gail Harris (2026)
Norfolk (Countywide) Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel	This must be the same membership as the Police and Crime Panel
Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Cllr Galvin Cllr Wright (sub) These appointments were made by the scrutiny committee as these must be a member of the scrutiny committee
Inclusive Norwich Partnership	Cllr Giles
Norwich Airport Consultative Committee	Cllr Smith
Norwich Consolidated Charities (4 year term of office)	Cllr Maguire (2027) Laura McCartney-Gray (2028) Jeanne Southgate (2026) Cllr Giles (2028)
Norwich Preservation Trust Limited	Cllr Smith Cllr Champion Cllr Schmierer Cllr Lubbock
Theatre Royal (Norwich) Trust Limited	Cllr Stonard

Appointments by the Cabinet to specific groups (as nominated by the Leader)

Organisation	Representation
Association of Retained Council Housing	Cllr Jones
CNC Building Control Services Board	Cllr Packer
Eastern Procurement Limited	Anthony Wiggins
Greater Norwich Development Partnership	Cllr Stonard Cllr Packer Cllr Kidman
Greater Norwich Growth Board	Cllr Stonard
Integrated Care Partnership	Cllr Giles
Joint Norfolk Waste Partnership	Cllr Hampton
Local Government Association (Norfolk Branch)	Cllr Stonard
Local Government Association – General Assembly	Cllr Stonard
Local Government Information Unit	Cllr Jones
Municipal Bond Agency	Cllr Kendrick
Norfolk Environmental Waste Services (NEWS)	Cllr Hampton
Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board	Cllr Giles
Norfolk Nutrient Mitigation Fund Member Working Group	Cllr Packer
Norfolk Police and Crime Panel	Cllr Mike Sands Cllr Driver(dep) Must be the same as the membership of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Panel
Norwich Business Improvement District Limited	Cllr Kidman
Norwich Climate Commission	Cllr Hampton

APPENDIX A

Organisation	Representation
Norwich Health and Wellbeing Partnership	Cllr Giles
nplaw Board	Cllr Kendrick Emily Yule
Norfolk Parking Partnership	Cllr Hampton
PATROL	Cllr Hampton
Three Score Open Space Management Limited	Cllr Kendrick TBC
Transport for Norwich Steering Group	Cllr Hampton Cllr Kidman
War Memorials Trust	Group Captain Stewart Blackburn Ernie Green Cllr Sands (M) Cllr Kendrick <i>(4 of 7 trustees are council appointments and 3 appointed by trustees)</i>

Motion to: Council

Item 9(a)

24 September 2024

Subject: Get me home safely

Proposer: Councillor Davis

Seconded: Councillor Catt

This Council notes:

- 1) The campaign, initiated by Unite the Union known as 'Get me home safely', with the aim to ensure safe home transport is widely available for workers who work late and unsocial hours, workers who struggle to access and afford for transport at off-peak periods.
- 2) The campaign's call on employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure workers are able to get home safely from work at night in line with the Government's ratification of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (C190).
- 3) Shift work is widespread in many industries, particularly hospitality, as well as health and social care, retail, cleaning, security and portering and can often entail late-night working.
- 4) The hospitality sector, which largely employs women and BAEM workers, is a hot bed for sexual harassment with workers and customers falling victim to sexual predators. Unite the Union research has found that 68% of women working in the sector are habitually witnessing and experience sexual violence and harassment. We are also aware of rising incidents of spiking in bars and clubs.
- 5) Many workers, especially women, Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority (BAEM), LGBT+ and disabled workers are increasingly worried about their safety travelling to and from work at night.
- 6) Only 2% of victims report sexual harassment on public transport.

This Council believes that:

- 1) While employers may feel their duty of care to staff ends when an employee finishes a shift, they also need to take into consideration journeys home, especially during unsocial hours.

- 2) The weakness of enforcement of the law against sexual assault, including up-skirting, on public transport is appalling.
- 3) Greater numbers of trained staff and stronger enforcement of the law against sexual assault and harassment on public transport are urgently needed.
- 4) Such a move would significantly benefit the safety and wellbeing of hospitality workers, particularly women, who often cannot afford, or access, safe transport options late at night and will also benefit our community.
- 5) Unite the Union's Get Me Home Safely campaign, which calls on employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure workers are able to get home safely from work at night, is greatly needed and should be supported.
- 6) Transport operators should take proactive steps to address gender based violence (GBV) on public transport and this should include; compulsory training for transport workers on GBV which includes practical guidance on reporting sexual harassment on public transport; work collectively with the council and Unite to lobby for stronger enforcement of the law against sexual assault and harassment; ensure there is clear and operational CCTV on all forms of public transport and lead by example by introducing safe home policies for transport workers.

This Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Fully support Unite's "Get me Home Safely" campaign.
- 2) Use its powers (where and when possible) – as others have done – to allow our Licensing Committee to include additional criteria when considering late opening applications from licensed premises, encouraging venues to provide free transport home for night shift employees. This will significantly benefit the safety and wellbeing of hospitality workers, particularly women, who often cannot afford, or access, safe transport options late at night and benefit our community.
- 3) Publicly call for improvement to late night and off-peak transport service provision and encourage the County Council to access Government funding specifically to provide extra night services.
- 4) Publicly call for the permanent lowering of fares and oppose any cuts to public transport funding and for our elected Councillors to use their powers and political platforms to achieve this.
- 5) Oppose any cuts to public transport funding and any measures which decrease the travelling safety of women and vulnerable passengers.

- 6) Support calls for the municipal ownership of buses in order to permanently lower prices and improve service provision, including safety provision, especially for night-time and off-peak services.
- 7) Ask Group Leaders to write to the relevant Government Minister and request that national minimum standards for Hackneys and Private Hire are brought forward in support of this motion and its demands.
- 8) Ask Group Leaders to write to the relevant Government Minister to highlight this Council's support for the Get Me Home Safely campaign and ask for appropriate legislation to be introduced in support of this motion and its demands.

Motion to: Council

Item 9(b)

24 September 2024

Subject: Winter Fuel Payment

Proposer: Councillor Lubbock

Seconded: Councillor Wright

This council notes:

- 1) The recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal Winter Fuel Payments and restrict the eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.
- 2) Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will not receive the payments.
- 3) Across England and Wales the number of people eligible for winter fuel payments will fall by £10m (from £11.4 million to only £1.5 million).
- 4) In Norwich the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 20,016. That means 83.80% of pensioners currently eligible for Winter Fuel Payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.
- 5) The concerning low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them – and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.
- 6) The role the Council has to play to increase the awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.
- 7) The Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

This council believes that:

- 1) The Labour Government has set the Threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for pension credits. This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.

This council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy of linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be

immediately paused and introduce a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments.

- 2) Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the two Members of Parliament for Norwich asking them to give their formal support to halting the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility
- 3) Ask Group Leaders to write a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the Winter Fuel Payment policy to be suspended and reviewed; and
- 4) Urgently commence a significant awareness campaign to maximise uptake of pension. This will include the use of council publications, social media, the Council's website and targeted letters to those who may be eligible.

Motion to: Council

Item 9(c)

24 September 2024

Subject: Child Poverty

Proposer: Councillor Giles

Seconded: Councillor Padda

It was one of the key achievements of the last Labour Government to lift more than 1 million children out of poverty. Official DWP figures released in March estimate there are 4.3 million children in the UK living in relative low income poverty after housing costs, an increase of over 60% on the number when Labour last left office in 2010. A Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report in October last year highlighted over 1 million children experienced destitution in 2022-23, triple the number in 2017. This is a shocking indictment of the previous Conservative Government's record on child poverty.

This Labour-led administration welcomes:

- The new Labour Government's fifth mission, "to break down the barriers to opportunity, for every child at every stage and shatter the class ceiling...and make Britain one of the fairest countries in the OECD". The new Labour Government's Mission Plan includes a commitment to reduce child poverty.
- The first steps the new Labour Government has set out in the King's Speech towards tackling child poverty. Free breakfast clubs in every primary school. Raising family incomes by introducing a Real Living Wage reflecting the cost-of-living. Enhancing families' financial security through a New Deal for Working People, and protecting families privately renting from arbitrary Section 21 evictions.
- The creation and scope of a cross-departmental Government Child Poverty Taskforce to produce a national Child Poverty Strategy.
- The decision as a short-term measure to extend the Household Support Fund for a further six months

This council notes that:

- 1) One of the key priorities in our Community-led Plan is a "Fairer Norwich".
- 2) Our published Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy includes a strong commitment to tackle broader socio-economic inequalities beyond the scope of those protected characteristics we currently have legal obligations towards.

- 3) The Norwich Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2025 prioritises tackling the broader socio-economic determinants of health and reducing health inequalities. As such social and economic wellbeing forms one of three strategic themes, with key workstreams on social mobility and food equity.
- 4) Norwich City Council unanimously passed a motion (Item 12(e)) in January 2024 calling on the then Government to end the two child benefit cap.
- 5) Norwich City Council unanimously passed a separate motion (Item 12(f)) in January 2024 resolving to call on the Government, among other resolutions: to end holiday hunger through permanent provision of free school meals in school holidays; and as a short-term measure in advance of more holistic solutions, provide an adequate level of Discretionary Housing Payment funding to ensure local authorities can support all Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants struggling to pay their rent throughout the entire financial year.
- 6) Norwich City Council passed a third motion in January 2024 asking the City Council to, among other resolutions, collate and produce a report on the poverty premium in Norwich City Council, and commit to monitoring Norwich's Poverty Premium through future annual Equality Information Reports

This council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Work constructively with the Government and its Child Poverty Taskforce, our local MPs, and local partner agencies in achieving the Government's Mission in Norwich to reduce child poverty by delivering the "Fairer Norwich" strand of our Community-led Plan.
- 2) Use the forthcoming procured report from the Norfolk Office of Data Analytics revising Norwich's Reducing Inequality Target Areas as a key holistic evidence base for working with partners on place-based interventions to reduce child poverty.
- 3) Ensure the combating of child poverty is a key priority in the emerging Norwich Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and the emerging Norwich Financial Inclusion Action Plan, and continues to be a key priority following a refresh of the Norwich Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- 4) Continue to fund a Financial Inclusion Consortium of advice and advocacy agencies in Norwich.
- 5) Continue to provide a maximum 100% Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 6) Monitor the impact of the poverty premium on families in Norwich through our annual Equality Information Reports, commencing in the 2025-26 EIR.
- 7) Thank City Council officers across service areas and partner agencies for the continued work to support families to mitigate against child poverty.
- 8) Call on the Government's Child Poverty Taskforce to ensure the Local Government Association is a key partner in producing and delivering a national Child Poverty Strategy.

- 9) Call on the Government to ensure that district-level Health and Wellbeing Partnerships receive an adequate level of public health funding to continue funding place-based interventions to combat the broader socio-economic determinants of ill health upstream, including child poverty.
- 10) Call on the Government to work with the Local Government Association on policies to combat poverty premiums facing families as part of the Government's commitment to produce a national Financial Inclusion Strategy.

Motion to: Council

Item 9(d)

24 September 2024

Subject: Preventing the deaths during extreme weather of people experiencing homelessness

Proposer: Councillor Hoechner

Seconded: Councillor Catt

In December 2023, it was reported in The Guardian that refugees experiencing homelessness were being refused accommodation and left in the freezing cold in Norwich, calling into question our status as a City of Sanctuary. The article talked about a concerning 'new tone of indifference towards young homeless people' that needs to be addressed urgently to prevent such cruelty from reoccurring and to save lives this winter. Our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is not currently in line with the most recent Homeless Link guidance and this motion seeks to address that. A staggering 1,313 people experiencing homelessness died on the streets of the United Kingdom in 2022 when statistics were last compiled by the 'Dying Homeless Project', representing a steady increase in deaths since 2020. The present motion seeks to ensure that Norwich does not in future become part of this terrifying statistic

This council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Ensure that Norwich City Council's SWEP is brought in line with the Homeless Link SWEP toolkit published in 2023 in preparation for Winter this year, and that it addresses the concerns raised in the media and by advocacy groups last winter, including by:
 - a. Ensuring adequate and appropriate provision to meet the needs of a diverse group of users on every day and night of the week, including by ensuring that sufficient extra capacity is available in case a decision is made not to operate the Winter Night Shelter this winter and by ensuring that shelter can be accessed throughout the night;
 - b. working towards single-room accommodation for everyone in need of shelter
 - c. Ensuring provision is available to everyone, including those outside of usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks, such as those restricted due to immigration status, and including those who have recently become homeless, and not only those considered to be entrenched homeless
 - d. Ensuring that verification of rough sleeping is not used as a barrier to offering SWEP provision

- e. Moving away from the narrow standard three-night criteria for triggering SWEP, whereby SWEP is activated only when three consecutive nights of freezing temperatures are predicted; and instead
 - f. Taking a common-sense approach where SWEP is activated whenever there is likely to be an acute need, even if this is for less than 3 consecutive days, taking into account weather warnings, near-freezing temperatures, rain, snow, wind chill, gales and heat, with a focus on feels-like temperatures, as well as consulting Cold-Health Alerts
 - g. Taking an approach that prioritises risk minimisation where different weather forecasts make different predictions
 - h. Setting out clear timescales for any SWEP activation and establishing actions for agencies to take, such as notifying relevant clients
 - i. Offering homelessness provisions during extreme hot weather, recognising that death rates among homeless people are higher during hot weather than cold weather; including by publishing a list of designated day-time shelters available during periods of extreme heat that provide water, sun hats, sun screen, and other necessities
- 2) Explore the possibility of installing water fountains in central locations such as Norwich Market and Prince of Wales Road to ensure everyone has easy access to water during periods of extreme heat
 - 3) Make detailed information on Norwich City Council's policy on Severe Weather Arrangements available on its website
 - 4) To ensure that information on whether SWEP is/will be activated is easily accessible and swiftly available, through a multitude of channels which could include emails to partner organisations, local media, Council social media, digital displays and a toggle or similar feature on Norwich City Council website so that relevant partner organisations and service users can easily access this information as soon as it becomes available
 - 5) Set out what the capacity is at the Winter Night Shelter, and to record uptake, any excess demand, and the reasons given to clients and/or partners for any potential rejections going forward
 - 6) Develop procedures for liaising with the police whenever SWEP is activated so that the latter directs homeless people towards the relevant provision and shelter
 - 7) Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to express concern about the lack of sufficient long-term government funding for local authority homelessness services and social housing.
 - 8) Write to the Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to express concern about the insufficient provision of care assessments and services for people sleeping rough

- 9) Liaise with Norfolk County Council to ensure care assessments are easily and swiftly accessible for people sleeping rough to facilitate their access to specialist regulated care provision
- 10) Document any cases of death of people presenting as homeless in Norwich, including those in exempt accommodation, recording as a minimum information on the setting, date, cause of death, accommodation type, age, gender, ethnicity and immigration status

Motion to: Council

Item 9(e)

24 September 2024

Subject: Endorsing calls for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Proposer: Councillor Hampton

Seconded: Councillor Stonard

This council notes that:

- 1) The scientific consensus is clear that fossil fuels are primarily responsible for accelerating global climate change
- 2) Norwich, the UK and the entire global community will be impacted by the climate crisis. Vulnerable communities, and those who have contributed the least to climate change, will often be impacted most acutely.
- 3) The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report states that it is unequivocal that climate change has already disrupted human and natural systems, and that societal choices and actions implemented in the next decade will be pivotal when it comes to avoiding the most damaging impacts of the climate crisis.
- 4) The International Energy Agency stated in its May 2021 report "Net Zero by 2050" that to reach that goal there should be no new oil or gas fields, or new coal mines, as of that moment.
- 5) The new Labour government was elected on a manifesto pledging to ban on new oil and gas exploration licenses and increase windfall taxes on North Sea oil and gas producers.
- 6) The Paris Climate Agreement is silent on the supply and production of fossil fuels (the largest source of GHGs. Global governments and the fossil fuel industry are currently planning to produce more than double the amount of coal, oil and gas by 2030 than can be burned if the world is to limit warming to 1.5°C. This will need to be addressed by other means.
- 7) A new global initiative is underway calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty that would plan the end of new fossil fuel exploration and expansion, phase out existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C and accelerate equitable transition plans globally.
- 8) This Treaty has already been endorsed by thirteen nation states, as well as over 100 councils, 3000 organisations and 900,000 individuals.

This council believes that:

- 9) New fossil fuel infrastructure and expanded reliance on fossil fuels exposes communities to untenable risks to public health and safety at the local and global levels.
- 10) The economic opportunities presented by a clean energy transition far outweigh the opportunities presented by an economy supported by expanding fossil fuel use and extraction.
- 11) The transition away from fossil fuels must be a socially, economically and environmentally just one: ensuring benefits are kept in communities, providing opportunities for secure, unionised green jobs and ensuring the cost of living and other crises people face are not exacerbated.
- 12) Norwich City Council has an important role in local decarbonisation, leading by example with its own operations and estate as well as working with partners – including Norwich Climate Commission, anchor institutions, businesses and community networks – on citywide action. But transformative national and international policy change is required to see progress on the scale required.

This council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Formally endorse the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and make that endorsement public.
- 2) Call on the UK government to also endorse the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty; and
- 3) Reaffirm our commitment to rapidly decarbonising our economy at a local and national level.