

Council
24 January 2017

Questions to cabinet members or chairs of committees

Question 1

Councillor Beth Jones to ask the deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for council housing the following question:

“Can the cabinet member for council housing comment on the actions that have and will continue to be taken by the council to ensure no one is left sleeping rough during freezing conditions? How can members of the public notify the council of people rough sleeping?”

Councillor Gail Harris, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for council housing’s response:

“We believe the most effective way to deal with homelessness is to prevent it from happening and we place great emphasis on this approach through the provision of specialist housing advice and assistance to all those facing homelessness or in housing difficulty in the city.

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

Our approach has been recognised as best practice and a recent peer review of our service, carried out as part of our application for DCLG gold standard recognition, reinforced this. It praised the high quality, accessibility and effectiveness of the housing options department in preventing homelessness in Norwich.

As well as performing our statutory obligations regarding homelessness, we also recognise Norwich, as the centre of a wide rural area, is a magnet for those facing homelessness or rough sleeping in the region. We are committed to preventing rough sleeping and dedicate significant resources throughout the year to preventing homelessness, as well as providing support to anyone who finds themselves on the street. This includes the employment of a specialist rough-sleeper co-ordinator to provide intensive support and assistance to rough sleepers, the funding of hostel and supported accommodation, reconnection to home areas, and provision of night-time outreach support through our partners at St Martins Housing Trust.

I am aware of the public interest in this issue caused by the increased visibility of rough sleepers and begging in the city centre. To be clear, assistance is available to rough sleepers in Norwich but, crucially, we are unable to force people to accept it. There are some who choose to refuse our offers of accommodation and support and don’t engage with services and do not wish to change their lifestyles. As you would expect, there may be some reluctance among those who do not wish to engage to be honest with members of the public about this choice. Naturally, we will do all we can

to help these clients. However, unless they are prepared to work with us, there is little we can do.

It may also be of note that a number of individuals who are visible on the streets are already receiving support and accommodation in one of the 320 hostel beds in the city. These clients may choose to beg in order to top-up their income or fund substance misuse.

As temperatures drop, we are eager to ensure no one sleeping rough in Norwich is left out in the cold via our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).

SWEP enables anyone sleeping rough in Norwich to access emergency accommodation and support during periods of exceptionally cold weather. It is activated when a temperature of zero degrees Celsius or lower is forecast for three consecutive nights. When this happens, the council's rough sleeping coordinator liaises with outreach staff and partner agencies to provide emergency accommodation for everyone that needs it.

Already this winter we have offered SWEP accommodation to a total of 27 people who are either entrenched or intermittent rough sleepers.

In these extreme weather conditions, it is more vital than ever that people take the help on offer, but disappointingly this is not always the case. More than half of the rough sleepers offered accommodation either refused it, or failed to use it. We continue to look at ways of encouraging these individuals to engage with the council and accept the help that we and our partners can provide.

In the meantime, we are keen to assist all rough sleepers and urge anyone requiring immediate assistance with finding emergency accommodation to contact the council on 0344 980 33 33. This number also provides out of hours support.

I would urge members of the public to notify the council of people rough sleeping at any time by emailing roughsleepers@norwich.gov.uk or through the mobile app available through our partners, streetlink.org.uk."

Question 2

Councillor Hugo Malik to ask the leader of the council the following question:

"Can the leader comment on the ongoing efforts being taken to ensure continued access to the popular and historically important Plantation Gardens?"

Councillor Alan Waters, leader of the council's response:

"The Plantation Garden is wonderful asset for the city and I applaud the work of the Plantation Gardens Trust in restoring the garden and ensuring it remains as a place for all to enjoy.

The land forming the gardens is leased by the council to the Trust and I was concerned to hear of the possibility that access might be prevented. As soon

as I heard about the possible closure I met with the Chair of the Trust so he could bring me up to speed with what was happening from his perspective.

The council has also written to the Preachers Charity to inform them of the situation as they own the freehold of the gardens.

We are working hard with the Trust to understand how the issues surrounding the gardens can be collectively solved, and the council is also taking independent legal and engineering advice.

Officers have, quite rightly, spent considerable time working hard to make sure that the gardens remain an asset for all to enjoy.

We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Trust on this matter.”

Question 3

Councillor Charmain Woollard to ask the cabinet member for customer care and leisure the following question:

“I was pleased to see the Norwich Big Switch and Save begin again, offering the chance for Norwich people to reduce their energy bills through collective energy switching. Can the cabinet member comment on how residents can sign up to the scheme and the savings so far achieved since its first launch?”

Councillor Roger Ryan, cabinet member for cabinet member for customer care and leisure’s response:

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

As you have mentioned, the 11th scheme of the Norwich Switch and Save launched on the 6th December and will run until the auction date on the 14th February.

The recent 10th round of our successful scheme delivered an average saving of £220 a year per household. In the last ten tranches overall 19,598 people have registered for the Switch and Save. Norwich has repeatedly had the highest national conversion rates, with over 3000 total switchers.

If all homes took up the offered savings a total of at least £ £3.6 million would be saved on energy bills by Norwich residents

With the recent frosty winter weather we would urge residents to take advantage of the council’s energy savings service. They can register either online by visiting www.bigswitchandsave.co.uk or offline by calling the council switchboard.

In addition to this, the council runs energy advice drop in sessions across the city where residents can come along to register for the switch and save. As well as being offered other energy advice such as help with fuel debt or smart meters.

Norwich City Council always endeavours to engage with fuel poor households to ensure that they are aware of the Switch and Save. This year we have written to residents in fuel poverty enclosed with an energy saving pack which includes a plethora of practical advice about keeping warm this winter.

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

Question 4

Councillor Sally Button to ask the cabinet member for customer care and leisure:

"As one of the ward councillors in Bowthorpe who has closely supported the work of the Friends of West Earlham Woods, I was greatly pleased to learn that the woods had been awarded Local Nature Reserve status. Can the cabinet member for customer care and leisure give his opinions on the benefits and opportunities this status will offer for this valuable and important woodland space?"

Councillor Roger Ryan, cabinet member for customer care and leisure's response:

"The council is very pleased to add West Earlham Woods to its list of designated Local Nature Reserves. There are many benefits that can be derived from being awarded Local Nature Reserve Status including:

- Illustrating the council's commitment to biodiversity conservation
- Providing enhanced legal protection to the site and associated wildlife; as well as meeting the requirements of planning policy DM6 which refers to the protection of local nature reserves
- Raising the profile of the site with the public and potential funding bodies
- Helping to engender community pride and recognising the work the Friends of West Earlham Woods have to done to achieve LNR status and their ongoing interest and commitment in the wood
- Having a site management plan being in place, developed with the Friends of West Earlham Woods and approved by Natural England.

Local Nature Reserve status will provide an opportunity to work with The Friends of West Earlham Woods, to deliver the action plan associated with the site ensuring it is well managed, a pleasant place for residents to visit as well as a haven for wildlife."

Question 5

Councillor Karen Davis to ask the cabinet member for fairness and equality:

"This council has been one of the few remaining councils to offer up to 100% reduction to those who qualify for council tax reduction. Cabinet has recommended that council continues with this as part of the scheme for 2017-18, and this will be debated this evening. This saving, for some of the poorest residents in Norwich, is a vital part of our financial inclusion policy.

Can the cabinet member for fairness and equality update council on the advantages and important difference this scheme offers?"

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

"Primarily the main focus of our Council Tax Reduction Scheme is one of fairness. Our scheme is designed to be accessible and easy to understand thereby encouraging take-up and ease of administration.

Those on the lowest incomes will not pay any council tax at all, hence the '100% reduction'. Other councils have chosen lower levels meaning that regardless of how low your income is you still have to pay something. Some councils for example cap the reduction to 75% meaning that you would still have to pay 25% of the council tax bill.

We grant maximum help to those on the minimum of income and thereby avoid a number of problems noted in other areas regarding debt collection and court action for relatively small amounts of money.

In addition by making the scheme easy to understand people approaching pension age are not discouraged from claiming by the perceived complexity of having different qualifying rules dependent on age. This is ironic as the CTS regulations are supposed to protect pensioner households. This has been highlighted in a number of reports most recently from Citizens Advice in July 2016.

"Analysis by the New Policy Institute shows a clear local link between the level of CTS provided and arrears - councils which kept the old Council Tax Benefit scheme and did not introduce charges for working-age residents saw arrears fall by seven per cent between 2012/13 and 2014/15."

Other councils have also made other amendments to their schemes such as reducing the amount of capital (savings) that is taken in to account before a claimant starts to pay. This council has maintained the savings level allowed at £16,000 in line with national housing benefit regulations.

Welfare reforms have hit our most vulnerable claimants hard. The government turned council tax benefit over from being set nationally to a council tax reduction scheme set locally by each collection authority. At that

time government also reduced funding for the scheme by 10% which has forced some council's to adopt schemes that penalise people on low incomes. We have had to make tough choices and make savings elsewhere to be able to maintain our scheme and this financial pressure remains.

By mainlining a 100% scheme we have protected our working age vulnerable, maintained equality and simplicity for those pension age claimants and not saddled the council with a costly administrative burden chasing small debts from those least able to pay."

Question 6

Councillor Kevin Maguire to ask the deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for housing the following question:

"The issue of energy poverty is a significant concern for many tenants in Wensum Ward. I was therefore pleased to learn that cabinet approved the contract for the awarding of a further sixty thermodynamic hot water systems on council owned homes. This builds on the 198 thermodynamic hot water systems already installed. Can the cabinet member for housing comment on the importance of this scheme in contributing to the council's aim of reducing fuel poverty across the city and in addition, to reducing the risk of tenants falling into arrears due to rising energy costs?"

Councillor Gail Harris, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for council housing's response:

The most widely accepted definition of a fuel poor household is one which needs to spend more than 10 percent of its disposable income to heat the home to an adequate standard of warmth (defined by the World Health Organisation as 21°C in the living room and 18°C in the other occupied rooms).

In Norwich we believe that 17% of households, or nearly 1 in every 5, are experiencing fuel poverty. That equates to a staggering 10,000 households.

Fuel poverty is caused by a combination of factors including:

- low household income
- homes with poor energy efficiency
- under occupancy
- fuel prices.

Increases in fuel costs and other household expenses will inevitably be exacerbating the problems of fuel poverty. The continuing changes to the welfare system are likely to make the situation worse, particularly in the more deprived urban areas like Norwich.

The impacts can be

Worsening health – cold homes can increase the risks of strokes and heart attacks. Cold conditions are also thought to lower resistance to respiratory infections and exacerbate conditions such as asthma.

Excess winter deaths – during the months of December to March the number of deaths recorded (winter deaths) nationally well exceeds the average death rate for the remainder of the year. A significant number of these are thought to be linked to cold conditions particularly amongst older people.

Increased accidents – mobility and dexterity reduce when people are cold which can increase the risk of falls and injury as well as potentially affecting arthritis.

Social exclusion – people can be reluctant to invite friends to their homes when they are cold, which can result in an increased sense of social isolation.

The council has developed a fuel poverty strategy as part of the council wide approach to reducing inequality, which sets out a number key activities and actions the council will raise awareness of fuel poverty and how advice and support can be accessed; ensuring good advice is available for households to ensure they are on the cheapest energy tariffs maximising, their income and are accessing grants that can improve their homes; and working collaboratively with partners to make the best use of resources and to attract further funding to address fuel poverty.

The council has a particularly important role as a landlord to over 15,000 homes in the city where it can support energy efficiency and affordable warmth of council homes through the improvements to the housing stock.

Therefore, energy efficiency isn't just good for the planet it's good for our tenants. The Council has a comprehensive programme of schemes which aim to make council tenants homes more energy efficient which in turn means lower bills for our tenants.

The council has and are continuing to invest in solar power where and when we can; there is a programme of wall and loft insulation throughout the City and we recently announced significant investment in new energy neutral Passivhaus homes. I am also delighted that we are continuing our programme to install thermodynamic systems providing free hot water.

All of these measures reduce energy bills and help tackle the problem of fuel poverty for tenants.

Indeed, we recently received reports of a family of 6 living in Mile Cross who had a thermodynamic hot water system fitted to their 4 bedroom property in 2016. They have commented that they have saved on average £50 per month on their heating and hot water costs following the installation.

Question 7

Councillor Vivien Thomas to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety the following question:

“The issue of prostitution and drug dealing around Rosary Road remain a persistent concern for many living in Thorpe Hamlet. Can the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety update council again on the steps taken to jointly tackle, with the police and other agencies, this problem?”

Councillor Paul Kendrick, cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety’s response:

“The police have recently updated their procedure for dealing with prostitution and that approach is being employed in the Rosary Road area. There is an escalation model whereby sex workers are issued two warnings, before being arrested on the third occasion they are caught. A Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) is then applied for by the Operational Partnership Team (OPT), which prohibits certain behaviour and their presence in specific areas (for example Rosary Road).

There are currently 12 sex workers at various stages of warnings, including two with CBOs pending and the others at earlier stages within the process.

The police are also taking action against men using sex workers in the area and recently five, so called, ‘kerb crawlers’ have been issued with warnings.

It’s also acknowledged that although street prostitution is illegal and is causing disruption and related antisocial behaviour within the community, many of the women involved are vulnerable as a result of substance misuse, exploitation or other issues. As such enforcement isn’t always the most appropriate approach. Police partners are also working closely with the Matrix Project, to offer support for prostitutes to stay safe, to exit prostitution where possible and to access additional health and addiction recovery services.”

Question 8

Councillor David Fullman to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety the following question:

“The issue and concern around drug dealing in my ward has increased in recent weeks. In response I was particularly pleased that the city council and police closed a drug den in Watson Grove, in Mancroft Ward, earlier in the month as part of Operation Gravity. Can the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety reassure members that this joined up approach, working collaboratively with the police and other agencies, will continue as we tackle this problem in Norwich?”

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

"The closure of the property at Watson Grove was an excellent example of direct and effective action, achieved through collaborative working between the police and the council's ABATE and Housing teams.

Considerable challenges remain elsewhere in the city and the council continues to work very closely with the police; sharing information, conducting joint visits, liaising with other agencies and taking legal action where appropriate.

The landscape is complex, with many of the individuals affected being vulnerable to some extent. Each situation is being carefully considered according to the specific factors involved, considering the risk to individuals against the impact on the community.

There are likely to be similar targeted operations in the coming weeks, in which the council will be playing a considerable and ongoing role. The council will continue to work collaboratively with police and other relevant partners, to help ensure the safety of Norwich communities."

Question 9

Councillor Carlo to ask the cabinet member for customer care and leisure the following question:

"Heigham Park is included in Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England. The Register description for Heigham Park includes 'lawn tennis courts'. The park's ten grass courts contribute to the historic character and appearance of Heigham Park. Heigham Park is now the only public park in Norwich with grass courts remaining.

I have been told as a ward councillor that Norwich City Council intends submitting a planning application for converting the lawn courts to floodlit all-weather courts on the grounds that this will improve sports facilities in Norwich. *I am told* that the council is in discussion with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and the council intends submitting a grant application to the LTA to remove the grass courts and the LTA is pushing within the organisation for the application to be successful.

The city council is focusing solely on the sports angle and does not appear to have considered the historic aspect. Heigham Park is a small site (2.5 acres) and the conversion of ten grass courts to floodlit all-weather courts would have a detrimental impact on its historic character. The council has not sought to discuss its proposal with the local community, with ward councillors or with user and heritage bodies. The council has not given the community a chance to consider alternative options to removing the grass courts to save maintenance costs.

Does the cabinet member agree that proper consultation should be undertaken with the community, user and interest groups, including the heritage bodies, before the council submits the planning application and the grant application to the National Lawn Tennis Association?"

Councillor Roger Ryan, cabinet member for customer care and leisure's response:

This project is about improving facilities so more people use them. This council has an excellent track record of making sure, even in the face of government cuts, that our historic parks are well used and maintained.

But we have to move with the times and look for external investment to protect these facilities for generations to come.

Norwich is fortunate to have a number of wonderful historic parks and gardens providing formal and informal leisure opportunities for residents and visitors to Norwich. Over time the needs and use of public spaces change, which in turn requires the services delivered in them to change also.

Following the success of Norwich Parks Tennis programme at Eaton Park the council is investigating opportunities to build on this success with a wider project designed to increase tennis provision within the city that is accessible to all and ensures sustainable provision.

The council in partnership with the LTA is developing a project, to expand Norwich Parks Tennis (NPT) which was introduced successfully at Eaton Park. The project will not only ensure that the opportunity to play tennis at Heigham Park is retained but also:

1. deliver improved courts which are available for use throughout the year rather than just the summer season, including winter evening use and being accessible when the park is closed
2. increase the provision of affordable quality tennis in the city
3. deliver tennis provision on a sustainable basis for the future covering the annual maintenance costs as well as the costs of scheduled court recolouring and lining
4. increase participation in sport and associated health benefits
5. reduce anti-social behaviour and vandalism through increased use and presence of the facilities in the park

Formal consultation on the delivery of the all-weather courts at Heigham Park will be possible, for statutory consultees and residents through the planning application process for which views on the proposals will as always be very welcome."

Question 10

Councillor Martin Schmierer to ask the cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety the following question:

"This council unanimously agreed in September to work towards phasing out single-use plastic bottles, which expend finite natural resources and create unnecessary pollution and huge amounts of non-biodegradable waste. On top of these issues, bottled water is also expensive for the consumer and is often purchased because tap water is unavailable.

A campaign called Refill, established in Bristol in 2015, works by having free and accessible tap water provided in venues across the city centre. Over 200 participating venues such as cafes, bars, restaurants, banks, galleries, museums and other businesses simply promote their participation in this scheme through window stickers and a free app, giving the public access to free tap water across the city.

After its successful pilot in Bristol, Refill is now expanding to other parts of the UK. Will the cabinet member support a Refill scheme in Norwich as part of Norwich City Council's commitment to reducing the use of single-use plastic bottles?"

Councillor Paul Kendrick cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety's response:

Council recently agreed to "ask cabinet to develop a robust strategy to make Norwich City Council a 'single-use-plastic-free' authority by the end of 2017 and encourage the city's institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures".

Officers are exploring ways in which we can support the reduction of single use plastics (SUPs) in council operations, commercial assets and the provision of services. When this work is concluded, the views of Cabinet will be sought on the deliverability and costs of the proposals.

As you will be aware the council continues to face significant financial pressure due to the continual reduction of Government funding. Therefore, any new requests on already stretched budgets will need to balance outcomes against costs and other budget pressures.

However, I am pleased to report that the events team and the Halls already ask traders to use biodegradable plates, cups and cutlery. In addition the bars will take a deposit for all plastic cups to encourage re-use and return. This was implemented a number of years ago and has worked well to date.

In addition the new strategy for the Norwich Market has an objective "To provide a good and safe environment for visitors and increase opportunities for reducing waste and increasing recycling." This will be achieved by "actively working with the market traders to create a 'green market' where waste is minimal and recycling is the norm." Therefore, it may be possible to

encourage tenants of the market to phase out SUP – in the same way the council might with residents by, for example, providing ‘promotional’ material alongside our correspondence with tenants.

In practical terms any changes made are likely to have financial implications. These financial implications would need to be fully understood to enable Cabinet to make an informed decision.

In regards to the refill suggestion I thank you for bringing it to my attention. I have asked our officers to contact them to establish the practicality of Norwich supporting a similar scheme in the future. However, such additional work would be a departure from other priorities which Members may feel is not practical given the budget pressures the council faces.

Question 11

Councillor Tim Jones to ask the following question to the cabinet member for customer care and leisure:

“The leader and other members will have received an email from the Norwich Market Traders Association objecting to the council’s proposal to increase service charges by 42 per cent and rent by as much as 50 per cent for the coming year. The association also states that despite repeated requests, traders have not received service charge accounts for more than a decade, in breach of the terms of their lease.

The market is a vital part of Norwich’s culture and economy. Just last year, the council published its 10-year strategy for the market, which aims to attract new traders and increase occupancy; but the association says the rent and service charge rises will force some stallholders to cease trading.

Would the cabinet member give his view on how hitting traders with such a steep rise in costs will help increase occupancy of market stalls?”

Councillor Roger Ryan, cabinet member for customer care and leisure’s response:

“The adoption of the 10 year strategy for the market last year gave a clear timescale for the rejuvenation of the market. Already in the first year of the strategy we are now seeing a cleaner and tidier market, extensive advertising and publicity and expert advice from a nationally recognised market consultant. In addition the formation of the Norwich Market Traders Association (NMTA) has been welcomed by the council and is providing a much needed forum for issues to be raised by both the NMTA and the council.

This forum has already seen agreement reached on the balance of goods act review which has resulted in new businesses trading from 12 previously vacant stalls and a further 8 new business waiting to begin trading and this demand by new businesses is increasing.

A review of the current rents and service charges applied to the Norwich Market has been undertaken, as it was identified that there were a number of issues requiring addressing:-

- The rent levels and services charges have not been reviewed or changed for almost 10 years.
- The rental/zoning model for the main body of stalls had not been updated for a number of years.
- There were a number of equivalent stalls within the main body, being charged different rates.
- The rental charges had not been reviewed for a number of years.
- The service charges had not been properly accounted for or reviewed, for a number of years.
- There were no formalised incentives for new businesses.

Incentives for new and existing traders, raised by NMTA as a key priority, are currently under consultation with them as part of the overall review of market rents and include:

- 10% reduction in rental charges for each additional stall
- 25% reduction in rent for the first 6 months for any new business coming to the market and operated by a new trader
- 50% reduction in rent for the first 6 months to attract new, younger traders to the market with the potential applicant being supported by a local or national charity/business support group

The discussion document being considered by NMTA details the change of rental levels necessary to address this inequality. As an ongoing consultation the detail of how these changes will be implemented has yet to be agreed. The council would welcome constructive proposals from the NMTA on how best to implement any agreed changes.

In summary within the main body of 180 stalls, although there will be an increase in rent on a few stalls, the vast majority either remain the same or are reduced.

- For 134 stalls rental charges remain the same
- For 16 stalls the rental charges are reduced
- For 30 stalls the rental charges are increased

The above numbers of stalls increasing/decreasing in rental charge relates only to the standard charge for an individual stall. In addition the proposals being considered by the NMTA include discounts where traders have multiple stalls. It has been proposed that these discounts will apply from the 1st April 2017 thereby helping traders with multiple stalls in the short term.

It is important to note that any increase in rental charges will not be implemented until individual releases are renewed. Most stall holders have

at least two years left on their agreements to prepare for the changes whilst still benefitting from the proposed discounts.

It is correct that the service charge accounts have not been provided. The accounts for the past 3 years, pro-rata for this year and projected for 2017-18 have been prepared, and will be provided to the NMTA shortly. The service charge has been heavily subsidised by the council for many years and therefore needs to reflect what is being spent on the market. The current review considers this subsidy along with a number of new projects agreed and suggested by the NMTA in relation to additional cleaning, canopy replacement and maintenance/replacement of lighting. As with the rental charges, the implementation of any agreed increases has yet to be discussed and agreed."

Question 12

Councillor Sandra Bogelein to ask the cabinet member for cabinet member for customer care and leisure the following question:

"Recently I have been working with residents to apply for the parish partnership scheme to raise the kerb on the corner of Hotblack Road and Waterworks Road. We have received a very expensive costing for this work, which was explained by the following reason:

"If we provide a crossing point on the road (ie a dropped kerb) this has to be matched with a suitable dropped kerb on the opposite side otherwise we are encouraging a person into the road without a safe exit. Whilst the existing road layout is unsuitable, we cannot change one side without the other and we could be liable if a visibly impaired person tried to use a new crossing point that was unfit for purpose."

It is very concerning that the city council did the work to raise the kerb on the opposite corner not that long ago, thus directly contravening the policy outlined in this response. This has rendered the intersection doubly unsafe, in that the dropped kerb on the other corner encourages people onto the road without a safe exit as well as being dangerous in relation to cars mounting the kerb. And it seems that now additional money would have to be spent to make that good; money which the council does not have. My phone conversations with officers on this subject have not yielded a satisfactory response, so I am now asking: can the cabinet member please explain how this unsafe situation arose and how the council is planning to resolve it?"

Councillor Roger Ryan, cabinet member for cabinet member for customer care and leisure's response:

Cllr Bogelein is mistaken in her belief that the council has recently raised the kerb on the corner of Hotblack Road and Waterworks Road (i.e. the corner by Jarretts Removals).

The council has fairly recently resurfaced this section footpath and also reset a gully pot. However the kerbs were not affected. There never has been a dropped kerb provided.

It is clearly not a satisfactory situation if we have a pedestrian route without the necessary dropped kerbs to make it easily accessible for vulnerable groups such as wheelchair users or those pushing buggies.

Therefore when the council undertakes new work such as raising a kerb it is obliged to ensure that this is fully compliant to the Disability Discrimination Act. This is why what originally may have seemed to be a minor job of simply raising a kerb on a corner has snowballed, as formal dropped kerbs need to be provided as well.

Such costs are inflated as not only are dropped kerbs required either side of Hotblack Road, they are also required either side of the very closely located vehicle access points into Jarretts Removals Ltd.

Question 13

Councillor James Wright to ask the leader of the council the following question:

"The Prime Minister has recently confirmed what she means by Brexit. With the New Anglia LEP highlighting the importance of Norwich's financial services sector, and our own assessment of the value of growth around the universities and airport (for example), could the leader of the council please outline his view as to how Norwich will be impacted when the UK leaves not only the EU, but also the single market?"

Councillor Alan Waters, leader of the council's response:

Thank you for your timely question on the day that Supreme Court determines whether MPs should be given a vote on Brexit. This is a crystal ball question. Each day highlights some new ramifications about what leaving the EU could mean and it is worth mentioning that the first thing that will happen when article 50 is triggered (a self-imposed timetable by Theresa May at a time when crucial European elections are taking place in France and Germany) is a negotiation over the untangling our EU budget commitments estimated at £20bn + before any discussions take place what kind of relationship we will have with the EU, including market access.

Meanwhile back in Norwich Brexit information is being gathered on a daily basis by the council and other business support organisations to understand general feelings about Brexit within the local business community and any positive or negative impact in order to build a picture of the overall economic effect as the picture unfolds. There are of course winners and losers at the moment, the fall of Sterling is very helpful to manufacturers/exporters but less so to retailers. I have no doubt it will also benefit foreign tourism. This information is being collated at LEP level and fed directly into regular discussions with ministers.

As we know from the media, the unfolding picture and likely impact is far from clear and it will not be possible to accurately predict overall or sectoral impact

whilst negotiations are on-going, indeed the picture will continue to unfold even when these negotiations are complete as the business community will make decisions throughout and after the process – experts talk about a five year window before we understand the full impact.

On a local level there are important steps that any business can take to mitigate against negative impact and this message was the key theme at our Leader's Business Reception on 1 December 2016 – encouraging local employers to monitor likely impact and take action with the support of local intermediaries is a positive step that we can take to protect our local economy.

The risk of inflation and the impact of rising costs on local families is also something that will need to be taken into consideration, especially supporting families who are already struggling to make ends meet.

The KPMG Brexit blog is also a very useful source of up to date information on the unfolding picture:

<https://home.kpmg.com/uk/en/home/insights/2017/01/the-brexit-column--not-a-complete-turkey.html>

It is important that the council provides timely updates on an issue that will dominate domestic politics well into the next decade and will affect all of our lives. Norwich needs to continue to make its voice and views heard to influence a negotiation that has barely begun and whose outcome remains unclear.