



Council

19:30 to 22:30

22 November 2022

Present: Councillors Maguire (Lord Mayor), Ackroyd, Bogelein, Carlo, Catt, Davis, Fulton-McAlister (E), Galvin, Giles, Grahame, Hampton, Harris, Haynes, Huntley, Jones, Kendrick, Kidman, Lubbock, Oliver, Osborn, Peek, Price, Sands (M), Sands (S), Schmierer, Stonard, Stutely, Thomas (Va), Thomas (Vi), Waters, Wright and Young

Apologies: Councillors Brociek-Coulton, Button, Champion, Driver, Everett, Fulton-McAlister (M), Padda

1. Lord Mayor's Announcements

The Lord Mayor welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

The Lord Mayor announced that he had attended the Christmas Light Switch-on (17 November 2022) and that it had been a "pleasure and a joy" to see families enjoying this free event. He took the opportunity to express his gratitude to everyone involved in organising the event.

2. Declarations of interests

Councillor Bogelein declared an other interest in item 11(d) – Motion – Norfolk Climate Change Partnership.

Councillors Lubbock, Galvin, Osborn, and Grahame declared an other interest in item 11(b) – Motion – Sweetbriar Marshes as members/supporters of Norfolk Wild Life Trust.

3. Public questions/petitions

The Lord Mayor announced that three public questions had been received.

Question 1 – Bus Services

The first question was from Mr James Hawketts to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth on Bus Services, as follows:

"Given the city council's involvement in the Transport for Norwich scheme, its interest in promoting low-carbon transport solutions to reduce car usage and hit net-zero, and its responsibility to cater for the green infrastructural demands of new developments within the Greater Norwich area, surely, it is

important to hold the county council and the commercial operators to account for their clearly missed commitments on quality service and value for money. To that end, could the cabinet member clarify if there is a level of mis-service at which the current administration would act, or at least call for action, against the operator should they continue to fail on reliability, pricing, or decarbonisation of their fleet, given diminishing public confidence in them, as: timetables appear more and more like suggestions, the night-time student rate has been abolished, and there appears to be little or no presence of electric buses in Norwich.”

Councillor Stonard, the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth’s responded as follows:

“Transportation is a county council responsibility although the city council seeks to work closely with the county both to maximise our influence on strategy development and to ensure effectively of the programmes.

We do not always agree with the county council, as our stance on the Transport for Norwich Strategy and associated Western Link scheme shows, and where this is the case, we do not hesitate to point this out.

However, we do believe it is in the interest of the travelling public of Norwich to co-operate with the county council on bidding for funding to deliver sustainable travel initiatives. We were active participants in formulating the successful Transforming Cities Funding bid and are now active participants in the delivery of the Transport for Norwich programme which has to date delivered sustainable transport schemes totalling £17m which have delivered reduced and more reliable journey times for buses and improved environments for people to walk and cycle.

We have also supported the county and First Buses Limited in their £6.9m zero emission bus bid which was recently approved by government, and which will result in a fleet of 15 wholly electric buses serving the city during 2023 / 24. We continue to work with the county council to identify opportunities to further increase the number of zero emission buses and note that the Bus Service Improvement Plan recently approved for Norfolk outlines a clear commitment to operating greener buses and an aspiration to decarbonise the bus fleet by introducing 100 zero emission buses in Norfolk by 2027.

With regard to improving the standard of public transport services the responsibility sits with the county council. In our response to the consultation on the Local Transport Plan we called for light touch regulation of bus services designed to ensure that core routes have an agreed frequency and capacity of service provided by vehicles that meet high environmental standards in exchange for public investment in infrastructure and the vehicle fleet. The county has recently agreed an Enhanced Partnership with local bus operators, which outlines commitments made to improve public transport in Norfolk. We hope this will result in the improvements we all want to see in combination with investment through their Bus Service Improvement Plan.

With regards low carbon transport more generally, our collaboration with County also includes developing plans to increase Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in high population density parts of the city, with plans now in place to procure a service provider to install circa 50-70 new charge points at numerous locations. We are active participants in county's innovative Zero Emissions Transport City project which is still at an early stage of development.

As far as our actions as the city council are concerned, we are currently reviewing our own fleet with a plan to reduce numbers of vehicles generally and increase the number of EV's over the medium term. We are investing £92k of CIL funds this year to install new EV charging infrastructure in our car parks and will produce an EV Charging Strategy for non-highways opportunities, next financial year. And finally, we will support NCSL, as part of their upcoming carbon reduction planning exercise, to reduce emissions generally, including transport emissions."

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hawketts referred to response to a Freedom of Information request which stated that 20 per cent of buses were either earlier or later than the scheduled timetable; and asked the cabinet member if he considered that this was an acceptable service and was the council being held back in this matter from the county council. Councillor Stonard reiterated that the county council was accountable for bus services and that it would be more appropriate to address the question there. The city council had worked hard to support the introduction of a wide range of initiatives to reduce carbon emissions from vehicles and progress was being made.

Question 2 – Plant-based catering only at council events

The second question was from Miss Lucia Alexander to the leader of the council, regarding plant-based food, as follows:

"Our question relates to the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity at the heart of governance including the provision of food. Other councils, for example, Oxfordshire, Cambridge City, and Lewisham Borough have committed to serving only plant-based food at their events, and I'd like Norwich City Council to do the same.

We are currently in a cost-of-living crisis and whole food plant-based meals are considerably cheaper. By doing the right thing for the planet, and promoting eating for good health, the council can also save money by serving more plant-based foods. We can and must move away from meat and dairy, towards climate-friendly eating, and I believe councils can lead the way with this.

Given the climate emergency and Norwich City Council's stated aim to reduce their emissions, will Norwich City Council consider committing to serving fully plant-based fare at all future catered events as other councils have done?"

Councillor Waters, the leader of the council responded as follows

"Norwich City Council has been clear in acknowledging the urgent need to address the twin climate and biodiversity crises, having announced a climate and

environmental emergency in September 2019. Our recently adopted Biodiversity Strategy is one example of our ambitious response and includes objectives around food production: we also provide ongoing support to community groups adopting land for this purpose. A communications and engagement plan is under development to support delivery of this strategy, and will include opportunities to engage people in the actions they can take to reduce their impact on the environment.

The council recognises the various benefits of a plant-based diet, which gives me the opportunity to recognise the critical, world-leading work being undertaken at Norwich Research Park to explore how we can improve food sustainability, security and resilience on a global basis.

The city council rarely provides catering for events. Our catering choices are informed by various objectives, including support for local social enterprises such as the Feed who are working to reduce poverty in the city. At any catered event we ensure that there is a choice of menus, including vegetarian and vegan options.

I was so intrigued by your question that I rang the leader of Cambridge City Council where they have won awards for sustainability. The council are exploring options for their catered city council events (the council's Annual General Meeting). These possible options include fully plant-based or having at least one plant-based option. As part of this exploration, they noted that proper research is required including ensuring that any catering procured is properly sustainable: not, for example, just factory produced food with a higher carbon footprint than locally sourced meat or cheese."

Miss Alexander asked whether there was a timeline for the introduction of fully plant-based catering at council events. Councillor Waters replied that this was a good question but that the first step was to ensure that choices including vegetarian and vegan options were available. The council did not have a timeline for introducing fully plant-based catering at council events. Miss Alexander had raised an important issue which was reflected in the council's Environmental and Biodiversity strategies and that the council was actively engaged in this issue.

Question 3 – Compulsory Purchase Orders/Earl of Leicester Public House site

The third question was from Ms Laura McCartney-Gray to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth, regarding a compulsory purchase order, as follows:

"The community around Dereham and Bowthorpe Road have long had to put up with the impact of land banking where the former Earl of Leicester Pub once stood. Can the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth comment on the steps this Labour led city council will take to implement a Compulsory Purchase Notice to address this issue once and for all?"

Councillor Stonard, the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth's responded as follows:

“In 2020 the council acquired the site of another former pub (the Kings Arms on Mile Cross Road) through the Compulsory Purchase process. The site had lain derelict for a number of years, had become an eyesore and a magnet for anti-social behaviour. Following the purchase by the council the site is now occupied by five houses for social rent which have recently been completed. In 2021 the council received funding through the Towns Fund for its Revolving Fund, which has the objective of bringing forward several more derelict, vacant and unused sites to improve local environments and bring forward much needed new housing.

Work on the Revolving Fund is continuing. Offers have now been made to purchase a number of sites. Where these are rejected and the owner is not able to demonstrate how they will bring the site forward for development we will use our statutory powers to compulsorily purchase them to ensure they can be beneficially redeveloped.

The site of the former Earl of Leicester pub at 238A Dereham Road is clearly a strong candidate for use of the revolving fund. This site has been derelict for many years, has seen two planning permissions issued since 2007, neither of which has led to redevelopment.

Discussions on the site continue and it is the intention to report progress to cabinet in December and seek approval for using compulsory purchase orders on sites where this is justified.”

Ms McCartney-Gray, as a supplementary question, asked that if a Compulsory Purchase Order was made, how soon would housing be available on the site and how would the community be consulted. Councillor Stonard replied that at its December meeting, cabinet would consider compulsory purchase to enable development on two sites, one of which was the Earl of Leicester public house site. Further discussions with the site owners were ongoing but if these were not successful, then the council would have a mechanism in place to compulsory purchase the site in the new year.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2022.

5. Questions to Cabinet Members

(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.)

The Lord Mayor announced that 20 questions had been received from members of the council to cabinet members, for which notice had been given in accordance with the provisions of the council’s constitution.

The questions are summarised as follows:

- Question 1 Councillor Sands (M) to the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods on support for private renters.
- Question 2 Councillor Sands (S) to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on Capital and Revenue projects in local communities.
- Question 3 Councillor Thomas (Vi) to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on progress of innovative heating system, using water from the River Wensum to heat 85 homes at Barnards Yard.
- Question 4 Councillor Fulton-McAlister (E) to the leader of the council on whether he considered that the government's Autumn Statement would fulfil the needs of the Local Government Association's campaign to "Save Local Services".
- Question 5 Councillor Peek to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on council's investment in play facilities.
- Question 6 Councillor Huntley to the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods on the work being undertaken to ensure the £150 Council Tax Energy rebate payments were made, together with any other discretionary payments that the council had taken.
- Question 7 Councillor Stutely to the cabinet member for community wellbeing on benefits to the city from the Biodiversity Strategy.
- Question 8 Councillor Davis to the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion on the outcomes of the COP 27 and salient points that relate to Norwich.
- Question 9 Councillor Lubbock to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing for an explanation on the work of specialist contractors when they had not been used before in relation to the turnaround of void council properties.
- Question 10 Councillor Galvin to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on the backlog of repairs to council housing and delays of several months to provide homes to residents who were homeless and had been promised one.
- Question 11 Councillor Bogelein to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on the further delay to the planned programme for the installation of secure entry systems to council properties.
- Question 12 Councillor Carlo to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing regarding the removal of asbestos from a council flat.
- Question 13 Councillor Grahame to the leader of the council on the submission of expressions of interest by the county council on multiple sites becoming Investment Zones.

- Question 14 Councillor Young to the cabinet member for wellbeing on the development of a county council policy on parklets.
- Question 15 Councillor Schmierer to the cabinet member for inclusive and sustainable growth, regarding the redevelopment of Anglia Square, on the steps that the council would take to ensure the smooth transition for all small medium enterprises (SMEs) at Anglia Square and Magdalen Street.
- Question 16 Councillor Catt to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on tenant's applications for higher banding and feedback for unsuccessful applicants.
- Question 17 Councillor Haynes to the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing on changes to the housing service where specific officers are no longer allocated to specific areas.
- Question 18 Councillor Osborn to the leader of the council regarding Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) and its carbon reduction plan.
- Question 19 Councillor Ackroyd to the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion regarding what work the council is undertaking in conjunction with various groups, ranging from churches, the voluntary sector, NHS and county council, to establish warm hubs to provide warm places and refreshments for people.

(A second question had been received from Councillor Carlo (Question 20) and included in the list of questions set out in Appendix A to these minutes. As the time taken by questions had exceeded thirty minutes, this second question was not taken at the meeting.)

Councillor Galvin moved and Councillor Bogelein seconded a motion to refer the matters raised in question no 8 (above), together with the supplementary question and the responses from the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion, to the climate and environment emergency executive panel (CEEEP).

On being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED, with 32 members voting in favour, and 6 members abstaining from voting, to refer Councillor Davis's question no 8 (above, and set out in Appendix A, attached to these minutes) together with her supplementary question and the responses from the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion, to the next available meeting of the climate and environment emergency executive panel (CEEEP).

The leader, by way of personal explanation, requested that as a matter of courtesy the proposal to refer a question to the panel should have been discussed with him or the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion before this meeting.

6. Treasury Management Review 2021/2022

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the treasury activity for the year to 31 March 2022.

7. Capital Programme Update

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, with 22 members voting in favour, and 10 members abstaining from voting, to approve:

- (1) the removal of budgets in relation to the Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) Riverside Walk Access Improvements and Community Centre Upgrades shown in Table 1, of the report, totalling £0.172m.
- (2) the removal of budgets from the general fund capital programme set out in Table 1, of the report, totalling £0.015m. (marked as ***);
- (3) the removal of budgets from the housing revenue account capital programme, set out in Table 2 of the report, totalling £3.155;
- (4) an increase to the general fund capital programme, as set out in paragraphs 6 – 9 of the report.

8. Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2021/2022

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to receive the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2021/2022.

9. Interim Polling District and Polling Places Review 2022

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

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to approve the amended polling scheme as recommended by the polling district and places working group at Appendix A (of the report).

10. Establishment of a Friendship Link

Councillor Waters moved and Councillor Sands (M) seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to agree to the establishment of a Friendship Link between Norwich City Council and the Ari-Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, Brazil.

(The Lord Mayor announced that two hours had passed since the commencement of the meeting. In order to debate Motion 11(a), a member opposed it. Members agreed to take agenda items 11(b) to 11(d) as unopposed business. Amendments to Motions 11(b), 11(c) and 11(d) had been received and accepted by the movers of the motions.)

11. Motions

Motion 11(a) Library story time events

Councillor Stonard moved and Councillor Huntley seconded the motion.

Following debate, it was:

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:

“Norwich’s Millennium Library at the Forum recently hosted a ‘Storytime with Auntie Titania’ event for children. This positive, inclusive, and educational event was warmly supported by many residents of Norwich, as children enjoyed being read to in the public space of a library.

Reading aloud to children has proven benefits around improving literary skills, while doing so in a group further benefits social interaction and developmental skills, especially important in children who have lost out on much of this developmental interaction through the experience of government-mandated pandemic restrictions. The story time events teach children a positive message of a supportive, inclusive, diverse, and tolerant community for all.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- (1) affirm support for the continuation of such story time events as a way of promoting positive, inclusive, and non-discriminatory attitudes within the city
- (2) re-affirm the Norwich 2040 vision of celebrating our diverse neighbourhoods and communities; and

- (3) ask the leaders of all groups to write to the relevant Norfolk County Council member expressing the city council's wish for further such events to be held in the city."

Motion 11(b) Sweetbriar Marshes

(Councillors Lubbock, Galvin, Osborn, and Grahame had declared an other interest in this item.)

(This item was taken as unopposed business.)

This motion had been moved by Councillor Lubbock and seconded by Councillor Galvin (and not as stated in the agenda papers.) Councillor Lubbock had indicated that she was willing to accept the amendments which had been received from Councillor Waters and circulated in advance of the meeting:

"Add the words "continue to" before the word "support" in resolution (1).

Replacing the text of resolution (2) with the following: "call on cabinet to consider how to confer appropriate thanks and recognition through consultation with those bodies, individuals and organisations which have supported the River Wensum and its associated marshes, and to celebrate this new nature reserve and its links to the river, demonstrating the city's commitment to natural networks and corridors."

Add the words "continue to" after the words "Work with NWT to" in resolution (3a)

Add the words "continue to" after the words "Work with NWT to" in resolution (3)(c)

Replace the word "Support" with the words "Continue to support" at the start of resolution (3)(d)

Add the word "appropriate" after the words "are given every" in resolution (3)(e)

Add the words "Continue to" at the start of resolution (3)(f)."

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

"Norfolk Wildlife Trust is to create a brand-new nature reserve in the heart of Norwich, a centrepiece for their vision for a Wilder Norwich for All, giving Norwich residents the opportunity to access nature in the heart of their city. Sweet Briar Marshes cover 90 acres along the River Wensum close to the city centre: a rare wild wetland, fenland and woodland habitat, including areas of SSSI and County Wildlife site status.

The project has led to NWT recently achieving its fastest ever appeal - with support from Aviva, charitable trusts and local campaigners and communities - for £600,000, to purchase the land, which shows how highly people value nature. Congratulations to all concerned for this incredible effort.

We call on the city council to:

- (1) acknowledge and continue to support this exciting opportunity, and
- (2) call on cabinet to consider how to confer appropriate thanks and recognition through consultation with those bodies, individuals and organisations which have supported the River Wensum and its associated marshes, and to celebrate this new nature reserve and its links to the river, demonstrating the city's commitment to natural networks and corridors.
- (3) ask cabinet to:
 - (a) Work with NWT to continue to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the site, and encourage and enable communities, including schools, to understand and appreciate its value as habitats for wildlife and experience peaceful enjoyment of nature.
 - (b) Ensure that the River Wensum Strategy Partnership continues to work to protect the river - with a particular new focus on its relationship with the marsh as an intrinsic part of its rich ecology.
 - (c) Work with NWT to continue to review Norwich City Council's land ownership around the site with a view to providing wildlife protection and enhancement, access and appropriate boundaries to the site including maintenance etc.
 - (d) Continue to support and develop future funding bids for the Marshes, for example through the Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS), CIL and other financial or 'in kind' contributions such as NCSL getting involved with volunteering.
 - (e) Ensure Norwich citizens are given every appropriate chance to be part of caring for the area, including supporting council-owned properties and estate e.g., community centres and parks which border the site to play an active role in its management and restoration.
 - (f) Continue to consider how the marshes fit into the natural networks and corridors across the city and facilitate the linkages through the Norwich city council biodiversity strategy also the planning process which provides the opportunity to fill in gaps in the natural networks that connects up with Sweet Briar marshes."

Motion 11(c) Development Management Policies

(This item was taken as unopposed business.)

This motion had been moved by Councillor Bogelein and seconded by Councillor Young. Councillor Bogelein had indicated that she was willing to accept

the amendments which had been received from Councillor Stonard and circulated in advance of the meeting:

“Replace the text in resolution 4 before the list with the following:

“Consult with elected councillors and the public on the content of the revised DM policies plan. The consultation will promote discussion on areas where the policies need to better support the council’s corporate objectives and be fit for the future. The consultation will enable the review of DM policies to be progressed a lot more quickly following the publications to the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The consultation plan will be discussed with the Sustainable Development Panel. The consultation will address issues such as:”

Replace the text after the list in resolution 4 with the following:

“These discussions will review best practice, explore where local members and the local community want to see changes to policies and speed the review of the DM policies plan.”

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

“The Norwich Development Management Policies Local Plan forms an important part of the local planning process which is used to guide and justify planning decisions and also to reject inappropriate planning applications. The Development Management Policies Local Plan was adopted in December 2014. In planning meetings over the last few years, there have been statements by members of the planning committee stating that there is a need to urgently update the DM policies so that they are fit for purpose in the Norwich of the 2020s.

The DM policies provide a crucial lever for the council to ensure the quality and sustainability of the built environment in Norwich. The DM policies should also provide communities with a democratic means of influencing planning for Norwich.

Council notes that:

- (1) currently it is expected that the next review of the DM policies will commence in 2024 following adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan.
- (2) a review of DM policies needs to take account of any changes to the National Planning Framework and policies in the adopted Greater Norwich Local Plan.
- (3) it is desirable for the DM policies to be reviewed as soon as national policies and the adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan allow so that they reflect new evidence, science and challenges.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- (4) Consult with elected councillors and the public on the content of a revised DM policies plan. The consultation will promote discussion on areas where the policies need to better support the council's corporate objectives and be fit for the future. The consultation will enable the review of DM policies to be progressed a lot more quickly following the publication of modifications to the Greater Norwich Local Plan. The consultation plan will be discussed with the Sustainable Development Panel. The consultation will address issues such as:

- (a) Air quality
- (b) Climate adaptation
- (c) Energy efficiency
- (d) Biodiversity Net Gain
- (e) Public health protections
- (f) Water resilience and sustainable drainage
- (g) Quality of amenity
- (h) Active travel
- (i) Heritage
- (j) Gardens
- (k) Good design

These discussions will review best practice, explore where local members and the local community want to see changes to the policies and speed the review of the DM policies plan.

- (5) ask group leaders to write to the government echoing the concerns of the Town and Country Planning Association by seeking to preserve the primacy of the local plan.

Motion 11(d)

(This item was taken as unopposed business.)

(Councillor Boglein had declared an other interest in this item.)

This motion had been moved by Councillor Osborn and seconded by Councillor Galvin (in the absence of Councillor Champion). Councillor Osborn had indicated that he was willing to accept the amendments which had been received from Councillor Waters and circulated in advance of the meeting:

“Inserting the words “continue to” after “need to” in resolution 1)

Inserting the words “due to repeated and sustained cuts in funding from central government” after the words “are over-stretched” in resolution 2)

Inserting the word “continued” after the word “urgent” in resolution 3)

Remove the words “Norwich and” in resolution 4)

Inserting the word “wholly” before the word “inadequate” in resolution 6)

Replacing the word “working” with the words “continuing to work” in resolution 6)

Adding the words “within the reality of ever diminishing resources” before the words “to establish” in resolution 6)

Replacing the words “Call on” with the words “Continue to work within” in resolution 7)

Inserting the words “of all tenures” after the words “housing” in resolution 7)

Inserting the words “and request effective resource from government to facilitate this” at the end of resolution 7)

Inserting the words “continue to” at the start of resolution 8)

Replacing the words “jointly fund” with the words “explore jointly funding” in resolution 8)

Replacing the word “implementation” with the word “coordination” in resolution 8)

Removing the words “Seek the backing of the NCCP to” at the start of resolution 9)

Inserting the words “share with the NCCP a copy of this motion and a copy of the letter written in response to resolution point 9).

RESOLVED, unanimously, that:

“Norwich City Council has set itself a target of reaching net zero carbon emissions across the whole city by 2045. This will only be possible with action from all partners and will require rapid decarbonisation of sectors that contribute the most to emissions in Norwich and Norfolk, namely transport and the built environment.

Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP) is a partnership of the environmental officers of all the district councils in Norfolk and the county council. The NCCP’s officer members report to the portfolio holders’ group of cabinet members with responsibility for climate change at the respective councils.

The NCCP has thus far commissioned a study on the use of hydrogen in refuse collection vehicles, and a study on the opportunities for community energy in Norfolk. The NCCP does not currently have a forward work programme or agreed priorities.

This month, scientists have warned that current policies would lead to a global temperature rise of 2.8C in the next 80 years. And the UN Secretary General António Guterres has warned that humanity must “co-operate or perish”,

saying that under current policies, "we are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator."

Council notes that:

- (1) In order to reduce carbon emissions effectively in Norwich and other parts of Norfolk, district and county councils need to continue work together.
- (2) Members of the NCCP are over-stretched, due to repeated and sustained cuts in funding from central government, and there is a need for a dedicated climate action officer for Norfolk, including Norwich.
- (3) There is an urgent continued need for the NCCP to prioritise the decarbonisation of transport and energy use in buildings to achieve net zero across the county, including in Norwich, as these are the two largest sources of emissions across Norfolk.
- (4) Virtually all housing and transport in Norfolk will need to be brought to zero carbon emissions by 2050 in order to meet net zero targets, as there are other sectors where total decarbonisation is not feasible (e.g. some industry) and therefore the offsetting that is relied on to deliver net zero must be dedicated to offsetting those sectors, not housing or transport.
- (5) Decarbonising housing through insulation and installation of renewable energy brings many other benefits including reduced fuel poverty, greater energy security, more green and decent jobs, and better health outcomes.
- (6) Support from the Government for decarbonisation is wholly inadequate, but this does not prevent councils from continuing to work together, within the reality of ever diminishing resources, to establish strategies, financing mechanisms and delivery models for advancing the decarbonisation of housing and transport.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- (7) Continue to work within the NCCP to establish an evidence-based county-wide climate action plan, covering Norwich and other districts, with buy-in from senior officers and cabinet members with a focus on decarbonising transport and housing of all tenures as the main sources of emissions, and request effective resource from government to facilitate this.
- (8) Continue to work with other districts and the county council to explore jointly funding a climate action officer for the NCCP, who would lead on the design and coordination of the county-wide climate action plan, and who would identify and prepare applications for relevant funding streams; and
- (9) Write to the new Prime Minister, BEIS Secretary, DLUHC Secretary, and DEFRA Secretary calling for a national programme of insulation and renewable energy installation, to be delivered in partnership with local authorities. Share with the NCCP a copy of this motion and a copy of the letter written in response to resolution point 9).

The meeting was closed.

LORD MAYOR

Appendix A

Questions to Cabinet Members

(Questions and answers, including a summary of supplementary questions and the responses.)

Question 1

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

“Last month saw not one but two U-turns on Section 21 evictions, causing untold distress to Britain’s renters together with a failure to inform people what steps they will take to provide additional support for private renters whose rent costs have already gone up 12% on average in the last year, and face even higher rents in the coming year. These risks leave potentially thousands at risk of arrears, eviction, and homelessness. Can the cabinet member for safe, strong and inclusive neighbourhoods comment on whether she has confidence that this government will finally address the concerns of private renters?”

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

“It is now more than three years since the proposal from the government to introduce legislation to protect private renters in the form of the renters reform bill. This has failed to progress into a parliamentary bill as yet, finally being published as a white paper in June 2022.

These protections are crucial to protect an ever expanding sector, with more than a million private renters entering the sector since the conservative government came into power. The ongoing delay continues to leave private renters vulnerable, with close a quarter of a million private tenants having been served notice since the government’s April 2019 announcement that they would bring these reforms forward.

This council continues to take its duty towards private renters with the up most seriousness and will continue to use the available legal powers to drive up standards. But it is only on a national level that the stability and protections that private renters require can be delivered. Although the proposed legislation leaves a number of loopholes and a funding commitment for its enforcement is lacking, this must be urgently progressed by the government.

There is currently no clear road map to progress this legislation or to deliver the very real reforms that this sector and most importantly the residents of Norwich require. I therefore have little confidence that the government will address the concerns of private renters with any urgency.”

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Sands (M) expressed concern about the government’s lack of commitment to help private renters at risk of eviction due to increases in rents. Councillor Jones said that she shared these concerns as

the white paper had not been progressed through Parliament. Increases in inflation had affected private landlords who had passed these increases on to private renters. There needed to be legislation to increase powers to local authorities to protect private renters from eviction. Private rented accommodation was the least energy efficient stock in the city. The council would continue to press government to introduce legislation to protect private tenants.”)

Question 2

Councillor Sue Sands to ask the deputy leader and social housing of the council the following question:

“It is sometimes commented that it is often “the little things in life which all add up” and can make a real difference to the quality of life in communities. It is for this reason that I have long supported, and voted for, the estate aesthetics budget which has made a real difference to providing sometimes small, but important, enhancements. Can the cabinet member for social housing comment on how many schemes have been completed since its inception?”

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

“312 schemes have been completed since inception. The detail is set out below.

Budget Year - 2022-2023

To date, we have completed 66 Capital and Revenue projects during this budget year (from 1 April 2022).

- We have an additional 53 Capital and Revenue projects that are still to be started, but we anticipate that all of these will be completed by the end of the budget year. We receive approximately 15 new projects every month.
- We also have another additional 42 projects being developed for the future. As a consequence, we are confident that the budget will again be spent this year.

Budget Year – 2021-2022

We completed 94 Capital and Revenue projects during the 2021-2022 budget year.

Budget Year – 2020-2021

We completed 55 Capital and Revenue projects during the 2020-2021 budget year.

Budget Year – 2019-2020

We completed 45 Capital and Revenue projects during the 2019-2020 budget year.

Budget Year – 2018-2019

We completed 32 Capital and Revenue projects during the 2018-2019 budget year.

Budget Year – 2017-2018

We completed 27 Capital and Revenue projects during the 2017-2018 budget year.”

(Councillor Sands asked for five examples of recent schemes which had made a difference for residents in those areas. Councillor Harris provided six examples of schemes: drying area resurfacing at Frere Road; new benches and planters at the communal gardens in Brooke Place; implementation of safety measures, including bollards, at Longmead; new picnic bench at Normandie Tower; electric garage door at Brazengate to address antisocial behaviour; and lines to distinguish disabled parking spaces at Whitebeam Court.)

Question 3

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

“I know that delivering practical and positive improvements to tackle the climate crisis and save residents money is crucial given the cost-of-living crisis we now face. Earlier this year work to install an innovative heating system using water from the River Wensum was begun at Barnards Yard aiming to achieve a major reduction in carbon emissions, but also provide hot water to 85 homes. Can the cabinet member for social housing comment on progress with the scheme?”

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

“The scheme is in the commissioning stage. All of the 85 homes have had new hot water and heating systems installed and are currently operating well. Residents have become familiar with a heating system that operates using larger but lower temperature radiators. The instance of resident call outs have almost ceased completely. There are mechanical works to be completed in the plant room with the programme for the completion of this work being early January and the issuing of Practical Completion and Final Handover on 31 January 2023. The final account for the scheme is anticipated to return just below budget (circa £1.825m).”

(In reply to Councillor Thomas’s supplementary question, Councillor Harris said that the scheme’s emissions would be 270 tonnes less carbon dioxide than regular heating systems, equivalent to the carbon absorption of 1300 full mature trees. There were very few schemes like this in the country. The council would consider the use of this technology on a case by case basis. Further funding from the government would be welcomed.)

Question 4

Councillor Erin Fulton-McAlister to ask the leader of the council the following question:

“Research released earlier this month by the trade union Unison (based on data from 391 UK councils) found that almost nine in 10 are predicting a

budget gap in the 2023/24 financial year - with a total shortfall of £3.2bn. In the run up to the Autumn Statement last week the Local Government Association called on the Government to 'Save Local Services' with a campaign to urgently provide financial sustainability and certainty for councils. Will the Leader comment on whether the autumn statement fulfils the needs of this campaign?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"We reviewed our financial planning assumptions earlier this year as part of our preparation for setting the 2023/24 budget; the cabinet received a report in July which highlighted that the impact of inflation and the uncertainty surrounding future government resources suggested a budget gap of £6.2m in 2023/24 and close to £11m over the medium-term planning timeframe. Since that time inflation has continued to rise – with the latest figure for the consumer price index standing at 11.1%. This has put still more pressure on our finances.

On Thursday we heard the government's autumn statement where they confirmed that the country faces a budget shortfall of £55bn and where they announced around £30bn in spending cuts and £25bn in tax rises.

We still await the provisional local government finance settlement which will confirm the position for each local authority but that is unlikely to be produced much before the middle of December and we need to start to make decisions now. For this council our interpretation of the position is mixed – we heard that the total resources for public services over the remaining 2 years of the comprehensive spending review period are unchanged, but we also heard that it is the NHS, Schools and Social Care that are the government's priorities for resources. Whilst it is difficult to disagree with that it is of little comfort as we seek to set a balanced budget for Norwich.

We now know that, for councils like Norwich, the maximum that the council tax can be increased by is 3% rather than the 2% in previous years and that social housing rent increases are to be capped at 7%. These still present us with difficult choices; both are below the current inflationary pressures we are facing and in themselves are inadequate; for example, each additional 1% rise in the council tax raises around £100,000. We also know that even a 7% increase in social rents will not bring average rents back to the level that they would have been before the decision to impose for four years a 1% per annum cash reduction to social rents.

What we do know is that we still need to make reductions to balance the budget in a way that protects those residents most affected by the cost-of-living crisis. We will bring an updated position back to cabinet in December, but it is sufficient to say that we face significant challenges in the years ahead.

In answer to your specific question, the Autumn Statement, is not a solution to the chronic underfunding of local government and the vital services it provides to residents. It compounds the problem."

(Councillor Fulton-McAlister (E) asked a supplementary question about the impact of the Autumn Statement on the city council. Councillor Waters said that the government did not refer to local government in the Autumn Statement. There was a need to reshape the government's narrative and provide a well-funded local government that could support its residents to reach their potential and where democratic engagements is strengthened. He considered that this would not be possible under the current government.")

Question 5

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

"I was pleased to read that thanks to the investment of this city council, the small park at Douro Place, in West Pottergate, will be significantly improved. This will make a real difference to the community, some of which live in council accommodation, which surround the park. Can the cabinet member for community wellbeing, update council on the changes planned?"

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

"This project is part of the council's ongoing investment in play facilities in the city. We have recently awarded a contract for this work and will be investing approximately £55,000 in new play equipment and safety surfacing at the play area in Douro Place. The project is aimed at improving play facilities in the area, in particular making it accessible for children of all abilities. It is also aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour at this location, and we look forward to work starting in February 2023."

(Councillor Peek asked as his supplementary question for a further examples of park improvements schemes which had been implemented recently. Councillor Giles said that the schemes scheduled for this civic year included the upgrade of Harford Park tennis courts; play area upgrades at Wensum Park and St Georges Street; upgrades to park toilets at Heigham, Wensum, and Sloughbottom parks; Year Four of Eaton Park path replacements; and Year Three of the refurbishment of the damaged dry-stone walls at Wensum Park. As highlighted at September's council, we have submitted an £85,000 Investment Plan for a package of improvements at Wensum Park using Levelling-Up Parks funding.)

Question 6

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

"As winter deepens, the number of constituents I have spoken to regarding their acute difficulty in heating their home increases rapidly. Can the cabinet member for safe, strong, and inclusive neighbourhoods comment on the work undertaken to ensure the £150 Council Tax Energy rebate payments are made together with any discretionary payments which this Labour administration is taking?"

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

"The £150 Council Tax Energy rebate scheme was due to finish at the end of September; however a number of councils did not achieve the initial deadline. The scheme has been extended to now end on the 30 November, allowing us to still make payments for a few weeks if we need to.

The council took appropriate steps to ensure it had made the payments by the original scheme end date, directly to bank accounts wherever possible. If bank details were not already held, residents were asked to supply their details through our secure online portal using a unique code. If no response was received the payment was made to the council tax account of the household to reduce their council tax payments.

Where accounts went into credit (for example where there is no Council Tax liability due to the resident being entitled to an exemption or full discount) a new bill has been issued showing this and refunds are being issued on request once bank details are supplied.

For others with a council tax liability, their charge has been recalculated and a new bill issued.

The council has paid 60,992 residents a total of £9,148,800.00 in respect of the main scheme.

Applications for the Discretionary Council Tax Energy rebate scheme closed on 20 November, so payments will continue to be made until the scheme itself ends on 30 November. To date we have paid £214,095.00 of the total funding of £292,050.00 and have made payments direct to council tax accounts this week where we do not hold bank account details. The council is undertaking a number of social media campaigns to encourage take-up of the discretionary funding."

(In reply to Councillor Huntley's supplementary question, Councillor Jones listed the wide range of support that the council provided to support residents and address financial inclusion. This included: working in partnership with the voluntary sector: ensuring the prompt receipt of the £150 energy council tax rebate for 60,000 residents, totalling £9m; retaining the 100 per cent Council Tax Reduction Scheme; supporting the Financial Inclusion Consortium and social supermarkets; and campaigning for a Living Wage.")

Question 7

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

"I was pleased that the Biodiversity Strategy was accepted at cabinet earlier this month. It contains a range of excellent, practical, and important steps this council will take as we take our part in responding socially, economically, and environmentally to the climate emergency, thus better achieving true sustainability. Given the reviews and enhancements to the strategy can the

cabinet member for community wellbeing comment on the strategy and the benefits to our city?"

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

"The Biodiversity Strategy, and the accompanying Biodiversity Development Plan, sets out an ambitious agenda with a commitment to "create a city where biodiversity can sustainably recover and thrive, halt species decline and increase species diversity and abundance by 2030 or sooner". A key objective will be to establish a 'Nature Recovery Network', creating and connecting wild places and habitats across the city to give nature room to thrive. This will involve the council beginning to manage our own parks and open spaces in a way that enhances biodiversity, but also encouraging strategic stakeholders across the city to manage their land in a more biodiversity-conscious way.

A range of benefits will be realised through the Strategy and Development Plan, relating not just to biodiversity improvement but also to climate mitigation and adaptation, improved health and wellbeing and educational experiences for our residents, and the growth of the green economy within the city to support people to find good quality jobs. This is an important strategy and I look forward to sharing our progress on it with colleagues in the coming months."

(Councillor Stutely asked as a supplementary question for five examples of measures being undertaken by the council to boost biodiversity in natural areas. Councillor Giles listed the planting of 2,000 trees at West Earlham Woods (hornbeam, oak, sweet chestnut, beech, hazel, crab apple, plum, spindle, guelder rose, and holly), and 1000 trees in Netherwood (hazel, crab apple, plum, spindle, guelder rose, and holly); coppicing willow scrub at Marston Marshes by the Norwich Fringe Project to preserve habitats and protect river banks from erosion, and increase water levels to provide winter habitat for snipe; access gates at Mile Cross Marshes to prevent unauthorized vehicle access which had been damaging the wildlife meadow; utilizing Higher Level Stewardship funding for animal grazing on Eaton Common between April and November leading to wildflower diversity.)

Question 8

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

"The United Nations Climate Change Conference 2022, or 'COP27', concluded last week. This council has previously declared a climate emergency and recognised that local, national, and global co-operation will be key tackling this in a truly just manner. Could the cabinet member for climate change and digital inclusion reflect on the outcomes of this conference with the most salient points relating to Norwich?"

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

"The key messages set out by the António Guterres, the Secretary General of the UN was that *"our world is facing the most pivotal, precarious moment in*

generations” and that “the goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees is slipping away”.

The council recognises that the goal of limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as set out in the Paris Agreement of 2015, is unlikely to be met and that urgent action is required, by all parties, to prevent a climate, biodiversity and humanitarian catastrophe. A great deal of work has been achieved to date. Norwich’s territorial greenhouse gas emissions (those for the whole city) have more than halved since 2005, despite a 12% increase in population. The council’s own emissions, according to a methodology defined by central government, have reduced by over 70% in a similar period. Work is underway to understand the full scope of the council’s emissions, including Scope 3 emissions - those emissions outside of our direct control. In collaboration with our partners, we are also working to update our understanding of the city’s emissions.

As well as generating good quality data, comprehensive plans are in development, based on evidence and prioritised according to risk, to reduce emissions to net zero as quickly as possible. The Council also recognises the need for adaption and resilience strategies to manage the social, environmental and economic impacts of the changing climate.”

(Councillor Davis asked as a supplementary question said that COP27 had hosted a food and agriculture pavilion for the first time which demonstrated that food and agriculture were at its agenda and asked what significance this had for the city. Councillor Hampton said that food systems accounted for a third of global emissions yet hundreds of millions around the world were going hungry. Climate breakdown would result in widespread famine with devastating international effect. Norwich would not be exempt. Food systems were not working and there was a need for national and international integrated food policies. The council had signed the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration, a commitment to tackle climate emergency through a food systems approach. This was formally presented during COP 26 but the campaign has continued ever since. As a city, food was not one of the largest emissions, but the council could still promote and campaign on this issue and do what it could, through its communications, supporting community groups who use excess food to tackle food poverty, strengthening the Biodiversity Strategy to include food production as a positive outcome, playing a role in food resilience as demonstrated with the Covid 19 – Norwich Community Hub, providing food parcels to support residents most in need.)

Question 9

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

“The member for housing advised cabinet last month that there were around 3,400 people on the council housing waiting list while over 230 council houses were empty because the voids (time taken to do work on an empty property in preparation for a new tenant) were taking longer to turn around than has been the case in the past.

She said this was due to a backlog of repairs and specialist contractors were being used. Can she explain the work of the of specialist contractors when they were not used before?"

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

"When the repairs service transferred from the joint venture with Norse to the council's wholly-owned company – Norwich City Services Limited – in April, there was a backlog of works. In order to allow NCSL to get off to the best start, the council appointed contractors to clear the backlog rather than passing it to NCSL.

To date, 5775 reactive repairs have been cleared. At present there are 125 reactive repairs to complete and we are on target to complete these by the end of December 2022.

Unfortunately, some delays have occurred due to works that the contractors are reliant on from other contractors to enable them to be compliant with H&S requirements. However, delays can also occur due to lack of materials and wider supply chain and labour pressures. These impacts are not unique to Norwich.

In appointing the contractors, the council followed the correct clearance and procurement protocols, mobilised the contract and put an internal backlog team in place to support. This took a period of time but was necessary. Now everything is in place and the contractors are working through the backlog."

(Councillor Lubbock's supplementary question was to ask for clarification on the work to ensure H&S compliancy. Councillor Harris referred to the two streams of work to clear the back log and the "business as usual". There was a robust system in place to use third party contractors were used to survey for asbestos, where intrusive work was required.)

Question 10

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

"The backlog in repairs in council housing that the Labour administration has overseen has left at least thirteen homeless people waiting for months for the keys to a home that they were promised they could move into within weeks. Families have been living in cars or sofa surfing while council properties are sitting empty. Please can the cabinet member explain what the council will do from now on to ensure that people who have been promised homes are not kept waiting for several months?"

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

"A project team comprising of staff from Tenancy, Lettings and Property Services has been created. This team is meeting weekly with NCSL and the

Norwich City Council backlog contractors to monitor and manage and drive performance.

Those properties that are in most need and have people allocated to them have been prioritised, this does not mean that newly created empty homes are not being actioned.

Based on this priority contractors are expected to focus on allocated properties and if they are paused due to awaiting facilitation works or have capacity work can commence in unallocated properties.

Further contractor support is being engaged by both NCSL and Norwich City Council to enable accelerated delivery is delivered.”

(In reply to Councillor Galvin’s supplementary question, Councillor Harris agreed that it was unacceptable that people were waiting for council accommodation and said that as a member of the shareholder panel, Councillor Galvin was well aware of how hard the council and NCSL were working to address these issues and develop an improvement programme. When the service had come back in house, there were some properties that required a high level of investment and work. She would continue to put pressure on the service to improve.)

Question 11

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

“I understand that the planned programme of installing secure entry systems has yet again been delayed. In January 2022 I asked for reassurance from the cabinet member that the work would be progressed quickly. The measuring up of doors is now expected to only go ahead by the end of the year, which is a further delay on an already extremely delayed start to the programme. Can you please explain why the timetable has yet again slipped and explain to residents when they can expect the programme to finally start and what measures you are putting in place to ensure that this is now the last delay to one of the highest priorities for residents in some areas of the ward I represent?”

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

“We have been working hard with Eastern Procurement Limited to expedite the procurement of the programme and we are currently awaiting the return of tenders. It is anticipated that the contract will be formally awarded before Christmas. The successful contractor will then be expected to attend the blocks that are in-scope to undertake measured surveys and place orders for the doors and similar bespoke equipment. Subject to lead-in times, it is expected that works will commence on site (including any asbestos removal and other enabling works) in early 2023.”

(Councillor Bogelein’s supplementary question referred to the two year delay and asked for an indication of the timescale for implementation of the secure entry

systems. Councillor Harris confirmed that this project was progressing as quickly as it could and that delays had been due to shortages in materials and labour.)

Question 12

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

“Tests on damaged ceilings in need of replacement at a flat in Golding Place, caused by a leaking roof, have shown white asbestos. The tenant has been informed of the need to move out whilst the work to remove the asbestos and replace the ceilings in several rooms is carried out and this will cause considerable upheaval for the tenant. Could the cabinet member please tell me the number of council properties known to contain white asbestos and the estimated costs involved in replacing it, including the cost of temporary accommodation for tenants and moving expenses?”

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

“We have 14,140 properties that were built before the year 2000 and therefore could contain some asbestos as it wasn’t banned until November 1999. Survey information relating to domestic properties is limited as there is no requirement to survey (or have a management plan) for domestic properties under The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (specifically regulation 4). However, management surveys within domestic properties are carried out when a refurbishment survey is carried out, for example Kitchen and Bathroom replacements/window replacement and voids.

Whilst there is no requirement under the regulations, Property Service are recording the information as part of the survey process and this will be recorded in the Asset Management database in order to build up our knowledge of asbestos in our property portfolio.

The cost of removal of a typical 25m² textured coating (so one room in one property) is likely to be in the region of £1,000.

Health and Safety Executive guidance is not to remove asbestos containing materials that are in good condition that are not being (or going to be) disturbed. Decorative textured coatings contain very low quantities of Chrysotile (white) asbestos that is heavily bonded into a paint matrix, this means that fibres do not normally become respirable unless heavily abraded such as being sanded or sawn.”

(In reply to a supplementary question, Councillor Harris said that individual cases could not be discussed in this forum, and therefore. asked Councillor Carlo to let her know the relevant details of this case to pass on to an officer to answer.)

Question 13

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

“Norfolk County Council is believed to have submitted 'Expressions of Interest' in multiple sites becoming Investment Zones without publishing any details. We now know that Investment Zones will not be established, but it was likely that such zones would have undermined local democratic control of development, and efforts towards nature recovery. The guidelines' only reference to the environment was about removing legislation that protects it. Does the Leader agree that it is important for the city to keep control of the planning function; insist on existing, if not improved, environmental protections and nature recovery rules; and continue a commitment to the current affordable housing percentage for development, whatever new scheme the government may come up with?”

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

“Thank you for your question, Councillor Grahame. You will be aware that there are speculative observations in your question since Investment Zones have been dropped by a shuffling of the Prime-Ministerial pack. My understanding from colleagues at Norfolk County Council is that they submitted an Expression of Interest in multiple sites becoming an Investment Zone in Norfolk.

In the case of the city, we only requested that the county include a single site, the East Norwich Regeneration Area, within the Expression of Interest. This was done. In seeking the inclusion of East Norwich within the county's Investment Zone Expression of Interest we considered many factors. One of these was the environmental risks posed through the possible planning and environmental protection regimes that may apply to the areas. We took the view that there was simply insufficient information available to allow these to be assessed at this stage. In the light of this we choose to include material in the case we made to the county noting these concerns and stressing that the council would want to see, and discuss, any proposed future arrangements regarding planning controls, and implications for environmental standards before agreeing to an Investment Zone designation.

You will also be aware that following last week's autumn statement that:

“The government will refocus the Investment Zones programme. The government will use this programme to catalyse a limited number of the highest potential knowledge-intensive growth clusters, including through leveraging local research strengths.”

All goes to show what a massive waste of time by the government insisting that local authorities bid in this way for various initiatives rather than properly fund local government in the first place to deliver regeneration of their areas. With regards to the second part of your question, the answer is obviously yes. Take, for example, our ambitious Biodiversity Strategy that went through cabinet last week and our strong commitment and delivery of genuinely affordable housing at social rents.”

(In reply to Councillor Grahame's supplementary question, Councillor Waters confirmed that he would hope that the government legislation would support high

standards of energy efficiency in buildings. The council had a strong track record in providing housing that was energy efficient and had a lifespan longer than 30 years.)

Question 14

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

“I am sure you joined in celebrating the recent national first prize for Norwich when a street in Wensum ward won Best Parklet in the country. In late 2019 the former highway team at the city council had begun researching the subject of parklets in order to establish a policy on the subject. Unfortunately, that work was halted by the termination of the highway agency agreement with the county council. I understand that officers are making progress with developing a joint policy with the county on this issue so that Norwich can build on its excellence and enjoy the wider benefits of parklets that have been seen elsewhere. When can we expect to see the policy developed?”

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

“We have spoken to the county council as the responsible highways authority who have said they plan to produce a policy to address issues such as safety, and we have supplied them with research that was done previously. We do not know when the county council will undertake this work, but we have said we are willing to advise them further based on previous experience.”

(In reply to Councillor Young’s supplementary question, Councillor Giles said that the details were still being worked through and would be provided in due course.)

Question 15

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

“Anglia Square and Magdalen Street are popular because their retail and commercial offer is cheaper and easier than the city centre. Small businesses there are concerned about rent rises or being forced out due to the proposed Anglia Square redevelopment. The local community also fears that big chains will not meet their needs and that this unique part of Norwich will lose its distinctive character. These worries have been confirmed in answers to councillor enquiries saying some businesses will be "displaced by the early phases of development at a point where no alternative accommodation can be provided" and those who can relocate to the new centre will see rent increases. With the effects of covid, the cost-of-living and energy crises, plus residents demanding protection for small businesses, what will the council do to ensure a smooth transition for all Small Medium Enterprises at Anglia Square and Magdalen Street?”

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

"I agree that retail offer of Magdalen Street, Anglia Square and St Augustine's Street is unique and distinctive from the rest of the city centre and the vibrant and independent nature of area should be nurtured. My own view is that offer of the current Anglia Square detracts from the character of the wider area. The blight created by the large derelict and underused buildings doesn't assist the retail environment.

The current planning application for Anglia Square proposes demolition of the shopping and office precinct and redevelopment with a residential led mixed use development. The impact of development on existing business is an important consideration and this is still being worked on as part of the assessment of the application. Officers have been discussing with the applicant a possible package of proactive business support for affected businesses which may be deemed necessary to be required by a legal agreement in the event of committee deciding to grant planning permission being approved. Under the possible agreement, the developer would be required to provide affected businesses access to free independent business support which would assist them with business planning, possible temporary (or permanent) relocation plans, and applications for any available grant support. The support would also look at how these businesses can use the redevelopment as a growth opportunity to provide new products and services. Clearly this will be one of many matters that will need to be taken into consideration by the planning applications committee in reaching a determination on the planning application in due course and I would not want to do or say anything in this forum that could fetter their discretion to do so."

(Councillor Schmierer asked as a supplementary question what he could say to business owners and community to reassure them about the support that would be offered to them. Councillor Stonard referred to his response and said that he considered Councillor Schmierer had misread it. The developer had recognised that the impact that the development would have on businesses and had put in place a meaningful and proactive package to support them.)

Question 16

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

"The council has a responsibility to ensure that people with disabilities and medical conditions are housed appropriately. However, I am aware of a number of council tenants, including some willing to move to smaller properties, whose health is currently being made worse by their living conditions. Tenants in my ward have applied for higher banding and been refused, despite supplying evidence from doctors and other professionals. Will the cabinet member supply unsuccessful applicants with feedback, including explaining the process that the council follows when deciding which band applicants should be in?"

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

"Norwich is an area of extremely high levels of housing need and the Home Options scheme provides a fair, efficient, and transparent way of allocating the social housing available. The scheme has been identified as a best practice model which has contributed to the award of 'gold standard' status for our housing options service, one of only fourteen local authorities in the country to be given this accolade.

Where a Home Options applicant feels that their medical situation is made significantly worse by their accommodation, they complete a medical assessment form, which enables a full review of their circumstances by a panel, in accordance with policy. The role of the medical panel is to assess the degree of medical need relating to an applicant's current accommodation and whether this merits additional priority to move to a more suitable property.

Medical priority is awarded where an applicant needs urgent re-housing due to a significant and enduring medical condition or disability which is strongly evidenced as being seriously and permanently affected by their current accommodation.

Specifically in relation to the question every single applicant, whether successful or unsuccessful, are advised of the outcome of the medical panel setting out the reasons for the decision in writing and advisors them of their means of appeal.

This process is applied equally to all applicants to ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency. I am satisfied that through this consistent application of Home Options policy we are able to ensure that scarce social housing in Norwich is allocated to those in the greatest need."

(Councillor Catt, as a supplementary question, said that he knew of residents whose medical conditions had become worse and had been denied bronze banding which was detrimental to that resident. Councillor Harris confirmed that residents were informed of the outcome of any panel in writing together with the reasons for the decision. She asked Councillor Catt to provide her with more information if there was a specific case, he wished her to look at.)

Question 17

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

"It has become apparent that housing officers are no longer being allocated to specific areas. When communication from the council has already been raised as a big issue for tenants, why are the council removing named points of contact for tenants?"

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

"Tenancy team leaders have made some amendments to ensure that all tenants receive a consistent service whether in the north or south of the borough. There are two teams; North and South, and 10 officers cover these sites. There are a further two dedicated housing officers to ensure access for compliance activity in relation to gas and electrical safety.

The query highlights the risk of having named individuals assigned to activities. It is important to focus on operational resilience, with a system which allows the management team to redistribute casework to the wider team to ensure all enquiries are addressed.

The service needs to remain flexible. Housing casework relating to tenancies come into our call centre or online and is allocated directly to a housing officer, who triages the need for a direct intervention or allocates the requests made by tenants. By using this method, we have seen improvements in turnaround time to enquiries, catching up on outstanding casework, and access into homes to keep tenants safe.

We continue to monitor progress and review our effectiveness as a council to respond to the needs of our tenants. This is a challenging time for recruitment into various social housing sector and local government roles."

(By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Haynes referred to the changing model and said that some residents would have difficulty trusting a "random" housing officer. Councillor Harris said that there was greater demand across the city and it was important that housing officers were available where needed to deal with a situation. It was not useful where a resident had built up trust with an officer and when a situation arose, they were unavailable due to sickness or on leave. She invited Councillor Haynes to pass on feedback from residents which she would raise with the housing managers.)

Question 18

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

"When the insourcing of Norse was first proposed, we were repeatedly assured, in response to Green councillors' questions, that creating NCSL would allow the council more scope to decarbonise environmental and building services. Yet officers have told me that NCSL has no carbon reduction plan. Can the cabinet member please provide details of carbon reduction targets for NCSL as a company that is wholly-owned by the council?"

Councillor Waters, the leader's response:

"A familiar Green Party template for this question. Greens claiming credit, unnamed officers giving their opinion etc. From the very start of the new company important environment features were built into the new depot and site. I quote a length from a question (Council, 16 March 2021) to the then

portfolio holder Councillor Kevin Maguire asking about new environmental and biodiversity improvements at the new depot:

“As you are aware we have been able to incorporate many environmental features within the design of the new depot to improve the environment locally and so it can contribute to our target in the Environmental Strategy for the council to become carbon neutral by 2030. Moreover, it is worth noting that the project itself is inherently sustainable as it is reusing a former wine warehouse building that has been vacant for some time.

Last month it was announced that the council had been awarded just over £100,511 through the government decarbonisation funding scheme to deliver energy efficient LED lighting within the depot and a solar PV system on its roof with associated battery storage measures. The LED lighting has been installed for depot opening, both within the main depot and the office accommodation, the solar PV scheme will follow in the summer.

These measures sit alongside the other measures that were built into the scheme to promote cycling to work, to future proof it by providing ducting to ease the process of adapting to using electric vehicles in future, and external lighting schemes that are specially designed to minimise disturbance to bats.

Furthermore, we are particularly proud of the on-site features designed to support biodiversity in the area. These include multiple bat and bird boxes, new pond and various measures to encourage reptiles and amphibians on the site.

A carefully designed landscape scheme, including 84 native trees, 88m of hedging and 71 climbing plants, has been developed in close consultation between Council officer's and landscape and ecological consultants. This provides new and varied habitat opportunities across the site. Significant tree and hedge planting has taken place in accordance with the agreed landscaping plan which, in time, will more than compensate for biomass lost as part of the development.

A combination of trees, hedging and climbers has been used. The climbers are designed and located to attract invertebrates which will in turn benefit the local bat populations. Native trees and woody shrubs have been planted, many as standard trees. The native hedgerow species have been chosen to increase diversity and promote good management for the benefit of wildlife in accordance with specialist ecological advice.

An area of fruit trees has been planted in the south of the site. The fruit trees have been selected to provide additional food sources. As they will not grow to be tall trees, this leaves an area of open grassland near to the proposed wildlife pond which should create considerable habitat opportunities for reptiles and amphibians.”

Also, as part of NCSL's 2022-25 business plan a company objective for the 2022-23 financial year is to develop a detailed carbon reduction strategy for NCSL and investigate carbon offsetting schemes.

Work is continuing and the company have met with city council officers in order to align the company objectives with that of the council's."

(Councillor Osborn's commented that the bulk of Councillor Water's response was to quote a previous answer which did not reflect the current situation in relation to the company and asked as a supplementary question whether there would be a 13 per cent year on year to reach net zero. Councillor Waters said that it was an aspiration of the council and the company to ensure that carbon reduction scheme met those targets, through the council's Environmental Strategy and working closely in partnership with the Tyndall Centre.)

Question 19

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

"With the prospect of colder weather coming, many groups ranging from churches, the voluntary sector, the NHS, and the county council are working to set up much needed warm hubs to provide not only a warm place but company and refreshments for part or all of the day.

Whilst primarily a county council function, could the cabinet member outline what work is being undertaken by this council in conjunction with these groups?"

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

"We recognise the very difficult position many residents of Norwich will be in this winter.

We have provided funding to the Norfolk Community Foundation to support them to establish new warm spaces in the city or expand current provision. We are also using all opportunities to signpost community groups to this service, and to other funding opportunities as appropriate to access additional support, including via:

- the many relationships we have with groups in our communities and
- by maintaining a database of information about where people can go for support, so that any residents contacting the council can be directed to warm spaces, support, and other help as relevant to their circumstances – so they experience a "no wrong door" approach when they contact the council for help.

Wider partnership work continues through the City Vision Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Partnership, Greater Norwich Homelessness Forum, Norfolk

Community Advice Network, and Financial Inclusion Consortium to raise awareness of activities, support and advice and ensure we are working together to support our communities through this unprecedented period.”

(Councillor Ackroyd confirmed that she did not have a supplementary question.)

Please note that the following question was a second question from Councillor Carlo and was not taken because questions had exceeded thirty minutes. This is in line with paragraph 53 of Part 3 of the council’s constitution.

Question 20

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

“Recent reports by three United Nations agencies warn of the terrifying outlook on climate change. The UN says there is no credible pathway to 1.5C in place and that “woefully inadequate” progress on cutting carbon emissions means the only way to limit the worst impacts of the climate crisis is a “rapid transformation of societies”. The UN also says that current pledges by countries for action by 2030, even if delivered in full, would mean a rise in global heating of about 2.5C, a level which would condemn the world to catastrophic climate breakdown. Norwich City Council has adopted two targets relating to climate change: carbon neutral for the council’s own operations by 2030 and net zero for Norwich by 2045: too little and too late. What additional targets for 2030 will the council adopt and implement in a strengthened programme of action as a matter of extreme urgency?”

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

“The council recognises that the goal of limiting global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as set out in the Paris Agreement of 2015, is unlikely to be met and that urgent action is required, by all parties, to prevent a climate, biodiversity and humanitarian catastrophe.

The council’s emissions reduction strategies and plans are part of a national and international effort, most recently in Egypt at COP27. Infrastructure and social and economic change are needed that is far outside the control of the operation or sphere of influence of Norwich or any district council, county or Nation. But as I described earlier, we have a track record of success and are ambitious within our own emissions and those we can have an influence over. We are ensuring we have the best data, and that clear plans in place, to reduce emissions from the council and across the city, with our partners.

As part of the council’s environmental planning processes, we will always review the outputs of credible climate scientists and agencies and seek the opinion of trusted advisors and strategic partners, to update and adapt our plans as necessary.”