

Motion to: Council

31 January 2023

Subject: Equitable access to voter ID

Proposer: Councillor Wright

Seconded: Councillor Schmierer

Council **RESOLVES** to

- 1) note
 - a) that the Elections Act 2022 will make considerable unnecessary changes to the conduct and administration of elections.
 - b) that the Act will reduce the likelihood and ability of certain disadvantaged groups to vote without any gains in electoral security or in tackling many fundamental issues with our electoral law.
 - c) that implementing the Act will cost the public purse a large sum in set-up costs and increasing running costs for elections every year, for no gain to the electors of this city.
- 2) register its concern that the list of identification permitted to be used at polling stations is discriminatory towards young people, as the range of passes allowed is much smaller than for senior citizens. This is likely to deter young voters from voting and make it less likely that they will vote later in their lives.
- 3) recognise that although some identification used by young people is permissible, not all is and the following should be added to the list, including (but not exclusively): an 18+ bus pass, a Young Person's Railcard, a student ID card or NUS card or an 18+ Oyster Card.
- 4) ensure that this council continues to take all possible measures through its communications channels to achieve maximum awareness of this legislation and implications.
- 5) express its regret that the 'fatal motion' tabled in the House of Lords that would have killed off the passage of this legislation did not receive the necessary support from opposition peers.

Item 9a

- 6) ask Group Leaders to write to the Minister responsible and the city's two MPs to ask them to support this policy of a wider range of acceptable ID and to press for its speedy incorporation into the guidance for the next set of elections in May 2023.

Motion to: Council

31 January 2023

Subject: End the unfairness of forced prepayment meters and protect citizens at risk of being cut off 'by the back door'

Proposer: Councillor Galvin

Seconded: Councillor Haynes

Due to rising energy prices, many households are struggling to pay their bills.

Homes with prepayment gas or electric meters, which require people to pay for energy before they use it, are in an increasingly difficult position. In contrast to billed customers, who are given warnings before being cut off, they lose their energy supply when their money runs out (after a small emergency credit), yet standing charges carry on racking up, from 5p-80p a day, meaning customers can build up debts even when not getting any energy. Households with prepayment meters cannot have more than £10 of debt and if they are unable to pay in advance they are essentially disconnected, leaving them without power in their homes.

Norwich City Council has supported some residents on prepayment meters through its discretionary rebate scheme. The council does not hold information on how many people in its properties (or the wider city) have prepayment meters, but the council stock stands at 14,500 homes and around half of social housing tenants are likely to have prepayment meters. Government figures show at least 7642 meters in Norwich in 2019 (not including smart meters operating in prepayment mode, which will now sizeably increase this number).

Rules state that suppliers cannot force-fit a prepayment meter under warrant for people in very vulnerable situations if they don't want one, charge them for warrant costs on debts, or use warrants on people who would find the experience very traumatic. However, nearly half a million warrants allowing energy firms to forcibly install prepayment meters in people's homes have been approved by courts since July 2021 (these are often approved in batches at courts far away from the customer's home). Citizens Advice said it was continuing to advise "high numbers" of people each month who were having prepayment meters forcibly installed. About 65% of the people being moved on to one for debt reasons are disabled or have a long-term health condition, and 40% are single people with children.

Cutting off people's water supply is banned; energy is likewise essential and fair access to it must be protected.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Ask group leaders to jointly write on behalf of the council to The Business and Energy Secretary to express its profound and urgent concern that warrants are being issued without the appropriate checks being undertaken to make sure that the rules are being followed, and to underline that nobody should be left without energy this winter as a result of them not being able to afford bills; and call for the Government to immediately implement a legal ban on prepayment meters being forcibly installed (or smart meters being turned onto pre-payment mode) without the explicit, informed consent of households.
- 2) Use all communications methods at its disposal (website, letter, tenancy agreement, tenant involvement panel, social media, Citizen magazine, local press, etc) to explain, inform and continue to underline to residents that they do not have to accept a prepayment meter; and offer assistance to those who wish to move to other forms of payment if appropriate.
- 3) Continue to provide where possible discretionary help to residents with pre-payment meters.
- 4) Make extra attempts to ascertain which city council tenants have prepayment meters, especially those who might be at extra risk of being cut off, and monitor them to offer assistance, for example through housing officer and other support.
- 5) Write to Norwich Magistrates Court to ask what processes magistrates followed prior to granting energy firms warrants of entry, how magistrates could be sure these households were not classed as vulnerable and what sanctions magistrates can take if it is found that energy firms did not complete vulnerability assessments on customers before applying for a warrant.
- 6) Ask group leaders to write to local MPs to ask them to support EDM (Early Day Motion) 690: tabled on 12 December 2022 - Involuntarily installation of prepayment meters; and
- 7) Ask group leaders to write to OFGEM asking them to carry out an urgent review of prepayment meters and their effects particularly on people on low incomes, in poor health and at risk of fuel poverty.

Motion to: Council

31 January 2023

Subject: Plant-based food

Proposer: Councillor Catt

Seconded: Councillor Osborn

It is increasingly recognised that meat and dairy production is a significant contributor to climate breakdown, with the livestock sector accounting for at least 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions, as well as being a major contributor to global deforestation. The catastrophic effects of climate breakdown mean climate and risk experts predict a world with systemic cascading risks related to food insecurity including food shortages, societal tensions, hunger and malnutrition, unrest and conflict (according to a Chatham house report from 2021), which furthermore predicts a 50% chance of synchronous crop failure in the decade of the 2040s. Producing a kilo of beef creates, on average, 12 times more CO₂ than a kilo of tofu or other soya based proteins. Meanwhile, producing a litre of dairy milk uses, on average, at least four times as much land as producing a litre of plant milk. Growing numbers of people are adopting plant-based diets, which do not include meat or dairy.

As well as a smaller carbon footprint, eating more plant-based foods also reduces the land footprint of our diets and would improve UK food security and self-sufficiency, thereby making our diets more local. As a country, we currently import much more food than we export. In 2021 we had a trade deficit for all dairy products of £1.04 billion and a trade deficit for just beef, pork and lamb of £1.7 billion. Only 55% of the world's crop calories feed people directly with 36% going to feed livestock; only a fraction of the calories in feed given to livestock make their way into the meat and milk that we consume which is a huge food waste issue on top of making our food production much more carbon intensive. While some people criticise people who follow a plant-based diet for eating imported soy, the vast majority of soy - 77% - goes to feeding livestock, which research has shown is an inefficient use of resources. East Anglia has predominantly arable farming and there are many local predominantly plant-based food businesses we could support.

Henry Dimbleby, in the Government-commissioned National Food Strategy concluded that a 30% reduction in meat consumption is necessary for future food

security. The National Food Strategy also states that obesity alone accounts for 8% of annual health spend in the UK, or £18bn. Savings to the NHS will come from healthier, plant-based diets. Sustain estimates that meat over-consumption costs the NHS directly £1.2 billion, and is responsible for 45,000 deaths annually. Over 40% of Britons are trying to reduce their meat consumption and 14% already follow a flexitarian diet, but plant-based food options are not consistently available at all events or food venues. Other countries have taken a stance; for example, in Portugal it is a legal requirement for all public catering – including local authority facilities – to provide plant-based food options, and other local authorities such as Oxfordshire County Council and Cambridge City Council have decided to promote plant-based food via serving a fully plant-based menu at Council meetings and events, where cost-effective. Locally, the University of Cambridge Catering Service reduced food-related greenhouse gas emissions by a third via replacing beef and lamb with plant-based products.

In September 2021, Norwich City Council formally adopted the Glasgow Declaration on Food and Climate which committed the council to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with food. Norwich City Council can build on its achievements to date and lead by example to promote and normalise consumption of plant-based food, recognising that plant-based meals are frequently nutritious and low-cost food options. This is in line with its vision for Norwich City to be net-zero carbon by 2045.

Council therefore **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Follow the lead of other councils around the country in ensuring that food and drink provided at all meetings and events hosted by the city council, including those hosted by the Mayoralty, be plant-based, and where possible, provided by a local caterer.
- 2) After engaging with a wide variety of catering options (including consideration of social enterprises), use Norwich City Council civic events to promote and showcase environmentally friendly plant-based food and drink options, alongside displayed information about the climate and health benefits and relative cost of different protein/food sources and educating people about how to achieve a balanced plant-based diet.
- 3) When events occur on City Council open spaces, and where catering is provided, ensure that environmentally friendly plant-based options are available (i.e., minimum from at least one caterer), secured through the use of terms and conditions of hire (where reasonably possible).
- 4) Secure through a contract specification when re-tendering for suppliers that environmentally friendly, locally sourced plant-based food and drink options

Item 9c

are to be available at providers on City Council open spaces (where reasonably possible). Similarly, when possible, via future contract specification when re-tendering for suppliers for council-run cafes, kiosks or leisure centres, specify that vegetable/legume rich plant-based options are listed prominently on menus, above non plant-based options.

- 5) Continue to use council communications channels to promote sustainable (and affordable) food and drink practices throughout the city, including details of the climate and health benefits of plant-based food and drinks and educating people on the best ways to achieve a balanced plant-based diet.
- 6) Write to Norfolk County Council requesting that they assess the carbon impact of meat and dairy industries on the county and ask what steps are being taken to reduce this in line with the target to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- 7) Work with community groups across the city to promote the establishment of new community gardens, especially on sites that have been previously derelict or contaminated so that these sites can be quickly brought back into beneficial use to support the growth of cheap and accessible plant-based food and drinks for all our communities.
- 8) Recognise Norwich as a city with businesses leading the way in the provision of plant-based foods and drinks. Engage with Norwich BID and the Norwich Market Traders' Association to investigate the opportunities to promote the benefits of plant-based foods, educate people on the best ways to achieve a balanced plant-based diet and improve the availability of plant-based options at Norwich businesses ; and
- 9) Write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs supporting UK endorsement of the Plant Based Treaty and invite all Party Group Leaders to sign the letter.

Motion to: Council

31 January 2023

Subject: Energy For All campaign

Proposer: Councillor Hampton

Seconder: Councillor Padda

The failure of Conservative-led governments to invest in renewables, retrofit homes and regulate the energy market has caused the current energy and cost of living crises. At the same time, the climate crisis is the biggest existential threat to our society with urgent action needed. There are numerous synergies between tackling the cost of living, energy, and climate crises; these must be addressed simultaneously to achieve true social, economic, and environmental justice.

1) Council notes that:

- a) Residents in Norwich and across the country are being hit hard by the cost of living crisis, with too many falling into fuel poverty.
- b) The Government's Energy Price Guarantee is socially unjust and fails to lay the path to an energy secure future.
- c) Norwich City Council's Sustainable Warmth Strategy sets out this council's approach to supporting residents who are experiencing fuel poverty, in a just and sustainable manner. It states our aim of ultimately eradicating fuel poverty in Norwich within the timescale of the 2040 City Vision.
- d) But national, systemic change is needed to guarantee energy security and the eradication of fuel poverty in the long term.
- e) The Energy Equity Commission Bill, and Fuel Poverty Action's corresponding Energy For All campaign, calls for the energy price cap system to be replaced with a free universal basic energy allowance, alongside a national retrofitting strategy. Everyone would receive a basic free amount of energy: enough to cover essentials like heating, eating, lighting and connectivity.
- f) If enacted, this policy would largely eradicate fuel poverty in Norwich and the UK.

2) Council **RESOLVES** to:

- a) Write to Fuel Poverty Action affirming our support for the Energy Equity Commission Bill and Energy For All campaign.
- b) Ask the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, copying in Norwich's two MPs, to alert them to this motion and request that they lend their support to the Energy Equity Commission Bill.
- c) Continue to support residents experiencing fuel poverty, deliver retrofit measures, promote clean energy and work towards a net zero city by delivery of our Environmental Strategy, Sustainable Warmth Strategy and other related policies.

Motion to: Council

31 January 2023

Subject: National Housing Crisis

Proposer: Councillor Jones

Seconded: Councillor Huntley

The worst cost of living crisis since the 1950s is coinciding with a national housing crisis. The result of this will be an increasing number of our residents deprived of one of the most fundamental pillars to a healthy and happy life – a secure, stable, and affordable home.

Homeownership is in decline following a period of rising house prices that has made buying a home unaffordable for too many. This combined with a drastic depletion in social housing stock has forced an increasing number of Norwich residents into the private rented sector and at the mercy of rising rents and under-regulated tenancies. Worse still, many are left without a permanent residence at all, as levels of homelessness remain high.

Whilst this Council has welcomed the Norwich Council Housing Strategy 2020-26 it is now calling for the acceleration of its delivery to increase the provision of affordable, secure, high-quality, and energy-efficient housing across the city to tackle the root of the housing crisis locally.

However, in the face of a worsening national economic crisis, urgent action is needed to protect our residents, especially those in the most precarious living circumstances, from its severest impacts.

To support residents through the immediate and acute period of the cost-of-living crisis, this Council **RESOLVES** to call upon Government to:

- 1) Increase Local Housing Allowance rates in line with rising private market rents - making these more affordable and reducing the proportion of income spent on rent at a time when household budgets are increasingly squeezed.
- 2) Introduce rent reforms and delegate powers to local authorities to set rent caps to protect private tenants from further rental increases or exploitative charges at a time of crisis.
- 3) Legislate a no winter evictions guarantee to protect private tenants from homelessness through the most challenging period of the cost-of-living crisis.

Item 9e

- 4) Abolish the Right to Buy in favour of expanding the provision of high-quality, energy-efficient, and environmentally sustainable social housing stock providing homes for residents and their families.
- 5) Expand pathways to homeownership so that owning a home can still be a realistic aspiration for any residents.
- 6) Prioritise the passing of the Renters' Reform Bill that seeks to improve standards and regulations across the private rented sector to better protect tenants.

Motion to: Council

31 January 2023

Subject: Norwich Bus Fares

Proposer: Councillor Stonard

Seconder: Councillor Harris

This council recognises the vital importance of affordable, reliable, and high-quality public transport to the functioning of Norwich. We therefore strongly welcome the recent IPPR research on public transport, published on 6 October 2022 under the title “To support low-income households, it's time to reduce the cost of daily bus travel”. While the report makes clear that reducing fares is not the only issue needed to increase bus patronage – interventions to improve speed, reliability and the experience of passengers are all required as well - reductions in the costs of public transport for passengers are essential for a fair transport system.

Council **RESOLVES** to

- 1) note that; -
 - a) Low-income households are the most likely to use buses, while research by the RAC Foundation shows that since 2013 the cost of bus travel has risen by a greater extent than all other forms of transport. It is the poorest households, without access to other forms of travel, that have borne the brunt of these increases driven by de-regulation and lack of long-term funding.
 - b) Any reduction in bus fares would therefore be of the greatest benefit to those least well off. Capping bus fares at no more than £1 per day would save the poorest 20% of households in England £0.8bn a year. Making all bus fares in England free would save the poorest 40% of households £1.5bn a year.
 - c) This Council notes that a policy of making bus fares in England entirely free would cost £2.3bn a year, with the greatest benefits going to the least well off. For comparison, the recent ‘fiscal event’ in September 2022 proposed £40bn worth of tax cuts, mostly to the most well off. The current proposed Government funding for new roads is £27bn, for schemes that are likely to increase pollution and make the climate and biodiversity crises worse. For the same money, bus travel could be made free for at least ten years, helping to reduce car journeys, and making progress towards a net zero transport system.

Item 9f

- 2) ask that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport, the Shadow Secretary State for Transport, Norwich's two MPs and to the Leader of the county council expressing this Council's support for making public transport in Norwich free of charge; and
- 3) Use its existing partnerships and relationships with the county council and bus operators, to work to promote this objective.