



COUNCIL

7.30 p.m. – 10.35 p.m.

30 March 2010

Present: Councillors Collishaw (Lord Mayor), Arthur, Banham, Bearman, Blakeway, Bradford, Bremner, Cannell, Divers, Dylan, Fairbairn, Fisher, Gihawi, Gledhill, Holmes, Hooke, Jago, Jeraj, Lay, Little (A), Little (S), Lubbock, Makoff, Morpew, Morrey, Offord, Ramsay, Read, Sands, Stephenson, Waters, Watkins, Wiltshire and Wright

Apologies: Councillors Brociek-Coulton, Blower, Driver, George and Llewellyn

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor announced that since the last meeting she had attended court at the invitation of Judge Jacobs; a business reception on Worklessness; the 11th Hewitt school technology competition; accepting the Canadian flag on behalf of Norwich in Bloom: the City of Norwich partnership - Role Models for young people at Open; the Musicmix concert at Great Yarmouth with the BBC concert orchestra; the Womens Institute federation annual meeting; dinner with Trafford Club; Norfolk and Norwich Rouen Friendship Association AGM; Norwich South Rotary ladies lunch and a meeting at Voluntary Norfolk to discuss how to spend the civic charity money.

She had also visited Norwich Blind School to see its new building; Heartsease school and the Sea Scouts at Rackham Road who are doing great work with local children.

She had also planted rose bushes at the Castle Gardens with the guides, brownies and rainbows; taken part in a radio quiz with Voluntary Norfolk; opened the Lions club conference; welcomed 76 French students to city hall; supported Sports Relief at Sainsburys; started one of the Sports Relief races from the Forum and presented a long service award to Jenny Kaye.

Finally she had presided over the annual Freedom of the city ceremony when over 200 new Freeman and Freewoman were sworn in at St Andrews Hall

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hooke declared a personal interest in item 13: motion - no recourse to public funds.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the Council meetings held on 23 February and 2 March 2010.

4. QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Lord Mayor advised members that 13 questions had been received from Members of the Council to Executive Members and Committee Chairs, of which notice had been given in accordance within the provisions of Appendix 1 of the Council's Constitution. The questions were as follows:-

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| Question 1 | Councillor Wright to the Leader of the Council regarding the arrangements for the Implementation Executive. |
| Question 2 | Councillor Watkins to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services with regard to affordable housing. |
| Question 3 | Councillor Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance on interview arrangements for benefit claimants. |
| Question 4 | Councillor Stephenson to the Leader of the Council on locally sourced items for sale at the Norwich Tourist Information Centre during British Tourism Week. |
| Question 5 | Councillor Stephen Little to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development regarding surface dressing of roads, and whether Ashby Street will be resurfaced. |
| Question 6 | Councillor Jeraj to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on the completion of the junction works at the Avenues and Bluebell Road. |
| Question 7 | Councillor Fisher to the Executive Member for Customer Contact and Citizens Services regarding the reporting of incidents of broken glass in public areas. |
| Question 8 | Councillor Antony Little to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development on the progress of 'safer routes to school'. |
| Question 9 | Councillor George to the Leader of the Council on the creation of an Executive Member with specific responsibility for Culture given the bid for UK Capital of Culture. |
| Question 10 | Councillor Wiltshire to the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development on the Council's obligations to the maintenance of community centres. |
| Question 11 | Councillor Lubbock to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance regarding the options for Norwich businesses paying their business rates. |
| Question 12 | Councillor Hooke to the Leader of Council on the role of the review of the role of the Lord Mayor. |
| Question 13 | Councillor Cannell to the Leader of the Council on the achievements of the Labour administration during this current civic year. |

(Details of the questions and replies together with any supplementary questions and replies are attached at Appendix A to these minutes.)

5. NOMINATIONS FOR LORD MAYOR AND SHERIFF DESIGNATE

(The Lord Mayor agreed to take this as an urgent item in order for the necessary arrangements to be made for the Annual Meeting of the Council.)

Councillor Stephenson moved and Councillor Morpew seconded the nomination of Councillor Dylan as Lord Mayor designate for the next Civic Year and it was –

RESOLVED, with 31 voting in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions, to approve the nomination of Councillor Dylan as Lord Mayor designate for the next Civic Year. accordingly.

Councillor Morpew moved and Councillor Stephenson seconded Mr Derek James as Sheriff designate for the next Civic Year and it was unanimously –

RESOLVED accordingly.

6. STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT

Mr Peter Franzen, Independent Chair of the Council's Standards Committee presented the annual report of the Standards Committee for the Civic Year 2009-2010.

7. CORPORATE PLAN 2010/2012

Councillor Morpew moved and Councillor Morrey seconded the recommendations as set out in the report.

RESOLVED, with 12 voting in favour, 3 against and 18 abstentions, to:-

- (1) approve the draft Corporate Plan 2010-12;
- (2) delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any further necessary minor amendments prior to publication.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2010-2011

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

RESOLVED, unanimously, to:-

- (1) approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy;
- (2) approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2010/11 (Appendix B), and the Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2010/11 to 2012/13 (highlighted in Appendix A of the report);
- (3) approve the Investment Strategy 2010/11 contained in the treasury management strategy (Appendix B of the report) and the detailed criteria included in Annex B1;

- (4) revision to the Council's standing orders at Annex B2, including the recommendation that Executive continues to be responsible for the effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies;
- (5) note the commentary and the explanation of changes adopted as required in the revised editions of the CIPFA Prudential Code and CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice produced in November 2009 (included in the report).

9. NORTHERN CITY CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN: ADOPTION

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

RESOLVED, with 20 voting in favour, 0 against and 12 abstentions, to adopt the northern city centre area action plan, following the recommendation by Executive to Council on 10 March 2010.

10. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Councillor Morphew moved and Councillor Waters seconded the report.

Councillor Morphew moved and Councillor Waters seconded that the independent panel be thanked for the work that it had done but that the recommendations be not accepted and the current allowances scheme continue unchanged and it was unanimously -

RESOLVED, accordingly.

11. UNITARY STATUS FOR NORWICH – PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP OF THE IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE

Councillor Morphew moved and Councillor Morrey seconded the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Morphew moved that recommendation (4) of the report be amended to read:-

- '(4) to accept the recommendations of the Independent Panel relating to membership of the Implementation Executive, the financial costs of implementing this to be met from budgets for unitary implementation. As set out in our unitary financial case, all implementation costs will be recouped through the implementation process, and will be paid back within 4 years.'

With 24 members voting in favour, 6 against and 2 abstentions the amendment was carried and became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor A Little moved and Councillor Wiltshire seconded that recommendation (2) of the report be amended to read:-

- '(2) agree that the 12 City Council seats on the Implementation Executive should be the Leader of the Council plus 11 members of the City Council which for the time being shall be made up as follows:-
- 5 Labour city councillors
 - 4 Green city councillors
 - 1 Liberal Democrat city councillor
 - 1 Conservative city councillor'.

The amendment was accepted by the mover and seconder and, with no member objecting, became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Morphew moved and Councillor Morrey seconded the recommendations as amended.

RESOLVED, with 26 voting in favour, 0 against and 6 abstentions to:-

- (1) note that the draft "Norwich and Norfolk (Structural Changes) Order 2010" sets out proposals for an Implementation Executive of 18 elected members, comprising 12 City Councillors and 6 City Councillors representing the city area;
- (2) agree that the 12 City Council seats on the Implementation Executive should be the Leader of the Council plus 11 members of the City Council which for the time being shall be made up as follows:-
 - 5 Labour city councillors
 - 4 Green city councillors
 - 1 Liberal Democrat city councillor
 - 1 Conservative city councillor
- (3) ask the Groups to make nominations to these roles;
- (4) to accept the recommendations of the Independent Panel relating to membership of the Implementation Executive, the financial costs of implementing this to be met from budgets for unitary implementation. As set out in our unitary financial case, all implementation costs will be recouped through the implementation process, and will be paid back within 4 years.

12. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

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

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) adopt the Chief Finance Officer Protocol for inclusion in the Council's constitution as Appendix 9C;

- (2) adopt the Scheme of Delegation to Officers (Appendix 8 of the Council's Constitution) as amended by the transferral of the following functions from the Director of Corporate Resources to the Director of Regeneration and Development with effect from 1 April 2010:
 - All the functions of the Council under any and all licensing, registration, and regulatory legislation.
 - All environmental protection (including food safety), emergency planning, disaster recovery, business continuity and health and safety functions.
- (3) ask the Head of Legal, Regulatory and Democratic Services to amend the Constitution accordingly.

Two hours having passed since the start of the meeting, it was decided that the following items nos 13 and 14 could be taken as unopposed business.

13. MOTION – NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

RESOLVED, unopposed, that:-

'Under the Immigration Rules, women who have temporary limited leave to remain are not allowed to have recourse to public funds if they leave a violent spouse and very few refugees will accept women without recourse to public funds. A pilot scheme to provide women with accommodation and support whilst their application for leave to remain under the domestic violence rule is under consideration, is coming to an end.

Council,

RESOLVES to ask the Executive to consider ways to work together with the Council's partners to counter the specific set of problems that such women face in Norwich.'

14. MOTION – MICRO POWER

RESOLVED, unopposed, that:-

'The Council is already committed to reducing its own carbon emissions by 30% by 2012/13. The Joint Core Strategy provides policies to require developments to be low or zero carbon and to maximise local renewable energy production.

Therefore Council,

RESOLVES to:

- (1) commit to acting as a leader in the city in emission reductions

- (2) ask the Executive to consider ways in which the objectives of the Micro Generation Council could help us achieve this in Norwich. These are to provide:

- cohesive support, including a fiscal strategy and financial incentives for micro generation technologies;
- clear consumer information to achieve and maximise consumer engagement;
- comprehensive retrofit of Norwich's housing stock, including the private rental sector;
- credible career options in this field in Norwich.'

15. MOTION – RIVER SYSTEMS OF NORWICH

Councillor Holmes moved and Councillor Offord seconded the motion as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Lubbock moved and Councillor Waters seconded that this motion be referred to the River Issues Group and with 17 voting for, 10 against and 3 abstentions it was -

RESOLVED accordingly.

With almost 3 hours having passed since the start of the meeting and with 9 voting for the continuation of the meeting, 15 against and 0 abstentions the meeting was adjourned.

LORD MAYOR

Appendix A

Questions to Executive Members and Committee Chairs

Question 1

Councillor Rosalind Wright to the Leader of the Council:-

"What assurances can the Leader of the Council give that the proposed Implementation Executive of the new unitary council will be run with openness and accountability and that relevant documentation will be made available whenever possible?"

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council's reply:-

"We are determined that the implementation process will be as transparent and open as possible. However, we need to bear in mind that there are only 12 months left for the implementation programme, which means that a huge amount of work and decisions will be needed in a relatively short period of time. We will therefore need to strike a balance in order to allow decisions to be made clearly and quickly.

Accountability to the people of Norwich has been consistently at the heart of our unitary proposals. Unlike the current two-tier system, decisions on the future of the city will be made by councillors who represent areas within the city area. Members of the Implementation Executive will be directly accountable to city electors, and there will be all out elections in May 2011 where local people will be able to express their views on the implementation process.

The draft structural change orders for a unitary Norwich council stipulate that the Implementation Executive will be a committee of the City Council's Executive. This means that the normal rules with regard to publication of papers and agendas will apply. Meetings will be held in public.

The draft orders also set out that the work of the Implementation Executive will be subject to oversight by a Joint Scrutiny Committee made up of elected members of both the City Council and Norfolk County Council. These meetings will also be held in public, and normal publication arrangements will apply.

We will also be developing a range of communication and consultation activities to keep local people abreast of developments. This will include a dedicated website for the development of the new council, which will provide information on implementation arrangements, the design of new council and decisions that have been taken."

In reply to a supplementary question from **Councillor Rosalind Wright**, **Councillor Steve Morpew** said that it was the role of the Implementation Executive to draft the constitution for the new unitary council and that he would support efforts to ensure that this process was as transparent and open as possible.

Question 2

Councillor Brian Watkins to the Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services:-

“According to the recent Shelter report, the City Council is failing to match the annual level of affordable housing needed within its area. With a waiting list in excess of 8,000, the report states that the council has built an average of 410 dwellings during the last three years - well below the national target of 624 affordable homes.

Whilst I understand that the Shelter report has come in for some criticism, does the Executive Member recognise any shortcomings within the council for failing to meet the required housing need, or does she blame the policies of this Labour government instead?”

Councillor Brenda Arthur, Executive Member for Housing and Adult Services' reply:-

“We all know that good housing is the bedrock on which healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities are built. Therefore this administration has recognised the importance of improving our existing stock and ensuring that more affordable housing is made available.

As a result this authority can be proud of its record of enabling the delivery of affordable homes for the people of Norwich. In 2006 the newly elected Labour administration promised 1000 new homes in its first three years and that figure was surpassed in under three years. The recent groundbreaking single conversation with the HCA will ensure more homes are developed and for the first time in many years Norwich will by the end of 2010 start work on building its own council houses again. This comes at a time when our RSL partners have struggled with the capacity to deliver having been hit by reductions in revenue and the economic downturn resulting in a lack of funds and low numbers of properties coming through section 106 agreements on stalled sites.

You will have seen from Shelter's league table that Norwich is 5th out of 47 in the Eastern Region and 23rd out of 323 nationwide. So while there is still room for improvement we are currently in the in the upper quartile both regionally and nationally.

Clearly we want to build on the work we have undertaken of late to increase our ability to provide more homes. Our Housing Development team will continue to work diligently with our developing partners in the City and with the Homes and Community Agency to bring forward as many properties as possible.

It should also be remembered that new build affordable housing is not the only answer to meeting need. Our work in bringing empty properties back into use, with the majority of the Empty Dwelling Orders being enforced across the country being here in Norwich, has resulted in a number of homes coming back into the market. Our initiatives to enable people to access the private rented sector through our Landlord Accreditation Scheme and our Private Sector Landlord Scheme are also helping to address housing need in Norwich.

Looking to the future we were pleased to hear last week that the Housing Minister John Healey has announced his recommendations for a long awaited restructure of the Housing Revenue account. His proposals will allow stock holding local authorities to retain all of their income and be in a better position to respond more effectively to local need in a more sustainable way. This together with the Homes and Communities Agency established by this Labour government and our own work locally demonstrates a clear commitment to social housing both in central government and here in Norwich."

Question 3

Councillor David Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"Benefit interviews are taking place in areas such as the third floor landing in City Hall. I am concerned that members of the public are having supposedly 'confidential' interviews in public areas, rather than in a private and comfortable setting. Could the Executive Member tell me whether they are happy with the present arrangements, why these arrangements have come about, and how long they will be in place for?"

Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-

"The benefits service has introduced a new role of benefit officer for a one year trial period. There are 6 benefits officers who help benefit claimants complete benefit claim forms and assess the claim. This new role has been devised to give our customers an end to end service from first point of contact. The role has relieved pressure on the customer contact team and helped to manage to deal with the 60% increase in new benefit claims over the past 12 months.

Prior to the introduction of the benefit officer role in the benefits service interviews were taking place at the counter in the customer contact centre. The customers would have to stand at the counter and give personal details in earshot of the waiting customers.

The 6 benefit officers conduct interviews throughout the day. They use an interview room where possible and where this is not possible they will use a private space, such as the space on the third floor landing."

Question 4

Councillor Claire Stephenson to the Leader of the Council:-

"What proportion of the items celebrating tourism in Norwich, for sale at the Norwich Tourist Information Centre during British Tourism Week were made in the city?"

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council's reply:-

"Norwich Tourist Information centre (TIC) sells approx 300 different lines of stock, sourced from approx 24 suppliers. Of those 10 are Norfolk based companies. It is not always possible to use local companies as the type of goods we require are supplied by national companies who are the only manufacturer – e.g. A-Z maps, Ordnance Survey etc, or some Norwich branded merchandise. We still abide by the councils procurement policy to balance the cost of procurement with the quality of goods, and how these meet our objectives.

Our new ranges of exclusive merchandise with the 'I love Norwich' logo is being sourced through the Design, Print and Production (DPP) procurement tender process which follows the councils procurement guidelines. Several companies were asked to supply quotes for printing and supply of various lines. Of the 4 lines ordered so far, 3 are from Norwich and Norfolk based companies. Our brief for these items which are exclusively available at the TIC, is to where possible, continue the sustainable ethos begun with the 'I love Norwich' bag, i.e. organic, fair-trade.

Exclusive lines ordered so far are:-

- baseball caps which are made of recycled plastic bottles;
- T- Shirt which are Earth Positive climate neutral manufactured and made from organic cotton;
- T-towel which are made out of organic cotton;
- earthenware mugs."

Question 5

Councillor Stephen Little to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-

"I have had a number of complaints from residents regarding the uneven quality of roads after being 'surface dressed' and the build up of large piles of stones by the roadside. Ashby Street is one particular example with many residents of the opinion that the surface is now, after two years, even more uneven than it was previously. Can the Executive Member clarify how the Council chooses which treatment to apply to road surfaces and, more specifically, when will Ashby Street be fully resurfaced?"

Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development reply:-

"Surface dressing is an efficient cost effective means of preventing further deterioration of a road. It can extend the life of a road by over 10 years and it restores surface texture as well. However, it does not improve the profile or ride quality of the underlying surface, although prior to surface dressing the worst erosion and surface depressions are patched.

Excess chippings are swept up by the surfacing contractor after completion of the works. Stones will however continue to work free from the surface for several weeks after this initial sweep and this is addressed through our routine street cleansing

operations. However, due to the presence of parked vehicles, street sweeping can be difficult to achieve (even with advance notice to the public).

The cost of surface dressing is much less than resurfacing a road: by a factor of 6 to 10. With limited and declining budgets for road maintenance there is therefore a choice – in trying to use the funding as effectively as possible – to either:-

- resurface few roads and allow others to deteriorate so that they become more expensive to repair at a later date; or
- surface dress several roads and help manage the need for more expensive intervention.

Funding for highways maintenance is provided by Norfolk County Council in accordance with the Norfolk Transport Asset Management Plan and Local Transport Plan. In reality, funds are made available for both resurfacing and surface dressing. The works budget for resurfacing principle roads (i.e. A and B class roads) in the City during 2010/11 is £1,331,000 and, for non-principle roads, it is £91,000. These figures compare to £293,000 for surface dressing.

With Ashby Street having been surface dressed and the life of the road extended there are presently no plans for full resurfacing within the foreseeable future. However, Ashby Street is inspected four times a year and routine repairs will be ordered as required. Also, if these inspections were to show further worsening then the need for resurfacing would be reviewed.”

Question 6

Councillor Samir Jeraj to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-

“The pedestrian crossing at the junction of the Avenues and Bluebell Road was recently replaced. However, the markings on the pavement for pedestrians and cyclists had not been repainted, causing a lot of confusion. When will this work be completed?”

Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development’s reply:

“I am pleased to confirm that the outstanding works are scheduled to be completed by 30 March and within the anticipated project programme timescale.

I believe that this area of the City is in University Ward, could Councillor Jeraj confirm that he had contacted the University City Councillors to let them know he would be raising an issue concerning their Ward and asking them if they minded he was encroaching on their Ward. This has always been an unwritten rule of the Council as it is a matter of politeness and common manners to let Councillors of a Ward that is not your own know what you are doing in their Ward.”

Councillor Samir Jeraj asked, as a supplementary question, if the Executive member agreed that it was reasonable for him to ask such questions as there were many students from his ward that cycled through this area. **Councillor Brian Morrey** said that he would always pass on such concerns to the relevant Ward Councillors.

Question 7

Councillor John Fisher to the Executive Member for Customer Contact and Citizens Services:-

“Having recently reported a number of incidents of broken glass in public areas I have been informed that there is a special section in Environmental Services who will be dispatched to clear the glass within 24 hours. I passed this information on to the Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA) representatives and a couple of local residents. Please can this information be circulated to all TRA teams across the city and advertised in the Citizen. Broken glass can be a hazard to children and animals and if we are offering a service we should ensure that residents who are interested in their area are fully aware that it exists.”

Councillor Julie Brociek-Coulton, Executive Member for Customer Contact and Citizens Services reply:-

“All such incidents need to be reported through the Council’s Customer Contact Team so they can be logged and dealt with in the most efficient way. You can contact the team from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday on 0344 980 3333. Once logged, they are passed to the appropriate team to deal with. In the case of broken glass it is normally passed to the contractor through the Environmental Services team so that it can be cleared as quickly as possible.

Councillors will be aware of the new neighbourhood teams that are being put in place that will increase the numbers of staff working at the local level with communities and partners to improve the quality of life. These teams, in conjunction with neighbourhood housing officers will be able to deal with these types of problems much more effectively.

If the TRA’s identify specific problems that keep reoccurring, they will be able to raise their concerns with local neighbourhood officers who can start to resolve some of the underlying issues on why such things keep happening.

We want to deliver services at a local level and work much more closely with residents and partners and enable communities to influence services they receive so they are responsive to local needs. The teams are about joining up services and working with communities and service providers at a neighbourhood level to improve the quality of life for our residents.”

Councillor John Fisher asked, as a supplementary question, whether some information on this service could be placed in the Citizen and information cascaded to TRAs. **Councillor Steve Morpew** said that as soon as problems were identified resources were targeted to the right place. The council always responded to councillor reports. However, in respect of the last Council question you asked about dog mess, you had not actually reported any incidents. Relating to this question

about glass you have only reported one incident. Under the new neighbourhood system the council would not be working in silos and any member of staff would have a responsibility of dealing with issues reported. If any TRA member were aware of a problem they could report it to any member of staff who should be able to help. Measures would be undertaken to ensure that in future all council staff were easily identified.

Question 8

Councillor Antony Little to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-

"It is very good news indeed that consultation has started on a new zebra crossing for Recreation Road School and a road safety scheme for Clover Hill Nursery & Infant School. Could the Executive Member please tell me how many schools and nurseries in Norwich do not have a road crossing scheme (zebra crossing, pelican crossing, lines/dropped kerbs etc) outside of their gates and of any plans to rectify this to ensure that we really do provide "safe routes to school?"

Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development reply:-

"In the last ten years, the City and County Councils have worked closely with the schools developing School Travel Plans and whenever schools have requested measures in the school's immediate vicinity these have been provided. The scope of measures implemented include those mentioned by Councillor Little, together with signage, waiting restrictions and traffic calming. At the three schools where nothing has been done (Eaton Hall, Harford Manor and Magdalen Gates Schools), it is because nothing was requested or needed.

We have also widened the scope of the Safer and Healthier Journeys project to look at routes to the school – and what can be done to make these routes safer for pedestrians and cyclists. For example, this summer we will be providing a pedestrian phase at the Aylsham Road / Woodcock Road junction, which will benefit both Mile Cross Primary and Catton Grove Primary, plus of course the wider community.

The scope of these improvements on the routes to schools varies enormously, it may be that it's just a short stretch of footpath that is required, or a new cycle lane, or a pedestrian refuge. These can be relatively easily funded by the Local Transport Plan, which for 2010/11 has set aside £275,000 for such improvements. However some of the more major projects are harder to deliver and one of the biggest obstacles to improving routes to schools is how to improve crossings at junctions on the key road network. The roundabouts on Heartsease Lane, Newmarket Road, Earlham Road and Hall Road have all been highlighted as particular problems, along with the signalled junction at Bracondale / King Street. To provide crossings at these locations, without detriment to capacity would require multi-million pound schemes, that there are simply not the resources available at present.

Members may be interested to know that as of yesterday, 29 March 2010; all school zigzag markings which restrict parking outside school entrances will be covered by a legal order that makes them enforceable by our Civil Enforcement Officers where

previously only the police could enforce these. Removing dangerous parking from outside schools, should improve safety for children and their parents."

Councillor Antony Little asked, as a supplementary question, if the Executive member was saying that every traffic calming measure identified as being necessary had or would shortly have been met. **Councillor Morrey** said that he would investigate and respond.

Question 9

Councillor Niki George to the Leader of the Council:-

"We are all very pleased that Norwich has been shortlisted as the UK's city of Culture. Would the Leader of the Council consider creating an Executive Member with specific responsibility for Culture at the next Council AGM, as has been the case prior to 2008, to give the bid and the cultural output of the city real leadership and drive from a single, focused, accountable and responsible member?"

Councillor Steve Morpew, Leader of the Council's reply:-

"Councillor George will be surprised to know that we already have an Executive Member with specific responsibility for culture. In my role as Leader I have had culture as part of my portfolio since 2008.

As Councillor George rightly notes that during my time as portfolio holder Norwich has been shortlisted for the UK city of Culture and I believe the City has an excellent chance of securing this prestigious title and the estimated hundred's of millions of pound investment in the City that would result from this.

I would like to think that the City's Cultural offer has already benefitted from being part of the leader's portfolio as it is receiving the attention it deserves. It is fully my intention to keep culture as part of the leader's portfolio at the next Council AGM in order to ensure culture and our bid for city of culture will continue to have leadership and drive from a single, focused, accountable and responsible member."

Question 10

Councillor Andrew Wiltshire to the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development:-

"Following a concerning discussion with residents of my ward, could the Executive Member please tell me what are the Council's current obligations towards maintenance of its community centres and upgrades of their individual systems, such as heating?"

Councillor Linda Blakeway, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development's reply:-

"The Council owns and maintains 15 community centres across the City in addition to the Norman Centre. The 15 centres are managed on a day to day basis either by voluntary management committees or community associations under a license or lease agreement with the Council.

These agreements were reviewed in 2005 and clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of the Council as the asset owner and the community associations as the occupiers. The agreements can be made available to members should they wish.

In essence, the Council is responsible for the fabric of the building, external decoration, electric and heating. The community associations are responsible for internal decoration, fixtures and fittings and furniture.

Some centres have, with support from officers, successfully accessed external funding or in kind support to undertake their own improvements. For example, in the last year West Earham and Belvedere Community Associations have refurbished their kitchens and Wensum Community Centre has replaced their heating boiler. Council officers can also advise community centres on issues such as energy efficiency and how to ensure that the centres are signed up to the most economical tariffs for their energy consumption.

As Councillor Wiltshire has not specified which Community Centre is causing concern to residents in his ward I am unable to offer a more detailed reply, however if he wishes to share these concerns with me I will endeavour to supply him with more comprehensive information at a later date."

Question 11

Councillor Judith Lubbock to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-

"Please could the Executive member for Finance explain the various options for Norwich businesses paying their business rates?"

Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-

"The following information is provided by the Council and can be found on the following webpage:-

(http://www.norwich.gov.uk/webapps/atoz/service_page.asp?id=1142)

Where it says:-

'How to pay your business rates

Paying by direct debit

Direct debit is the easiest way to pay. Payments are automatically taken from a bank or building society account each month so no need to worry about remembering to pay the bill. The payment date can be chosen - either on the 1st, 8th, 15th or 28th of each month from April to January. To pay by direct debit you can complete the form below and send it back to us or contact our revenue services on 01603 212898.

[Direct debit form](#)

Telephone payments

To pay business rates by debit or credit card over the phone, please call our telephone payments hotline on 01603 212282.

Paying by cheque

Please send cheques to:

Revenue services
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH.

All cheques should be made payable to **Norwich City Council** and the business rates account number should be written on the back of the cheque (this can be found on the bill).

Paying online

Payment of business rates and other services can be made online using a debit card or credit card.

Please note that if you are paying your business rates by credit card there will be a 1.95% surcharge.

[Click here to make online payments](#)

For more information please contact

Revenue Services
City Hall
Norwich, NR2 1NH

t: 01603 212898

f: 01603 212905

e: revenues@norwich.gov.uk

Minicom: 01603 212587

The following information is also relevant to Councillor Lubbock's question:-

The Council publicises hardship relief provisions in the Booklet that accompanies the annual rate bill. Ratepayers are also made aware of the provisions when an organisation is known to be in financial difficulties. The Council does not have a specific budget available for this purpose due to its own financial constraints. However, we would normally encourage payment by making arrangement to settle over an extended period to help firms in this situation.

When considering the provision for hardship relief the Council is required by law to consider the impact granting the relief would have on the local council tax payers as well as the benefit to the business. Each request is considered on an individual basis.

25% of cost of the relief is met by the council tax payers of Norwich. The remaining 75% is met by the National Pool. The receipts from non domestic rates collected by

the Council is paid into the national pool each year and redistributed as a grant to each authority in accordance with the formula set by the government.

Another form of relief is the small business rate relief that applies to property with a rateable value of less than £15,000. Where the rateable value is below £10,000 additional relief will be granted. However, there are a number of qualifying conditions where the ratepayer has more than one property. The scheme is advertised in the booklet that accompanies the annual bill and is advertised on our website. An application form must be completed before relief can be granted.'

There are currently around 1200 businesses who receive small business rate relief (SBRR) (value £1,046,249). The Business Rates team proactively discuss SBRR with any business that contacts us and there is information about SBRR with each bill that is sent."

Councillor Judith Lubbock said that the council gave an undertaking to use post offices wherever possible and asked, as a supplementary question, why businesses could not pay their rates at a post office. **Councillor Waters** said that businesses had no difficulty in paying rates because of the high number of ways they could pay. However, he would look into the issue.

Question 12

Councillor Jeremy Hooke to the Leader of the Council:-

"It is believed the role of the Lord Mayor will change considerably within this next Civic year. It is understood that there will be a reduction in the amount of functions attended by the Lord Mayor from the traditional 500-750 down to around 200 per Civic Year. This is an approx reduction of two thirds and many Civic Events, Military Events, Charities and City Organisations will suffer.

With this in mind:

Will the staff at the Civic Office, the Lord Mayor's budget and Lord Mayor's monthly expenses all be reduced by two thirds accordingly?"

Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council's reply:-

"Councillor Hooke prefers it when I don't get cross at the questions he asks in council, but he really should help me. He knows my phone number it would have taken little effort to ring me to check his facts. He knows the lengths we go to in order to make sure the civic offices are treated with respect and it is really disappointing to read a question like this.

As a consequence, even to begin to try to answer his question is pointless. If he wants to discuss it properly then he knows how to contact me."

Councillor Jeremy Hooke asked, as a supplementary question, if the functions reduced, would the Executive member vote for the new Lord Mayor and expect others past and present to also do so. **Councillor Steve Morphew** said this supplementary question was unclear. He emphasised that no-one had suggested diluting the traditional role of the Lord Mayor. The aim was to ensure that the role

continued to be relevant and was manageable. He added that the preparations for the new council would look at how we could develop the traditions within the new governance arrangements. He emphasised that his offer to talk to Councillor Hooke remained.

Question 13

Councillor Mary Cannell to the Leader of the Council:-

“Could the Leader outline the achievements of the Labour administration during this civic year?”

Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council’s reply:-

“The Labour administration has had a number of notable achievements over the last civic year. This list is in no particular order

1. Achieved unitary status orders through parliament;
2. Achieved clean accounts;
3. Achieved a 2 in Use of resources against the harder test;
4. Started work on the war memorial;
5. Set up the Norwich war Memorials trust;
6. Started work on the skate park;
7. Agreed an historic deal with the HCA to develop 1100 new homes;
8. Won agreement and funding towards building the first new council houses in Norwich for decades;
9. Set a council tax level well within our promises to the city – about 1p per day for 89% of households;
10. Restored from 1 April the extra hour for concessionary bus pass holders;
11. Introduced and maintained free swimming for Go4Less card holders;
12. Exceeded 35% recycling – way ahead of our targets;
13. Announced the start of food waste collection from autumn;
14. Relet the contracts previous carried out by CityCare at lower cost and higher performance overall;
15. Reduced the budget by 16% without unpopular service cuts, further privatisation of services and few redundancies;
16. Introduced Neighbourhood working from 1 April;
17. Returned wardens to local areas and extended the area they cover;
18. Made ‘phenomenal’ improvements in our housing service on target to reach 2 stars in 2 years;
19. Led the campaign through Regional Cities East for improvements and influence in future rail services;
20. Reached agreement with partner GNDP councils on the Joint Core Strategy;
21. Been shortlisted for the UK Capital of Culture;
22. Exceeded 350 new business created under LEGL funding;
23. Opened the Lady Julian Bridge;
24. Started work as part of GNDP on St Augustine’s gyratory system;
25. Introduced new 0344 phone number;
26. Introduced advice and support for people worst hit by the recession;
27. Helped bring the Genome Analysis Centre to Norwich;
28. Brought the Sport Relief Mile event to Norwich;
29. Taken the Planning service into the top quartile of performers.”