

**Cabinet**  
**2 November 2020**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

Agenda item 6	Public Question Time
6.1	<p><b>Question from Lesley Grahame</b>  Nearly 4 000 people have signed a petition to keep two lime trees on Tombland, wanting to defend the trees that give amenity, shade, habitat and flood protection to their area, and improves its air quality. Many have expressed wider concerns for the incremental loss of trees &amp; green spaces for development</p> <p>I'm told that Conservation Area Appraisal was used which does not consider natural heritage. Given the twin crises of climate and species extinction, will the Cabinet member introduce:  A default presumption of preserving mature established trees  An Assessment process that gives substantial weight to the ecosystem and amenity services that trees provide, before considering their removal, such as CAVAT or TEMPO.</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Martin Wilby</b>  In relation to the specific scheme at Tombland, of the 22 existing trees we need to remove two of these to enable the scheme to be delivered, however we will be replacing these with five new trees.</p> <p>It is unfortunate that two trees will be removed, and this is a not a decision that has been taken lightly. We carried out a public consultation on the proposals and as a result of feedback we carried out further survey work and made some changes to the scheme design. We also sought and took account of the advice of appropriate experts.</p> <p>We recognise that the tree planting in Tombland is of significant value, which is why we have used the project as an opportunity to diversify and increase planting, ensuring that tree cover in Tombland is secured for future generations while also responding to the reconfigured uses in space.</p> <p>The replacement trees will be of a minimum heavy standard size classification – these trees are much larger than saplings and will have an immediate presence in the streetscene. They will also increase the resilience of the overall Tombland tree planting in our changing climate, with increasing pressures from pests and diseases, and will increase biodiversity. Pollution tolerance and mitigation was another consideration in the selection of tree species.</p> <p>We will be improving rooting conditions for the retained existing trees by installing a permeable surface below them and addressing the treatment around the base of the stems to allow unimpeded future growth.</p> <p>More generally, all highway projects where trees may be impacted are discussed with appropriate experts, to ensure that we can reflect current best practice and guidance, and their advice is taken into account by our highway design teams. The County Council also has a well established Tree Safety Management Policy in place, and as part of the Council's Environmental Policy we have recognised the importance of planting more trees to improve biodiversity and as potential mitigate measure for climate change.</p>

	<p>Therefore, I do not think that there is a need to amend the existing approach or policy.</p>
6.2	<p><b>Question 1 from Christine Marshall</b> To the local community, Holt Hall is a much loved part of its history, a local asset, for over 70 years a source of income for local businesses, livelihoods for local residents, a venue for active volunteering as well as for its primary School, Youth Project, residents on Open Days and events and a Norfolk wide facility of which it is inordinately proud.</p> <p>What community consultation has NCC undertaken with Holt Town Council, community groups and residents in the locality about the impact on them of the sale of Holt Hall?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> We have engaged with those who use the outdoor learning provision at Holt Hall to consider the impact of ceasing day and residential visits. Engagement has taken place with stakeholders - principally schools, Holt Hall staff and volunteers as well as partners such as Friends of Holt Hall and a local holiday company offering services on the site. No decision has been taken regarding the future of the building.</p>
6.2.1	<p><b>Question 2 from Christine Marshall</b> What steps has the council taken to explore the potential of identifying and establishing partnership working with local interested parties to save on site educational provision?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> We are consulting on ceasing the current day and residential provision. We have not sought partnerships, as the approach being evaluated is to leave this market to other providers. We are not consulting on closing Holt Hall, and the future of the building is not yet decided.</p>
6.3	<p><b>Question 1 from Brian Donovan</b> NCC says it is keen to promote volunteering and its value in the community. The council must be aware of the huge contribution volunteers have made as part of the Holt Hall “family”. Some volunteers who have died have memorial trees funded and planted in the Victorian wall garden. Volunteers add value with the planting of the walled garden, assist the Head Gardener with management of the woodlands, raising funds through a pop up cafe and Run Norwich, adding to the beauty and ethos for children’s outdoor learning and mental well-being.</p> <p>What will the council do in a lasting way to respect the value of these voluntary contributions and protect the memorials to those whose commitment was so strong?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Greg Peck</b> A decision has yet to be made about the future of Holt Hall. Once a decision is taken about the service delivery of outdoor learning on November the 17th the council will</p>

	<p>consider future plans for the building and its land and any associated matters to be considered, including the voluntary contributions and memorials. If there are specific concerns about memorials, I would ask that Mr Donovan contact the Corporate Property Team <a href="mailto:corp.propertyteam@norfolk.gov.uk">corp.propertyteam@norfolk.gov.uk</a></p>
6.3.1	<p><b>Question 2 from Brian Donovan</b> NCC sold the lower lake off. It is not maintained as it should be now. The main lake contains rare fish, the woods contain semi ancient and protected trees, and delicate habitat that needs continuous care. They have several layers of protection (eg SSSI). How seriously do NCC take their responsibility to protect these environments?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Greg Peck</b> A number of protections exists for environmental assets – notably around protected trees and SSSI landscapes – enforced by a number of bodies, including the Local Planning Authority. Environmental issues will be flagged up, should the site be disposed, with purchasers (who will ultimately be liable) and who will need to consider the maintenance of these sites. The environmental legislation that exists already is the most appropriate to protect these natural assets.</p>
6.4	<p><b>Question from Kate Jewell</b> Before it is decided to cease the provision of current outdoor learning services at Holt Hall and potentially dispose of the vacated land and buildings, the value to society of the site should be protected.</p> <p>What are the council's views on a proposal to protect, through planning constraints and sale conditions this valuable natural environment and county wildlife asset, its ancient woodland and scientifically significant lake, the skills and inspiration of the team, and overall, the present mission (which council says it supports) providing young people's opportunity to learn, love and value the natural world and their part in its future?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Greg Peck</b> No formal decision has been made on the future of Holt Hall. Should it be declared as surplus to NCC's requirements, we will work with our agents to identify what the best method to bring this site to the market would be. This will also consider what the likely interest would be in the site and this could be as a going concern, for a restricted use, or on an all enquiries basis. Ultimately the decision on any use (different to the current use) would need to be made by the Local Planning Authority.</p>
6.5	<p><b>Question from Iona Chamberlain</b> Cllr Fisher stated 'closing Holt Hall is not the end of Outdoor Learning in Norfolk' and agreed that it is an important part of any curriculum. The impact of Covid 19 has affected all providers and The Telegraph expect half of UK centres to close, because residential, which are a major source of income, are currently restricted by the DfE.</p> <p>What research has been carried out, which gives the council confidence that there will be sufficient providers operating in 2021 and what will the Council do to support</p>

	<p>schools if there is a lack of provision?</p> <p>Cllr Fisher specifically mentioned Brancaster Activity Centre will no longer be running residential</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> Outdoor learning and residential provision is offered within the market by a range of local and international providers. Norfolk is fortunate to have a number of such centres located within the county and we have sought to understand the planned offer and some of the current challenges in at least 10 other centres which offer significant programmes including a core offer of residential activity packages. All centres are currently affected by the impact of the pandemic and the continuing need to maintain social distancing etc which restricts their ability to offer residential programmes</p> <p>In the financial year 2019 – 2020 43 Norfolk schools out of over 450, and 1 Norfolk university, used the residential facilities at Holt Hall. This was approximately 7% of all residential outdoor learning visits undertaken by Norfolk schools. In addition, 32 Norfolk schools completed day visits, and 9 schools used the campsite. This highlights that most Norfolk's schools already make use of other centres and locations to deliver outdoor learning to Norfolk children and young people.</p>
6.6	<p><b>Question 1 from Nic Hopkins</b> Children's Services is considering the future of Holt Hall as a Centre for Outdoor Learning. I worry that ceasing to provide these services is the wrong choice. Closing the environmental study facilities and grounds risks losing valuable professional skills, experience and reputation for Norfolk and a centre of excellence according to customer feedback assessments.</p> <p>If there is a funding gap of £85,000 per year, why not take further time to explore the options of additional services, commercial partnerships, sponsorships and revenues to provide cost-effective future outdoor learning, personal development and mental health for Norfolk and the region's children for years to come?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Andrew Jamieson</b> We have not sought partnerships, as the approach being evaluated is to leave this market to other providers. The funding gap is considerably larger than £85,000 per annum, which was the average figure before Covid-19, as there is currently no income. In addition, there is a significant requirement for maintenance and a long-term future would require substantial capital investment.</p>
6.6.1	<p><b>Question 2 from Nic Hopkins</b> Has the Children's Services Team in the review process had suggestions about possible partners and additional services, and how have these been evaluated?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> We are consulting on ceasing the current day and residential provision. We have not sought partnerships, as the approach being evaluated is to leave this market to other providers and taken on the role of strategic enabler. We are not consulting on closing Holt Hall, and the future of the building is not yet decided</p>

6.7	<p><b>Question from Susan Vaughan</b></p> <p>Holt Hall is a unique, secure, valuable asset with potential to generate additional income through extended activity, and the ability to substantially add premium value to areas of social, health and preventative services that NCC and its partners deliver to vulnerable young people individuals, families and groups.</p> <p>What discussions internally and with potential partners have been undertaken to establish how such a venue could meet multiple statutory functions by supporting the cost effective delivery of other services, in addition to its current environmental education role which leads on NCC's Environmental Policy of more engagement with the public about biodiversity and making Norfolk carbon neutral by 2030?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Greg Peck</b></p> <p>Holt Hall is an expensive to maintain building for the local authority and is unlikely to offer a cost-effective solution to provide multi-agency statutory functions. Our objective is to make our estate carbon neutral by 2030 and we are engaged in several measures to achieve this.</p> <p>A number of protections exists for environmental assets – notably around protected trees and SSSI landscapes – enforced by a number of bodies, including the Local Planning Authority. Environmental issues will be flagged up, should the site be disposed, with purchasers (who will ultimately be liable) and who will need to consider the maintenance of these sites.</p> <p>The environmental legislation that exists already, is the most appropriate to protect these natural assets.</p>
6.8	<p><b>Question from Thomas Green</b></p> <p>As a Norfolk teacher, headteacher, inspector and Education Department associate, I witnessed first-hand the transformational impact and education benefit to children visiting Holt Hall. Exposure to nature and the outdoors is a key factor in maintaining and improving mental health and well-being. The review landscape has now changed. The UK Children's Commissioner has drawn attention regarding children's well-being adversely affected by the Covid crisis. Councils will be judged by how they remediate this situation.</p> <p>What is the assessed impact of any proposed closure on children and young people and where is the evidence to support it?</p> <p><b>Response Cllr John Fisher</b></p> <p>We agree on the importance and impact of great outdoor education and want to ensure that we take a leadership role to support and challenge all schools on this part of their curriculum. We are currently consulting on ceasing our direct delivery of residential and day visit provision at Holt Hall. It is a difficult decision but would enable us to focus our limited resources. It would also assist other providers, some of whom are struggling, as the Council would no longer be a direct provider, but an enabler in the market.</p> <p>We have a duty to ensure that public money is appropriately spent. In the last financial year 7% of Norfolk School residentials took place at Holt Hall. This represents a small share of the current market.</p>

6.9	<p><b>Question 1 from Susan Dowling</b> Could the cabinet member for Assets please provide an update relating to the former Cosy Carpets building, Minstergate ,in Thetford. I believe from media reports the building was compulsory purchased by Norfolk County Council; rumours locally suggest that this building has been returned to it's previous owner. Could you please confirm whether this is the case ?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Greg Peck</b> We have reached a settlement with the previous owners, as part of which we have transferred the freehold of the former Cosy Carpets site to them, a settlement we feel is fair for all sides. There were strong arguments on both sides and we also need to bear in mind the cost of going to Upper Tribunal, with us, as the Acquiring Authority expected to pay all parties' costs.</p>
6.9.1	<p><b>Question 2 from Susan Dowling</b> Could you please confirm the total expenditure incurred by Norfolk County Council in relation to the Cosy Carpets building over the past 10 years; including the estimated cost of the asset, if it has been returned to previous owner.</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Greg Peck</b> This case dates back to the original Compulsory Purchase Order for the site back in 2013. The valuation and compensation payable for sites purchased under CPO can be extremely complex, as the court will look at the potential value for a site at the time of acquisition (in this case 2014).</p> <p>There are a number of other factors that we needed to take account of including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The planning status of the various plots, as well as a Certificate of Appropriate Alternative Development for 12 apartments and 2 dwellings on Plot 1 and a restaurant / flat on Plot 3.</li> <li>2) The difficulty in establishing values in this area, given the relatively low volume of comparable sites.</li> </ol> <p>The time and level of the correspondence between the various agents – do show that this is not a simple matter, however the current value of the site is therefore not a material consideration. In terms of the total cost, this was subject to an FOI (Freedom of Information Request ENQ-404037-M0P3K8) we will update with latest costs and provide directly to the enquirer.</p>
6.10	<p><b>Question from Adrian Vaughan</b> At a time when NCC has a projected budget deficit, why is the cabinet refusing to allow access to its extensive estate at Holt Hall Outdoor Learning Centre, or permit its staff to deliver services at any remote site or even in school grounds? Permitting this would meet current thwarted customer demand and earn much needed income through the sale of Covid secure expertly taught school day visits, family activities and private bookings at Holt Hall.</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> The current guidance from the DfE clearly states that they advise against overnight educational visits. Day visits are permitted but require full consideration of the range</p>



	<p>of measures in place for schools, including consistent grouping and COVID-19 secure measures at the destination and during transport. Full and thorough risk assessments both in relation to COVID-19 and the normal guidance regarding educational visits are required, as is appropriate insurance. Within this context, the service provided would therefore at a minimum require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional staffing both by the school and by the service provider</li> <li>• Smaller pupil groups to facilitate social distancing</li> <li>• Transport arrangements within consistent groups</li> <li>• Social distancing arrangements of keeping people two metres apart, particularly if staff support more than one group</li> <li>• Hygiene measures to ensure any equipment that is handled is disinfected before being used by a second or subsequent person</li> <li>• Additional cleaning, including between sessions, where multiple groups attend a centre</li> <li>• Arrangements for separate (specialist) transport, including if a pupil or member of staff develops symptoms during the trip</li> </ul> <p>School leaders are understandably cautious regarding such arrangements. They have spent and are spending considerable time on the operational arrangements in their schools and communication with parents and the wider community. Therefore, the likely uptake of services is deemed low. Within this context the provision of services is not deemed viable and by some education leaders it is also not deemed desirable due to the increased risks whilst cases are rising.</p>
6.11	<p><b>Question 1 from Philip Bacon</b> Holt Hall is a much loved part of Norfolk history, a local asset for more than 70 years, a source of income for local businesses and local resident livelihoods, a venue for active volunteering as well as for its Primary School, Youth Project, residents, Open Days and events as well as being a Norfolk wide facility of which it is inordinately proud.</p> <p>What community consultation has taken place with Holt Town Council, other town and parish councils, local community groups and residents about the impact of the sale of Holt Hall?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> We have engaged with those who use the outdoor learning provision at Holt Hall to consider the impact of ceasing day and residential visits. Engagement has taken place with stakeholders - principally schools, Holt Hall staff and volunteers as well as partners such as Friends of Holt Hall and a local holiday company offering services on the site. No decision has been taken regarding the future of the building.</p>
6.11.1	<p><b>Question 2 from Philip Bacon</b> What steps have the council taken to explore establishing potential new partnerships with local interested parties to save on-site educational provision?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> We are consulting on ceasing the current day and residential provision. We have not sought partnerships, as the approach being evaluated is to leave this market to other providers. We are not consulting on closing Holt Hall, and the future of the building is</p>

	not yet decided.
6.12	<p><b>Question from Stephanie Gilbert</b> Holt Hall is a unique, secure, valuable asset which has the potential to generate additional income through extended activity, and the ability to substantially add premium value to areas of social, health and preventative services that NCC and its partners deliver to vulnerable young people, individuals, families and groups.</p> <p>What discussions internally and with potential partners have been carried out to establish how such a venue can meet multiple statutory functions by supporting the cost effective delivery of other services in addition to its current environmental education role which leads NCC's Environmental Policy of more engagement with the public about biodiversity and making Norfolk carbon neutral by 2030?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Greg Peck</b> Holt Hall is an expensive to maintain building for the local authority and is unlikely to offer a cost-effective solution to provide multi-agency statutory functions. Our objective is to make our estate carbon neutral by 2030 and we are engaged in a number of measures to achieve this.</p> <p>A number of protections exists for environmental assets – notably around protected trees and SSSI landscapes – enforced by a number of bodies, including the Local Planning Authority. Environmental issues will be flagged up, should the site be disposed, with purchasers (who will ultimately be liable) and who will need to consider the maintenance of these sites.</p> <p>The environmental legislation that exists already, is the most appropriate to protect these natural assets.</p>

<b>Agenda item 7</b>	<b>Local Member Issues/Questions</b>
7.1	<p><b>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins</b> Are you disappointed that Norfolk Conservative MPs voted with the Government to not fund the poorest families with food for their children over the half term and future holidays, as the demand for support from households facing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19 has outstripped the government funding available. Will you join Councils such as the Liberal Democrat run Portsmouth City Council, in not wanting any child to go hungry, and provide families of children with food tokens to cover the Christmas period?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Andrew Proctor</b> I recognise that government has made significant support available to vulnerable people through the benefits system, in addition to the Emergency Assistance Grant and other general purpose and specific Covid-19 grants to local authorities. We know this has been a tough year for many people in Norfolk and we've been working with partners to support the most vulnerable, especially as winter kicks in and the furlough scheme ends. Norfolk County Council will continue to support people in the best way possible with the funds available to us. I announced on Thursday a £200,000 fund in partnership with Norfolk Community Foundation to support families and vulnerable</p>



	people facing hardship over the coming months and into the Christmas period.
7.2	<p><b>Question from Cllr Steff Aquarone</b> What would need to be done to make Norfolk – not just Norfolk County Council - carbon neutral by 2030?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Andy Grant</b></p> <p>Achieving the target of carbon neutrality is a stretching goal, either for Norfolk County Council or for the county of Norfolk as a whole. Whilst Norfolk County Council has set a target of 2030, the current Government target for the country as a whole, including Norfolk, is to achieve this goal by 2050.</p> <p>Norfolk County Council has set itself this ambitious target as an authority and has taken significant strides towards this goal, including through its commitment to plant a million trees, and by changing many aspects of the way the organisation operates, including through its ambitious Smarter Working programme and in the approach taken to managing its estate.</p> <p>In terms of the wider county, Norfolk County Council recognises that it has a responsibility to work in partnership with many different organisations and bodies including our District partners, the private sector, key environmental organisations, and higher education, particularly working with the University of East Anglia who have considerable expertise in this field.</p> <p>As elsewhere in the country, achieving carbon neutrality will involve a concerted effort across many sectors including construction, agriculture, transportation, and energy production. Alongside adopting a range of positive new measures across these different sectors, the Committee on Climate Change suggests that there will also be a residual amount of impact that will have to be addressed through some form of offsetting activity. This is likely to involve an increasing reliance on renewable electricity as the main component within the wider energy mix, both within our homes and underpinning how we travel.</p> <p>Over the coming period, NCC will continue to provide a leadership role where appropriate, helping to coordinate key activity, developing sustainable partnerships, and communicating and delivering our plans in close partnership with the communities we serve.</p>
7.3	<p><b>Question from Cllr Dan Roper</b></p> <p>School Headteachers in England have just received an email from the Department of Education informing them that their allocations of laptops for disadvantaged pupils have been slashed by around 80%. This was just two days after the government used its Covid-19 emergency powers to impose a new legal duty on schools to provide a remote education to any pupil unable to attend lessons because of the pandemic. Can you confirm what the position is in Norfolk and how many/what percentage of school children will now receive a laptop?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b></p> <p>Children are supported with a laptop in a number of ways, including the government schemes. For example, schools have for some time made laptops available to children and young people. We do not have an overall percentage of how many children benefit from this across Norfolk, as allocations are made directly to academies</p>

7.4	<p><b>Question from Cllr Tim East</b> Did you accept the European Environment Agency data in February of a six-metre rise in sea levels which would see areas such as Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Hemsby and Wroxham under water? If you did not, what level of sea rise and damage to Norfolk are you working to?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Andy Grant</b> We take account of the evidence gathered by the Government via the lead UK agencies, including the Met Office and the Environment Agency. This is set out in the 'Exploratory sea levels projections for the UK to 2300'. The projections in this do not suggest that the levels will be in the range proposed by The European Environment Agency along any stretch of the UK coastline.</p> <p>A more detailed analysis of potential sea level rise impacts on Norfolk is currently being undertaken through the "Broadlands Futures Initiative": a partnership including the Environment Agency, Broads Authority and Norfolk County Council. This work has not yet drawn any final conclusions but in regard to this question offers the following advice:</p> <p>It depends on the timescale considered, the assumed future emission scenario, and the level of statistical confidence assumed within the scenario results.</p> <p>For the purposes of Broadlands Futures Initiative (BFI) we've presented a number of different emissions scenarios to reflect uncertainty about the future, but to also emphasise that change is inevitable. These scenarios range between RCP 2.6, where emissions are restricted to limit warming to 2 degree C above pre-industrial levels, and RCP 8.5 which is 'business as usual' with continued high emissions. Within each of these scenarios we show the 50th percentile values in our BFI documents. Based on this approach we are presenting the possibility that by 2120 mean sea level could be between 54cm and 102cm higher.</p> <p>However, for the purpose of undertaking flood risk assessments for development current national guidance requires a conservative approach is adopted. Therefore scenario RCP 8.5 is still used, but the 70th and 95th percentiles being used. In this approach the assumed sea level by 2125 is up to 160cm higher.</p> <p>So in both case well below the 6m figure mentioned</p>
7.5	<p><b>Question from Cllr John Timewell</b> How has the business birth rate in Norfolk over the period between 2014 and 2018 compared to the UK average?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Graham Plant</b> On average, there was one start-up in Norfolk per 149 people of working-age in the period 2014 to 2018. For the UK, there was one start-up per 109 people of working-age in the same period. Therefore, more start-ups per capita were evidenced in the UK in that period than in Norfolk. This was the case for every year in that period, as shown in the table below.</p> <p><b>Table: Start-up rates in Norfolk and the UK 2014-2018</b></p>

	Norfolk: Business starts per year	Norfolk: working age population	Norfolk: people per business start	UK: Business starts per year	UK: working age population	UK: people per business start
2014	3,330	525,000	158	350,305	41,036,700	117
2015	3,380	527,000	156	382,755	41,241,000	108
2016	3,910	528,500	135	413,900	41,443,900	100
2017	3,945	530,400	134	381,885	41,545,600	109
2018	3,300	531,400	161	380,580	41,645,800	109

Source: Office of National Statistics (Business Demography; Population estimates)

We should note, however, that the UK average start-up rate will include London, where start-up rates are very high. We should also note that Norfolk's 'business death' rate is also relatively low: those businesses that do start often have a higher survival rate in Norfolk than elsewhere. For instance, the five-year survival rate in Norfolk in 2018 was 45.1%, whereas in London it was 39.3% and, in the UK, only 42.4%.

There are some instances in Norfolk where the picture bucks the national trend. At Hethel Innovation Ltd for example, which the County Council set up with the specific purpose of delivering economic outcomes for Norfolk communities, support has been provided direct to many start up businesses. They have seen around 95% of these still operating 2 years after set-up, in comparison to the national picture where the Small Business Association reports that 30% of start-ups fail in their first year alone

7.6

**Question from Cllr David Harrison**

What are the opportunities to increase the financial benefits that Norse brings to Norfolk County Council over the course of the current Medium Term Financial Plan?

**Response: Cllr Andrew Jamieson**

The County Council has set out its shareholder expectations for Norse over the current Medium Term Financial Strategy. This includes an expectation of an increased dividend being received from £2.2m for 2020/21 incrementally increasing to £3m for 2023/24. The shareholder expectations have been discussed by the Norse Board and will be reflected in the company's current and future business plans. In addition a budget proposal for 2021/22 is to renegotiate the Norsecare contract which, if agreed by the County Council and Norse, would reduce the contract value by £3m and provide a further financial benefit for the County Council."

7.7

**Question from Cllr Tim Adams**

Norfolk County Council has been ranked 103rd out of 151 local authority areas by the UK Safer Internet Centre for performance in providing appropriate online safety resources to help children online. What are the main reasons for this low ranking and what is being done to get Norfolk ranked higher?

**Response: Cllr John Fisher**

The ranking is derived from the responses given by schools using a specific online evaluation tool (360Degreesafe) combined with the proportion of schools in an area engaging with it. Schools are not required to engage with this tool, it is a voluntary

	<p>offer often promoted alongside the Online Safety Mark.</p> <p>The evaluation of school effectiveness on this issue is part of the Ofsted Inspection framework, within both the Quality of Education and the Personal Development, Behaviour and Safety judgements. It is also considered as part of safeguarding checks.</p> <p>A very small proportion of Norfolk schools have engaged with the tool, which explains the ranking. We will consider any future opportunities to alert schools to this tool. Up until lockdown, Educator Solutions offered CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection command) accredited courses for schools and also offered Online Safety training for governors.</p>
7.8	<p><b>Question 1 from Cllr Sarah Butikofer</b></p> <p>I believe recent decisions by the Children's Services department in my County Division of Holt, have failed to take account of the impact of those decisions will have on the local community and indeed the children of the County of Norfolk. Groups and panels have made recommendations behind closed doors, leading to confusion, for portfolio holders and improbable financial promises, in relation to the future of Holt Hall, and Holt Primary School. Would Cabinet not agree decisions about the future of key educational assets should be made in a completely transparent and open process the public can have confidence in?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b></p> <p>The Local authority has the duty to forecast places and secure new places through commission new schools or expanding existing ones. There is a robust process for this, which includes taking all major financial recommendations to the Capital Priorities Group. The membership of this group includes cross party representation as well as school leaders. The group meets regularly and takes account of strategic planning for ensuring there are enough places for children across the county. They receive information and updates about the forecast needs and sufficiency planning. They scrutinise proposed projects and recommend funding allocations. Officers work closely with district colleagues and also ensure local members are aware of the process of any application to expand and build a new school. The Town Council is very supportive of the new school, as reported in the EDP: "The current school, as you are aware, is constrained as it sits on two sites and is split by the busy A148. The proposed new school is therefore a huge community benefit which would be welcomed by many families in the town."</p> <p>Holt Hall is a building in North Norfolk that is currently used by Norfolk Children's Services to deliver residential and day visits, largely from Norfolk schools. Last year 43 Norfolk schools out of over 450 completed residentials there, 32 schools held a day visit and 9 stayed at the campsite. 70% of the total income for the provision of this service comes from the residentials. This represents just over 3,000 children using Holt Hall in the last financial year out of approximately 130,000. The service is requiring a significant subsidy from the council to continue to operate and so we are consulting on the cessation of this service. This is a decision for Norfolk's Children's Services to make, as with any other service decision. We have spoken to the users of Holt Hall, and to staff to understand this decision. The staff consultation stage ends on 7th November. The final decision to cease this element of our Outdoor Learning service, that is the residential and day visit element, will be taken by the Executive Director for Children's Services following the closure of the staff consultation. This</p>

	<p>decision will then be taken to Corporate Board on the 17th November. The future of Holt Hall has not been decided. Norfolk County Council will consider that once any decision has been taken about a change in service approach and should it be no longer needed by Children's Services.</p>
7.8.1	<p><b>Question 2 from Cllr Sarah Butikofer</b> Due to the recent confusion can you confirm for the public record, what is the process now for a decision on Holt Hall, will you commit to giving North Norfolk District Council a say in the future of this facility.</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> The answer is contained in response to question 1 from Cllr Butikofer above.</p>
7.9	<p><b>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare</b> At the cabinet meeting in September Cllr Fisher said 'It is not the role of Children's Services to ensure all children are fed. Our budget....I would love to have the budget.' While Children's Services may not have the budget why did he not refer to £500,000 unspent from the Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Services the council was supposed to spend within twelve weeks of receipt in July and why was that money not used to feed hungry children in Norfolk during the recent half term holiday?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Andrew Proctor</b> The Cabinet member for Children's Services rightly outlined what the role of Children's Services was and reassured members that if a child or family is in need Children's Services steps in to assist. When September Cabinet took place there was still funding available as we didn't receive the Defra grant until August. Although reference was made in the DEFRA correspondence to spending the bulk of this within 12 weeks Defra also referred to this being the 2020/21 budget allocation and acknowledged that funds would no doubt be spent beyond October. There was not at that time, nor since, any suggestion that further such specific grants would follow. On that basis a prudent approach was developed to ensure that support could be provided to those facing financial hardship not just from August through to the end of October, but through the winter period which is likely to be the most difficult time for people facing financial hardship due to Covid. The long-standing Norfolk Assistance Scheme has continued to be in place through half term to provide emergency cash or access to food due to the coronavirus situation. While the Cabinet Member did not talk about the Norfolk Assistance Scheme directly Norfolk County Council has used it to help those families who need it to access support.</p>
7.10	<p><b>Question from Cllr Colleen Walker</b> In response to my question on 7 September 2020 while the consultation on the future of Holt Hall was ongoing Cllr Fisher said 'There is no intention for Holt Hall and Whitlingham to be closed for good and I'm not quite sure where Cllr Walker has got that interpretation from'. Having therefore ruled it out as an option during the consultation can we assume he misspoke when last week he said Holt Hall would be closing or did he tell me and Norfolk a lie?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr John Fisher</b> We are consulting on the cessation of a service at Holt Hall. We are not consulting on closing a building. There has been no decision about the future use of Holt Hall. In the</p>



	<p>early stages of the process to engage with some stakeholders as well as staff and friends there may have been some confusion. I [Cllr Fisher] apologised for that immediately and I set the record straight at the end of the meeting and through a subsequent press release. Contrary to what the councillor infers I did not tell anyone a lie however she wants to interpret what I said</p>
7.11	<p><b>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp</b> <u>Strategic Infrastructure in West Norfolk</u> The Govt recently refused Norfolk County Council's application for funding for the £50 million West Winch Relief Road. How is the County going to secure the funding so that the Relief Road is in place before the development of up to 4,000 homes?</p> <p><b>Response: Cllr Martin Wilby</b> You will be pleased to hear that Government has not refused an application for funding and active work to continues to try to bring this important scheme to fruition.</p> <p>The Department for Transport (DfT) has not turned down our Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the West Winch Housing Access Road (WWHAR).</p> <p>To clarify, the importance of the scheme has been recognised by Transport East and prioritised for investment in July 2019. A draft Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) for the Major Road Network (MRN) fund and the DfT requested that we provide additional information. We have responded to that request and since that time completed work on a full economic appraisal and prepared a revised SOBC. The SOBC indicates that the scheme demonstrates high value for money - due to the nature of the alignment of the route, this is predicated on housing delivery benefits rather than traditional transport benefits.</p> <p>We are currently finalising the updated Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the scheme and intend to submit this to the DfT by the end of the year.</p> <p>The importance of the scheme to Norfolk continues to be recognised in our Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Development Plan, and we are continuing to work hard to try to secure the funding needed.</p> <p>In the meantime, the numbers of any new housing coming forward before the Access Road is in place will need to be agreed as conditions of planning permissions. This will be based on evidence supplied by the individual applicants and reviewed and considered by both the Borough and County Council development management teams before any recommendations are made to the relevant planning committee.</p>