

Cabinet

Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 January 2024 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 10:15am

Present:

Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Chair. Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Cllr Penny Carpenter	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
Cllr Jane James	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation
Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Alison Thomas	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Deputy Cabinet Members Present

Cllr Greg Peck	Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance
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Executive Directors Present:

Harvey Bullen	Director of Strategic Finance
Debbie Bartlett	Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Grahame Bygrave	Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy
Kat Hulatt	Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Tom McCabe	Chief Executive
Sara Tough	Executive Director of Children's Services`

The meeting started late due to technical difficulties which also affected live streaming at the start of the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, and Director of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.

2 Minutes from the meeting held on 04 December 2023

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 04 December 2023 as an accurate record.

3 Declaration of Interests

- 3.1 No interests were declared.

4 Matters referred to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee, Select Committees or by full Council.

4.1 No matters were referred.

5 Update from the Chair/Cabinet Members

5.1 The Chair noted that many Norfolk County Council employees had been recognised in the New Years honours list. The Chairman would announce these at the next Full Council meeting and the Council was proud of these awards.

6. Public Question Time

6.1 The questions received from members of the public and responses to them are published in appendix A of these minutes.

6.2.1 James Hawketts asked a supplementary question:

- Mr Hawketts recognised the pressures outlined, but asked if the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport had read the email communication from the University of East Anglia students union from Luke Johnson outlining the costs and timings of implementation, and if so, if this had altered his view on the feasibility of a night bus scheme.

6.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport had received the email. It was with officers who were working through the proposal to see if a joint scheme could be developed with the University of East Anglia for a long-term sustainable scheme.

6.3.1 Judith Taylor asked a supplementary question:

- Several Members of Cabinet attended the Charging Reference Group meeting in March 2023. People with disabilities struggled on a daily basis and the Council's impact assessment said that if the if the Minimum Income Guarantee was reduced and care charges increased this would have a detrimental impact on disabled peoples' lives. Since this time there has been a cost-of-living crisis and SCOPE had shown in their latest statistics that a family with one disabled person would have to spend £975 more per month.
- In the March meeting attendees tried to build trust and it was said that Norfolk Adult Social Services should not be seen as a burden but something to be proud of.
- She asked if it was reasonable to consider making savings for Norfolk County Council by targeting the most vulnerable and worst-off people in norfolk.

6.3.3 The Vice Chair replied that he was at the meeting in March which he felt was productive. He felt there was more that could be done together to benefit disabled people in Norfolk and that a more holistic approach by Norfolk County Council towards interacting with disabled people and families was key by bringing in not just Adult Social Care, but also the environment and economics teams to help disabled people live a more normalised lives where possible. Regarding the substantive question, the final settlement for local government would not be announced until February 2024 unless brought forward; until then he could not say where savings would need to be made but could say that the Council would try to minimise savings and were attentive to the most vulnerable people in communities.

7 Local Member Questions/Issues

- 7.1 The questions received from Members and responses to them are published in appendix B of these minutes.
- 7.2.1 Cllr Brian Watkins asked a supplementary question:
- Cllr Watkins was aware of the funding constraints for local government and the settlement for Norfolk needed careful consideration, and there were no easy choices available. However, with 6 weeks to the budget council meeting in February 2024 there was no clear word on how much the deficit for 2024-25 would exceed the £24.5m estimate or where further savings above those already identified would be made.
 - He asked what the timescale was for presenting these answers and what further consultation would take place with the public.
- 7.2.2 The Vice Chair replied that autumn statement and provisional settlement were disappointing, and the Council were told they would receive less than expected. Since this time officers had been working at pace to look at what would need to be done to balance the revenue budget. There would be areas for further public consultation and further work needed before the budget was set. The Chair added that there was a consultation underway for Local Authorities to let the Government know what the implications of the settlement would be on council tax and other aspects which would finish on 15 January 2024 and would inform the Final Settlement.

8. Improvements to Norfolk Fire Stations

- 8.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out plans to make improvements to Fire Station facilities in Norfolk following a survey conducted in summer 2023, which concluded that investment was required to proactively bring our fire stations up to the standard needed for a modern workplace.
- 8.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships introduced the report to Cabinet:
- Norfolk had the lowest proportion of female fire fighters in England. Part of the reason for this was because people enjoyed working for the service and worked for them for many years, resulting in a low staff turnover.
 - Last year, 35% of recruits were female showing that this position was improving.
 - When considering how to encourage more staff to join the service, it was found there were not adequate facilities for women. Changes were needed to Fire Station facilities in Norfolk to improve workplace facilities and control of hazardous substances guidance. It was decided to implement an upgrade programme for all fire stations to meet all of these requirements.
 - The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships moved the proposals set out in the report.
- 8.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation noted that it was important that the Council maintained its assets and that the Fire and Rescue estate met the needs of the service. The recommendations would make sure that the Council met its strategic objectives to ensure safety, statutory compliance and front-line service delivery requirements.

8.3 The Chair noted the importance of keeping on top of maintenance of Council assets and that the service and its staff was very valuable to the community and to Norfolk.

8.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve reallocation of existing capital funding for the first phase of the programme totalling £2m for the financial year 2024/25.
2. To approve in principle the funding requirement of an additional £2m capital for phase 2 for the financial year 2025/26, which will require separate Cabinet approval.
3. To agree in principle the third phase, which will commence post-2026, as this will be rolled out as part of the decarbonisation programme and offer learning from the first two phases. This is estimated to require a further £4.5m. Similar to 2025/26 funding, this will require separate Cabinet approval.

8.4 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Survey reports undertaken during the summer in 2023, identified the works required at each location. These have been reviewed by the Corporate Property team to provide the initial estimates of the capital required.

8.5 **Alternative Options**

The comprehensive review of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service estate is believed to be amongst the first of its kind in the UK. The areas needing to be addressed do not leave scope for a “do nothing” approach.

For the duration of the programme the Corporate Property team, in consultation with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, will continue to assess alternative options related to collaboration or relocation as they arise, and where they provide an operationally equivalent (or superior) and cost-effective alternative to the renovation proposals.

9. School Sufficiency Plan 2024

9.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the School Sufficiency Plan 2024. Norfolk County Council had a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and to do this provided an annual snapshot of how these would be secured in the annual sufficiency plan.

9.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The School Sufficiency plan 2024 supported a long-term view of educational trends; behind it lay information on demographic change, new housing developments, migration, population data, planned housing in districts, local plan information and other information.
- To inform pupil movements across the County it included school forecasting data and impact of parental preference was taken into account.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

9.2 The Vice Chair welcomed the report which showed the work being done to

ensure that schools could be provided in the right place for all children. There had been pressure in many areas of the county, at secondary stage in particular. An area of particular concern was southwest Norfolk and officers had worked hard to alleviate concerns that parents had in this area such as increasing the intake at some schools. The Council was confident there would be enough places in the southwest of the county in 2024.

- 9.3 The Chair noted that the School Sufficiency Plan was a snapshot and would help ensure there were enough spaces for all children. She recognised that there were a number of factors involved.

- 9.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to adopt the School Sufficiency Plan 2024.

9.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The proposed School Sufficiency Plan provides the necessary detail to ensure we secure sufficient school places and prioritise capital appropriately.

9.6 **Alternative Options**

The statutory duty is to provide sufficient places.

It is possible to plan for fewer additional places, where surplus places are available further afield, but within maximum recommended travel distances.

Norfolk County Council would then have a duty to provide Home to School Transport. This would add a considerable inconvenience to children and families and is outside of the Council's policies (e.g., building local communities). It would also add to the existing transport costs, where budget pressures already exist.

10. Short Breaks Strategy 2023-2026

- 10.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out a co-produced Short Breaks Strategy (2023-26) with a proposed change in approach in providing Short Breaks from an existing financial-focused Resource Allocation System (RAS) to a new, outcome-focused Circle of Support system.

- 10.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report to Cabinet:
- The Change to the Circle of Support System would not result in a reduced short break offer for families.
 - A consultation was carried out with families receiving short breaks, and events were held for families to attend to discuss the changes.
 - 264 responses were received to the consultation. A consultation analysis and a "you said we did" document were included in appendices to the report.
 - The change to the way short breaks were commissioned would be changed slowly over a period of time.
 - Short breaks could be taken in child's home, in the home of carer or in a residential or community setting for hours or days.
 - This proposal would move away from a financially focussed model to a focus of support which would allow families to plan the model of short breaks around their child's needs. It would allow family members to attend alongside their child.

- Families would not receive a reduced offer but instead, the funding could be delivered in a different way to better meet the needs of the child.
- Discussions would be held with families to ensure they understood the changes.
- There was no intention to reduce funding for short breaks and does not reduce funding for short breaks which was a demand led service.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

10.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care thanked the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for her focus on children and families and directing support towards families in need of respite and support.

10.3 The Chair felt that it was right that the child should be the centre of decisions being made and it was good that there was no reduction in service.

10.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to proceed with the:

- Implementation of the Short Breaks Strategy.
- Change from the RAS to Circle of Support.
- Clear communications with families feeding back the findings of the consultation and the launch of the new Strategy and approach.

10.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

See section 4 of the report.

10.6 **Alternative Options**

The alternative approach would be to keeping with the current RAS system. However, this does not allow us to work with families in a child-centred way focusing on improving outcomes and supporting them towards leading their most independent lives.

11. **Admission Arrangements for the School Year 2025/26**

11.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the annual admissions coordination scheme for all schools and determining the admissions criteria for all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, for which the Council was the admissions authority.

11.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The report set out that there were no changes to admissions criteria or the timetable for the school year 2025-26.
- Following difficulties in the process for families a consultation had been run about the possibility of increasing the number of preferences parents could make to four.
- Parents must be allowed to state at least 3 preferences according to the School Admissions Code. The proposed change met this requirement and would ensure a fair and consistent approach for parents.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

11.2 The Chair noted that this would increase choice for parents.

- 11.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to increase the number of preferences a parent can make from 3 to 4 and determine the Admissions arrangements for the school year 2025/26.
- 11.4 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**
- Please see section 4 of the report.
- 11.5 **Alternative Options**
- None.
- 12. Risk Management Report**
- 12.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the reviewed and updated corporate risks, as at January 2024.
- 12.1.2 The Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:
- Risks were looked at on a regular basis to identify new risks and changes to existing risks.
 - new risks included considerations around Artificial Intelligence (AI) and risks for statutory services related to increases in demand in Adult Social Services and Children's Services
 - The Chair moved the recommendations as set out in the report
- 12.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care discussed that the duty teams saw the highest number of contacts over the Christmas period 2023-24. She felt this should be reflected in the risk register and thanked staff for their hard work
- 12.3 The Vice Chair noted the impact of inflationary pressures which continued to impact on the council. There was an aim to control these as much as possible however they were outside of the control of the Council. This would be mitigated by close control of capital spend and the capital programme and by lobbying government to stress the impact of the initiatives on the council's budget.
- 12.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree:
1. The key proposed changes to corporate risks since the last report to October 2023 Cabinet (shown in paragraph and 2.2 and Appendix A of the report)
 2. The corporate risks as at January 2024 (Appendices B and C of the report)
- 12.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**
- Not applicable as no decision is being made.
- 12.5 **Alternative Options**
- There are no alternatives identified.
- 13. Corporately Significant Vital Signs**

- 13.1.1 Cabinet received the Quarter 2 report providing an update on the Council's performance against its Corporately Significant Vital Signs.
- 13.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This report gave an opportunity to review and provide context on performance, review trends, identify performance risks and allow for early interventions and validate actions already taken to address performance deviation and areas for improvement.
 - It was important to understand the challenges faced and extenuating circumstances affecting service delivery.
 - The council continued to monitor trends and insights around measures such as planning and monitor demand and forecasting.
 - The council operated in a challenging period and had responded to changes in the national landscape around performance with proposed changes in metrics from the office of local government, Oflog
 - Vital signs around community and environmental services and children's services continued to be reviewed to ensure the focus on performance on services was on target with stretch goals in place.
 - The council was developing the approach to realise benefits in the priority portfolio in change and transformation to prioritise and invest in activity supporting positive outcomes for residents.
 - This quarter there had been an uplift in measures moving from red to amber, with 4 red measures compared to 5 last time, and an uplift in measure moving from amber to green.
 - Improvements had been seen against key measures such as in the care market in Adult Social Services and an improvement in the number of children achieving a good level of development at age 5.
 - For areas of underperformance corrective actions were set out and the expected return to target date. This would be discussion by managers at Executive Leadership Team meetings and at Departmental Management Team meetings to ensure they were monitored and returned to target where possible.
 - The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation moved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 13.2 The Vice Chair felt this was a very useful tool to see where issues were emerging. He discussed "Vital Sign 401: Capital receipts for land sold, that will be counted as part of overall capital receipts". This was currently rated as red. This was a timing issue and would be on target soon.
- 13.3 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care acknowledged the work by the Adult Social Services department to reduce the number of people on the "holding list" which was now rated green. This would impact on the level of care which needed to be provided. Care providers providing good care via the Provider Assessment and Market Management Solution (PAMMS) system had been asked to be reassessed by the Care Quality Commission.
- 13.4 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted that the vital sign "Increased use of public transport" had shown a marked increase. This was against a backdrop of public transport use not returning to normal as quickly nationally post pandemic. The bus service improvement plan had helped with increased bus use and would help people get round the county quicker and

reduce the carbon footprint for the Council.

- 13.5 The Chair felt this was an essential piece of work which would monitor trends and compliance. It had highlighted the pressures and demands on services which were increasing and would help the council to improve its performance.

- 13.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. Note the end of Quarter 2 performance data and associated narrative.
 2. Agree the 27 highlighted actions as set out.

13.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Provided in the narrative under each departmental section.

13.8 **Alternative Options**

Please see the information Report

14 Health, Safety and Well-being Mid-Year Report 2023-24

- 14.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out data and analysis on the Health, Safety and Well-being mid-year performance of as an employer so that members have the information necessary to satisfy themselves of the effectiveness of the Norfolk County Council health and safety management system, or where necessary to identify actions for Executive Directors and others to improve the performance against the 3 key outcome goals set out in the report.
- 14.1.2 The Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:
- Staff are the Council's greatest asset and allowed the Council to provide services for residents.
 - New schemes had been introduced for staff this year, such as the musculoskeletal health plan.
 - It was recognised that staff may have felt isolated through the Covid pandemic which may have impacted on mental health issues.
 - The Council was a pro-active employer; meet the staff sessions were held to allow staff to discuss issues in their areas of work with the Leader and Chief Executive. They both welcomed hearing this feedback from staff.
- 14.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships noted that it was essential to look after the staff who were the Council's greatest asset.
- 14.3 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services pointed out that violence was the greatest cause of incidents and was pleased that the Health, Safety and Well-being team were working with Children's Services and those in educational settings to reduce this trend.
- 14.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. Note the performance report.
 2. Champion employee and Member health, safety and wellbeing through demonstrable leadership and advocacy of the guidance and services available
 3. Endorse and support the ongoing focus to improve health, safety and wellbeing management through Executive Director and management

leadership and delivery of health, safety, and wellbeing services.

14.5 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

Norfolk County Council's legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

14.6 Alternative Options

There are no identified alternative options, this governance is part of our Health, Safety and Well-being management system.

15 Reports of the Cabinet Member and Executive Director Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting

- 15.1 Cabinet noted the delegated decisions which had been taken, as set out in the agenda.

The meeting ended at 10:56

Chair of Cabinet

Cabinet
10 January 2024
Public & Local Member Questions

	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from James Hawketts</p> <p>At their full council in November, Norwich City Council unanimously endorsed a motion put by the Lib Dem group, calling on the county council to use a mere 0.1% of the new bus improvement money from the department of transport to fund a trial of a term-time night bus between the UEA and Norwich City Centre. Given the tiny relative cost of such an initiative, and the significant social benefits that could come from it, can I ask the cabinet member to reconsider his prohibitively low financial offer to the UEA and UEASU, and to fully fund the cost of the proposed UEA night bus?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Thank you for your question. Funding from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is to support improvements to bus services across the whole of Norfolk and there are many demands on this funding to support numerous different communities and their needs. Allocation of funds to specific services is considered on a case-by-case basis and is not based on ensuring any specific proportion of the available funding is used. It is important that the longer-term financial viability of any service is considered, otherwise there is a strong possibility that services would need to be removed once the short-term funding ends. There is a much higher chance of the UEA (University of East Anglia) bus service continuing post-BSIP funding if funds can also be found from others, hence why we are working with the UEA towards a jointly-funded trial. We also continue to work with First Bus to see if there are other ways that this night bus could be provided in a way that ensures its long-term success.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Judith Taylor</p> <p>At the meeting with the Charging Reference Group and Cabinet at The Nest in March 2023, the Leader and Deputy Leader both said to several members of the CRG - "We now have much more understanding of disability and how our decisions affect those people's lives. We shouldn't have done what we did in 2018/19 with regards to the MIG and would not do so again."</p> <p>Will the Leader confirm this is the view of the Cabinet that will be reflected in the forthcoming budget?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p> <p>Thank you for your question. As you may have seen, local government faces some very difficult funding constraints, and we are still considering the impact of the settlement from Government on our need to provide services to all Norfolk people and balance our budget as legally required.</p>

Cabinet
10 January 2024
Public & Local Member Questions

	Member Question Time
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp Norfolk is experiencing more extreme weather when highway drainage cannot cope with surface water. NCC needs more gulley suckers.</p> <p>A highway drain in West Winch overflowed, flooding pavement and road on Watering Lane, key route to community centre and shops, in December, for a week. Water froze to ice. Several residents fell over. I asked Highways to send a gulley cleanser. There was a delay. Highways was using equipment for internal flooding. There are 4 gulley suckers in the whole of Norfolk. Clearly not enough. Can County provide 4 more gulley suckers, so each Highway Area has two. The Watering Lane drain has flooded again.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport During autumn and the start of winter, Norfolk has experienced multiple storm weather events which has brought high levels of rainfall. This has resulted in land becoming saturated and main rivers and water courses being at or over capacity. This has meant that at some locations the highway drainage systems have become overwhelmed and unable to operate efficiently, as discharge rates into flooded rivers, ditches and other private systems becomes limited.</p> <p>The local Highway teams have been working around the clock to deal with flood water affecting the highway, and the Highways Out of Hours teams continue to work through the night to ensure residents that need assistance are supported.</p> <p>The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance (established by the County Council in February 2021) continues to bring together all agencies and partners who are involved in planning and responding to flooding in Norfolk.</p> <p>In terms of Watering Lane, resources were deployed to this location although the system outfalls on to the common which itself was under water.</p> <p>With regards to gully emptying resources, Norfolk's supply chain currently has six machines permanently in Norfolk. Other sub-contract resources are also available and can be procured at short notice if required.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp The Local Government Association highlighted the invisibility of social care, its impact on unpaid Carers, and the need to increase choice and control. The shortage of respite care in West Norfolk, an area of demographic ageing, impacts on Carers. This leads to hardship and desperation. The current system isn't working. Older Carers are particularly vulnerable, juggling caring with their own healthcare, but Social Care cannot always locate suitable respite care urgently. This results in more permanent admissions to care homes when the Carer can no longer cope. Can NCC work with the NHS to provide a much-needed new Respite Care Establishment in West Norfolk?</p>

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Thank you for your Question.

Respite provision available for unpaid Carers in Norfolk is varied to meet a variety of needs, from shared lives, domiciliary care, day services, short breaks through Carers Matter Norfolk, as well as traditional bed-based respite provision. Norfolk County Council is committed to supporting unpaid Carers to have regular and meaningful breaks from Caring responsibilities and is currently reviewing the feedback received from Carers on the kind of breaks and service which is most helpful to them. Further details of the range of respite options are summarised below:

Bed based respite care - Norfolk County Council commissions beds from across Norfolk for planned respite care which can be booked 3 months in advance. In addition, respite care can be requested 3 weeks in advance from any residential or nursing home.

Shared Lives - In 2023 the Shared Lives service was extended to include Older People thus providing an alternative respite care option. Shared Lives is a service where an adult or young person who needs support moves in with or regularly visits an approved Shared Lives carer, after they have been carefully matched for compatibility.

Day Services - There are c.7 Day Services across West Norfolk for Older People, a mixture of specialist services, local community groups and residential settings. Day Service provision for older people in West Norfolk includes support to those with physical and cognitive disabilities including Dementia and Alzheimer's, as well as information & advice and social inclusion. Day Services provides support for unpaid carers by way of regular respite mostly on a weekly basis, and provide early intervention, management of condition, and promoting independence.

It is important to also note the ongoing investment into Carers Matters Norfolk (CMN) which is a county-wide service delivering support for carers, including information, advice, assessment and support. Part of the offer includes the Carers Breaks service, which will provide a personalised, flexible break from caring. Norfolk County Council currently work with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) concerning the funding that is provided through the Better Care Fund, which contributes towards this service, as part of an integrated Health and Social Care offer.

7.2

Question from Cllr David Sayers

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has shrunk from a headcount of 875 in 2010 to 722 in 2022, this reflects that national decrease of firefighter numbers from 44,307 in 2010 to 34,857 in 2022. This turnover rate coupled with a real term spending reduction has a concerning impact on public safety. What measures is Cabinet considering to address the implications to public safety and the diminishing resources for firefighting services?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

The figures quoted are the total number of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service operational fire fighters. Any changes to front line response, including station closures or removal of pumps (fire engines) is always carried out in consultation with the public as part of our CRMP (Community Risk Management Plan, previously known as Integrated Risk Management plan) with public safety at the forefront of planning and proposals. No

station closures have occurred since 2010, with the exception of Bethel Street with the move to the Diamond Jubilee Station Carrow – during that period we have also opened King's Lynn South which is delivery point. We are carrying some on-call vacancies at present. We have also added in new roles such as Fire Investigation Protection Officers and On-Call Support Officers to strengthen the overall approach.

Significant savings have been made in relation to support services, some of which have been replaced by Norfolk County Council shared service models.

Second question from Cllr David Sayers

The difficulties of recruiting and retaining staff within the SEND service are well known. Which positions, such as educational psychologists, is the Cabinet Member most concerned about retaining and recruiting and are we at risk of failing Norfolk's SEND children if the issues of recruitment and retainment are not addressed?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Challenges with recruitment and retention of Educational Psychologists (EPs) is well understood across England and it has been pleasing to see further national investment in training for EPs forming a key ambition within the DfE's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) Improvement Plan's to create a highly skilled workforce for children and young people with SEND. A strong EP Recruitment and Retention Strategy has been developed between Children's Services and HR in Norfolk to positive effect for our valued EP workforce. A recent recruitment campaign, underpinned by an innovative communication and engagement strategy led by HR has resulted in successful recruitment of 2 EPs who will join Norfolk in 2024.

Additionally, our well established and enduring partnership with the University of East Anglia's trainee EP programme continues to reap rewards by enabling Norfolk's access to a talented pool of trainees who receive expert support from our existing service whilst on placement and who go on to join Norfolk as fully qualified EPs. It is anticipated that through this route we will benefit from a further 2-3 fully qualified EPs joining us in September.

A newly established service structure, supported by local investment, has brought a range of benefits and opportunities to the EP workforce and places Norfolk as a highly attractive employer for both existing and prospective EPs and our Local First Inclusion strategy is enabling innovative partnership between EPs and our school system, especially through the Specialist Resource Base programme which embeds research in practice to further attract this post graduate workforce. A further recruitment campaign is planned for the Spring where we aim to build on the success and place Norfolk as a vibrant and exciting place for EPs to work to the direct benefit of our children and young people with SEND.

7.3

Question from Cllr John Crofts

Developments within West Midlands devolution deal and recent comments by Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner suggest that the powers of the PCC could potentially be

	<p>transferred to Norfolk's directly elected leader. Have these discussions happened with DLUCH and does this cabinet believe that further centralisation will benefit Norfolk's residents?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance The West Midlands and other areas with devolution deals are Mayoral Combined Authorities, where the Combined Authority is a separate legal entity from the constituent councils (and an additional layer of local government) enabling the transfer of additional functions. Norfolk's devolution deal will be through a County Deal, which does not create this additional tier of governance. Norfolk County Council has a strong record of working in partnership with the PCC (Police and Crime Commissioner) and has no plan to seek to transfer its powers into the County Council.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell A recent LGA poll conducted by YouGov found that just 5% of the British public feel prepared for climate change, furthermore, 63% of respondents were worried about the impact of climate change in their local area. In light of this, does the Cabinet member agree with the LGA that it is time for a rapid acceleration in the adaptation work needed to prepare for the impacts of climate change?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Norfolk County Council set out its ambitious Climate Strategy last summer and we have been developing a comprehensive delivery plan over the last few months. The delivery plan covers a diverse range of actions and areas for immediate focus, and we are aware of the need to support adaptation where relevant as well as activity to mitigate Climate Change.</p> <p>In common with many of the goals set out in our Climate Strategy, much of our delivery will continue to be in partnership with District Councils, statutory agencies, third sector organisations, and the private sector. Full details of our delivery plan will continue to be brought forward over the coming months.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Rob Colwell Given the need to revisit NCC spending plans in the coming weeks due to insufficient funds announced by central government, please can urgent reassurance be given to residents that cuts to flood and water management services will not take place, given indication that further cuts are planned?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Thank you for your question. As you may have seen, local government faces some very difficult funding constraints, and we are still considering the impact of the settlement from Government on the need to provide services to all Norfolk people and balance our budget as legally required.</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Sharon Blundell Research conducted by Carers UK details a concerning link between mental health and unpaid carers, more than a quarter of unpaid carers are 'in bad or very bad mental</p>

	<p>health'. Unpaid carers are the backbone of our adult social care services, what work is being undertaken to identify and assist those carers suffering from poor mental health?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Norfolk County Council commissions the service Carers Matter Norfolk. This service offers comprehensive information, advice, and Care Act assessments to carers in Norfolk. Understanding of the challenges that caring can bring to someone's mental health is integral to this advice and support. The principles of mental and physical wellbeing underpin the Care Act and are the foundations for assessment.</p> <p>Carers Matter Norfolk work hard to reduce the impact of a caring role on the individual, looking for ways to help them continue to participate in their activities and interests, and links to support networks. They support people to plan breaks and access mental health or counselling services where this is appropriate. They also help people to link with appropriate supportive services such as housing or benefits and work holistically to make changes which reduce stress and worry. Carers Matter Norfolk is available to all adult carers in Norfolk, regardless of demographic.</p> <p>Norfolk County Council works closely in collaboration with carers to ensure we have a good understanding of the experiences of being a carer. We attend partnership groups with Carers Voice to listen to views and give updates. Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust representatives are also part of this collaborative group and attend to ensure that carers voices are being heard by Mental Health services and can give advice on what resources are available.</p>
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins I share members disappointment at the council's recent provisional financial settlement from Government, this clearly puts the authority's budget under even more pressure with the likelihood that the projected deficit for 2024/25 will exceed the £46.2 million already announced with so many Norfolk households still struggling through the cost-of-living crisis can you categorically assure council taxpayers that you will not follow the example of Croydon, Slough and Thurrock councils and seek government permission for a much larger hike in council tax.</p> <p>Response from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Thank you for your question. As you may have seen, local government faces some very difficult funding constraints, and we are still considering the impact of the settlement from Government on our need to provide services to all Norfolk people and balance our budget as legally required. The Council has not approached the Government in respect of a bespoke referendum threshold for Norfolk and does not anticipate doing so at this time.</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby A report published in October 2023 by Future Health, 'Tackling malnutrition as part of the prevention agenda,' estimates that 6.7% of the Norfolk and Waveney ICB population suffer from malnutrition, the joint highest rate in the UK. The report estimates that Norfolk and Waveney ICB spends over 20% of its annual budget treating and managing</p>

malnutrition, with two thirds of this cost falling on the social care sector. Can the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing confirm what steps are being taken to address malnutrition in Norfolk and how the ICB will be responding to the opportunities and recommendations in the report?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Thank you for your question. As you are of course aware, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) is a separate organisation from Norfolk County Council. We work closely with the ICB, as part of the Integrated Care System, but as partners. It is possible to ask the ICB questions directly on their performance and priorities. Public Health at Norfolk County Council take an evidenced based approach, focussing on the prevention of ill health. Public Health's strategic ambitions are outlined in the 'Ready to Change, Ready to Act' Public Health Strategic Plan.

Supplementary question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby

The newly published Norfolk Public Health Strategy Plan, "Ready to Change, Ready to Act" makes no mention of malnutrition. Will the Cabinet Member ensure it's a public health priority for Norfolk?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Thank you for your question. Nutrition is part of the Strategic Plan. 'Ready to Change, Ready to Act', prioritises prevention and identifies actions Public Health will focus on to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. Working with partners in Health, Social Care and District Councils the Public Health team, informed by data, identifies those issues which need the most attention and action to improve poor health outcomes for our communities and residents. The council is investing over £45m of Public Health grant in helping people to live the healthiest lives they can. The strategic plan prioritises the importance of health improvement for all ages seeking to ensure the best start in life, importantly healthy eating and nutrition are recognised as a significant factor for children and young people. The plan also identifies taking a healthy lifestyle behaviours approach which, includes consumption of a poor diet as one of the key risk behaviours, will aim to look wider than just commissioning services. It will include significant workforce development to upskill key workforces around behaviour change so that they can support people to address barriers to change. In addition, efforts to promote 'positive' health behaviours will be supported by working with communities. Looking at these issues more widely will start to address wider determinants such as food poverty and health literacy in ways that we have not been able to previously.

7.8

Question from Cllr Brenda Jones

Given the increasing evidence of malnutrition in older people, what impact does this have on Adult Social Care services and what steps is the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care taking to deal with them?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Thank you for your question:

In line with the Care Act, we support people with a range of needs and this includes supporting people to eat well and manage and maintain their nutrition. When we assess and review people's care and support our teams consider a person's nutrition and take

appropriate steps to support the person to meet any needs they may have. This may include using community resources, family, or friends, as well as direct support.

The UK Malnutrition Task Force and Age UK have highlighted a number of interventions that we can undertake in Adult Social Care to support older people. This includes advice and direction to Food Banks; Introduction to community support groups such as Age Concern, Alzheimer's Society etc; Welfare Benefit Checks; Direct assistance to help eating and drinking and assistance with debts or other costs.

Social Care Community Engagement (SCCE) and the Development workers are introducing people to community groups and support projects which have a meal provision aspect to them and in general social workers will link people to available community groups and services via the Living Well approach.

Domiciliary care directly provides older people and others with assistance, often with eating and drinking and act as a useful fail safe when weight loss is apparent. In addition, our partners at NCH & C have a Nutrition and Hydration pathway which helps to detect malnutrition and the Integrated Care System have created a Nutritional Guidance Booklet for Care Homes (2023) which is an area where malnutrition is a concern due to dietician and other specialist healthcare inputs being limited and the complexity of older people's health needs having increased.

7.9

Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare

In a Guardian article published on 21st December 2023 Dr Sarah Hanson, an associate professor in community health at the University of East Anglia was quoted as saying "there's evidence that not getting enough to eat causes low mood and anxiety, and often leads to stricter discipline in households. For children, their behaviour worsens and it has been linked to increased asthma diagnoses, as well as significantly higher use of emergency care." Will the Cabinet Member for Children's Services explain what actions she is taking to address the underlying causes and the consequences of malnutrition on the children of Norfolk?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Thank you for raising this important issue, as we know that poor nutrition in childhood affects the life chances of a child and impacts on their health and wellbeing across their lifetime. This is why nutrition and access to healthy food is an important aspect of the work that Children's Services and other Council departments are undertaking with a range of partners, as part of our shared commitment to children and young people flourishing.

Children's Services community and partnership teams are engaging with families and enabling them to be aware of and where needed, connecting them with the increasing network of community supermarkets/stores which are supporting around 22,000 people from over 8,500 households across the county as part of the Nourishing Norfolk network ([Nourishing Norfolk Network | Norfolk Community Foundation \(norfolkfoundation.com\)](https://www.norfolkfoundation.com)), and which is being supported by the Council. The teams' early help community workers maintain strong links with local food banks and community groups to ensure that wider support that families might need is available, including for example, access to local groups or links with libraries to reduce social isolation and loneliness, as well as there being practical help such as the NCC Client Hardship Services, where debt management and emergency financial assistance is available.

We continue to promote take up of free school meals and, with almost 100% take up. This is in addition to all children in Year Reception, 1 and 2 who automatically receive free school meals.

The Children's Services Inclusion and Opportunity Team supports schools to take a whole-school approach to delivering an effective needs led RSHE curriculum which includes physical health and mental wellbeing, as well as what constitutes a healthy diet, including understanding calories and other nutritional content. The team is also developing an oral health toolkit to support schools with this issue at a whole school and individual pupil level. The toolkit will collate high quality resources and helpful signposting and will include a focus on ensuring that the curriculum is effectively delivered in ways which increase awareness around healthy eating and nutrition.

As part of our early childhood work with partners, services such as the Early Childhood and Family Service (ECFS), commissioned by Children's Services, and the Norfolk Healthy Child Services as part of a Healthy Child Programme (HCP), commissioned by Public Health, are supporting families in the early years to enable good nutrition, providing information, support and guidance on healthy eating including in pregnancy, breast feeding and infant feeding. This includes universal and targeted support such as the healthy weight programme, and promoting take up of the 'healthy start' pre-payment cards. The HCP includes the Just One Number team which provides health advice and information about nutrition, infant feeding and diet, alongside a range of wider related health issues. They are able to support over the telephone, via video calls or via a parentline text service. Specific healthy eating information guidance and resources are available to parents families, young people and health and care professionals via: [Health Advice & Support for Children & Families \(justonenorfolk.nhs.uk\)](https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk).

During 2023, there were over 21,000 page views by nearly 18,000 users accessing Just One Norfolk pages covering healthy eating, diet and nutrition information. For the 12 months period up to August 2023, there were 763 new referrals for HCP interventions following NCMP measuring of children in Year Reception and Year 6 at school, and through Just One Number, over 1,500 calls were specifically related to advice on feeding, diet, nutrition and lifestyle advice for 0-19s. Whilst not specifically focused on healthy eating, over the 12 months up to September 2023, ECFS supported over 2,000 families with bespoke packages of support on a wide range of issues, and in addition nearly 1,300 families were supported to access universal group sessions in their local community. ECFS staff also undertook over 1,000 visits to a range of community settings over the same period.

Through our engagement in the DfE funded Start for Life and family hubs programme we are extending our early childhood focus to include families with children up to the age of 19 (25 with SEND), joining up and enhancing existing services, so that children, young people and their parents and carers can access the early support they need when they need it. As part of this development, recognising the importance of the first 1001 days of children's lives, face-to-face 'pathway to parenting' programmes are on offer to families that include the health and wellbeing of parents as well as supporting newborn babies, and the sessions have been very well received by families, and our school and community teams are delivering a number of community-based group programmes supporting parents/carers with home learning for their children that include healthy

	<p>eating. In the last quarter, our school and community teams have worked with over 650 families, including delivering 105 group sessions, focused on wider issues and support for parents. Through this joined-up approach, services are taking a 'make every contact count' approach to supporting families including with healthy eating even when this is not the primary reason for their engagement.</p> <p>Children's Services will continue to work with colleagues from Public Health, the Integrated Care Board, local community organisations and service providers to explore what else can be done as a priority to promote healthy eating as part of preventing malnutrition in children.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for Children's Services confirm what progress has been made on converting the Angel Road school site into a SEND school, given the urgent need for additional SEND places?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>This is the 4th time I have been asked this question within subsequent Cabinet meetings. Due to the relative short time-frame between these questions being asked and the timeframe for capital decision making I will have to repeat my previous answer : <i>'...as part of the process for any vacated property we consider the potential use of such assets for Children's Service. This will involve how this building could support our Local First Inclusion Programme and will therefore be considered as part of the SEND Sufficiency and Capital workstream'. I am not able to provide any further update at this time. However, I believe all councillors are aware that SEND developments remain a priority for this council and that Officers continue to work hard to move these developments forward and I will be happy to provide an update when the next stage of the process has concluded....'</i></p> <p>The lease for Angel Road is not yet transferred to the council, which will be the next stage in the process, as we have previously indicated. We continue to both take your suggestion seriously at the same time as following a process that guarantees the right decision is achieved for the long term benefit of the county.</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Catherine Rowett</p> <p>Given that animal husbandry is a key source of nutrient neutrality issues in Norfolk's water courses, and also of global heating and destruction of rainforest, does the Cabinet have any plans to enable farmers to reduce the intensity of livestock farms, including reducing the number of animals, or to improve the sustainability of feed sources, without loss of income? Will these issues be addressed as part of the Council's carbon reduction plans?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>Responsibility for national farming subsidies sits with Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), who administer a number of schemes to support UK farmers. The funding is not devolved to a local area and therefore is not the responsibility of the County Council to manage or implement.</p>

As a vegan, I would personally encourage the benefits of a plant based diet but would also note that British agriculture has some of the highest standards of welfare and environmental management in the world. I would encourage everyone, where possible, to buy British and ideally buy from Norfolk producers.

Second question from Cllr Catherine Rowett

It has been encouraging to see materials from the Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) being displayed and disseminated in places such as doctors' surgeries. It would be useful to know the objectives of NIDAS and the progress made towards those targets. Can the Cabinet Member please provide details of this?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Thank you for your question

NIDAS stands for Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service and is a domestic abuse support service for those assessed to be high or medium risk. The service also offers dedicated support for Children and Young People (if their parent/care giver has been/or is being supported by an IDVA (independent domestic violence advisor)), recovery programmes, coordinated multi-agency support, and access to IDVA support in criminal courts for people who are at medium or high risk.

NIDAS is a countywide partnership delivered by specialist service providers – Leeway, Daisy Programme and Safe Partnership. The service has been commissioned and shaped by OPCCN (Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Norfolk), Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council, South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils. It is a consortium of specialist support services working together to ensure people living across the county have access to a full range of help and guidance regardless of where they live.

Since launching in January 2022, NIDAS has grown considerably, and now also employs specialist Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates (IDVAs) supporting vulnerable people with disabilities, people from diverse communities, LGBTQ+ people, male victims, and family support workers.

NIDAS also has dedicated Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse IDVAs (CAPVA), following additional funding to deliver the Respect Young Peoples Programme (RYPP) earlier this year.

These specialist roles ensure that support is tailored to the individual, rather than offering generic one-size-fits-all support that does not fully cater to the service users' needs.

NIDAS has an ongoing commitment to providing the best possible support for all survivors across the county, regardless of their support needs or where they live.

7.12

Question from Cllr Paul Neale

A BBC investigation in 2020 into the seven gantries, costing £1m, built to help bats fly safely over the Norwich Northern Distributor Road, showed that none of the bridges was effective, with 40% of bats crossing at unsafe heights - a proportion experts considered unsustainable for local populations. Could the Cabinet member tell me what further

evidence they have sought as to whether these bridges work, especially as they are being claimed as mitigating measures for the NWL?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Bat gantries do not form part of the council's mitigation proposals for the Norwich Western Link. A combination of green bridges, underpasses and planting is proposed to help guide bats to cross the new road safely, and these measures have been developed by bat specialists who, in carrying out this work, have taken account of relevant guidance and advice from Natural England.

Information on these proposals will be included in the planning application documents and we will need to demonstrate through the planning process that these proposals meet the high standards required for a project of this type.

Supplementary question from Cllr Paul Neale

The Leader of the Council's response to my councillor question at the 6th November Cabinet meeting was not completely true and it misled the public. Further, it potentially caused reputational and financial damage to Dr Boswell. Given that the Council's monitoring officer has now admitted that damaging statements about Dr Andrew Boswell made by the Leader were incorrect, does the Leader now intend to issue a written public apology to Dr Boswell?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance

In response to the question posed by you on the 6th November 2023, it has been concluded by the Monitoring Officer that there was unintended, incorrect information passed to me by an Officer in relation to comments said to have been made by Dr Boswell. These comments were made during the case but by Judge Mrs Justice Thornton, when finding in the Governments side on the case brought forward by Dr Boswell. If Dr Boswell was distressed by this, then of course I am sorry, as it was not my intention to give out incorrect information. I acted in good faith in using the information I had received and which I believed to be true at the time.

7.13

Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn

The NWL project risk register lists a risk that "There may be a delay in the funding approval (OBC and/or FBC) from DfT due to a general election being called". What the risk register does not cover is the potential for a new (not Conservative) government which could cancel the funding for the project altogether. Does the Cabinet Member accept that a change in Government could result in the project being scrapped, and will the risk register be updated accordingly?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The risk of changes to the local and national political landscape, and the risk this poses to support for funding, is covered under risk Q01 on the risk register. I will ask the project team to amend the wording of this risk to make this clearer in the next update to the risk register. Department for Transport funding (DfT) towards the Norwich Western Link (NWL) is subject to final approvals of all statutory processes. As set out in section 9 of the 4 December 2023 Cabinet report, until the Full Business Case approval is granted by

	<p>DfT there is a risk that the Council would not be able to proceed to the construction phase.</p>
	<p>Second question from Cllr Jamie Osborn Residents in Norwich need a pedestrian crossing on Westwick Street to go from Oak Street and Coslany Square into the city. I put in a request for a feasibility study for a pedestrian crossing on Westwick Street two years ago, but this has not been done. Please will the Cabinet Member lend his support to this?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport I will ask officers to review the status of your request for a crossing at this location and ask them to follow this up directly with you.</p>
7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price Has the council considered introducing a one-way system on Eade, Patteson, and Buxton Roads as part of the Angel Road revamp?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Consideration has previously been giving to introducing one-way systems on Eade Road, Buxton Road and Patterson Road but the idea has not progressed as one-way streets almost always result in an increase in speeding traffic. Additionally, the introduction of one-way restrictions in this area is likely to make the streets more attractive for rat running traffic wishing to avoid the St Augustine's gate junction.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Ben Price Will the Cabinet Member for Highways confirm how many feasibility studies for road improvement projects put forward by councillors have been carried out since 2021, and how many are currently awaiting a feasibility study?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Officers and councillors engage on a regular basis in discussions about possible improvements to the highway network, many of which result in further investigations, both formal and informal, taking place that are then reported back. However, statistics related to this activity is not collected centrally or reported.</p>