Norfolk County Council

Cabinet
Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 30 January 2023 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 10am

Present:

Cllr Andrew Proctor	Chairman. Leader & Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance
Cllr Graham Plant	Vice-Chairman. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy
Cllr John Fisher	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Greg Peck	Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Executive Directors Present:

James Bullion	Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Simon George	Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services
Kat Hulatt	Assistant Director of Governance
Tom McCabe	Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Sara Tough	Executive Director of Children's Services

Cabinet Members and Executive Directors introduced themselves.

1a Point of order

1a.1 Cabinet agreed to take items 8-12 in the order set out on the agenda, then item 14, "Finance Monitoring Report 2022-23 P8: November 2022", followed by item 13, "2023-24 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27", before returning to the running order of the agenda.

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance and the Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy.

2 Minutes from the meetings held on 11 and 17 January 2023

2.1 Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 11 January 2023 and 17 January 2023 as an accurate record.

3 Declaration of Interests

3.1 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Norfolk County Council nominated Director of

Hethel Engineering.

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

4.1 None.

5 Update from the Chairman/Cabinet Members

5.1 The Chairman gave an announcement on changes made under his delegated authority to internal and external bodies following the recent changes in membership on Cabinet:

- **Norfolk Parking Partnership Joint Committee:** Cllr Plant, The Vice-Chairman, to be appointed as the Member representing Norfolk County Council and Chair of the Joint Committee, replacing Cllr Martin Wilby.
- **Transport for Norwich Advisory committee:** Cllr Plant, The Vice-Chairman, to take up the role of one of the 4 County Council appointed Members and Chair of the Committee, replacing Cllr Martin Wilby.
- **Internal bodies:** Cllr Plant, The Vice-Chairman, to sit on the following bodies as Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, replacing Cllr Martin Wilby:
    - West Norfolk Transport and Infrastructure Steering Group
    - Norwich Western Link Working Group
    - Norfolk Windmill Trust
    - Long Stratton Bypass Committee.
- **Member Champion for Rural Economy:** Cllr Chris Dawson to replace Cllr Fabian The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy as Member Champion for Rural Economy.

6 Public Question Time

6.1 The list of public questions and the responses is attached to these minutes at Appendix A.

7 Local Member Questions/Issues

7.1 The list of Local Member questions and the responses is attached to these minutes at Appendix B.

7.2.1 Cllr Alexandra Kemp asked a supplementary question:

- Cllr Kemp disputed the answer given to her question; she wanted details of the coalition of change which the Council had committed to set up to give people with autism and learning disabilities in Norfolk in the system, care homes and assessment and treatment centres. Cllr Kemp asked if these groups had been set up.

7.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention replied that these groups had been set up, agreeing with Cllr Kemp that the people served were an important and vulnerable group that the Council should do everything they could to support.

8. Scottow Enterprise Park Capital Investment Plan

8.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out proposals to ensure effective implementation of the Scottow Enterprise Park Capital Investment Plan 2022-2027 and enable the successful operation and development of Scottow Enterprise Park.

8.1.2 The Executive Director for Community and Environmental Services noted that the Council had been operating Scottow as an enterprise park for over a decade and this marked the next step in its development

8.1.3 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The purpose of the proposals in the report were to add enterprise zone funding to the capital improvement programme and streamline the approval process based on the site wide capital strategy and prioritise additional site projects subject to approval of 2023 capital progamme.
- This site had been a huge success and was Norfolk's largest business park. The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy thanked his predecessor, officers and Hethel Innovation for the success achieved so far.
- Table 2 of the report showed the economic impact of the investment
- Enterprise zone funding conversations would progress with a view to unlocking funding for capital investment which would make 600,000 square feet of lettable space available.
- Hethel Innovation Ltd had exceeded their 2021 targets, with 381 more jobs, 238,000 more square feet of let space, 394,000 more rent and 275,866 more square feet of lettable space above their targets.
- This report showed that Norfolk was a place to do business, and that if this success could be achieved in northeast Norfolk then all of Norfolk was open to thrive.
- As well as being a site of huge job creation, Scottow Enterprise Park through leases with Hethel Innovation Ltd and other provided a return to the Council of £765,000 per annum.
- Without this site there would be less jobs, less opportunities and less income for the Council.

8.2 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management noted his interest as a nominated director of Hethel Innovation Limited and gave some background to the site. Hethel Innovation supported 600 jobs and 130 businesses and had a good operating profit. Capital investment into the site would protect the value of the asset and preserve the heritage of the site, allowing protection of accommodation and construction of additional business space; demand was seen for more business space at Hethel Innovation Ltd. Norfolk County Council was the shareholder of Hethel Innovation Ltd and had representation on their board. Hethel Innovation Ltd's objectives were to help the business recover from the impact of the pandemic and have a positive impact on the local economy by supporting start-ups business growth and employment. They had a strategy to grow the business, support tenants and attract new tenants as well as supporting tenants to grow. The site could be developed further with additional funding in the future and the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management was excited about expanding the heritage offer of the site and woodland tree planting. The priority was protecting the viability of the site by allowing Hethel Engineering Ltd to continue to grow their business.

8.3 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention noted that this site was creating important jobs in Norfolk as well as making a profit and putting money back into the Council, helping the Council meet its statutory duties.

8.4 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services noted the heritage of the buildings on the site and supported the report and the business being created on the site.

8.5 The Cabinet Member for Finance agreed that a return of £765,000 was excellent however also noted that creation of up to 1500 jobs was very important; he felt that it was important for the Council to put in place infrastructure for the private sector to create jobs and take up growth.

8.6 The Chairman noted the huge amount of work which had been put in to get Scottow to the point they had reached and recognised the large amount of job growth seen on the site.

8.7 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the Scottow Enterprise Park Capital Investment Plan 2022- 2027 attached at Annex 1 of the report subject to, where applicable, Enterprise Zone Pot B and other capital funding to be approved at February County Council.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services to enter into a New Anglia Enterprise Zone Memorandum of Understanding for the capital refurbishment of Scottow Enterprise Park.
3. Agree that the directors of Hethel Innovation Limited ("HIL") will approve detailed business cases in order to deliver the Scottow Enterprise Park Capital Investment Plan 2022-2027 within the funding available, noting that NCC appointed directors have majority voting rights and that HIL reports activity to the HIL annual Shareholder meeting.

8.8 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report

8.9 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 5 of the report

9. Herbicide Use Policy

9.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the Norfolk County Council Policy for the use of glyphosate-based herbicides.

9.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Glyphosate-based herbicides were widely used by local authorities to control excess vegetation. Glyphosate was the active substance in many herbicide brands effective in killing many plants, including weeds.
- In weed control programmes across all directly managed lands, 7500kg glyphosate-based herbicides were used by the Council in 2021: by highways to control vegetation in transport infrastructure, to control vegetation in hard surfaces on council owned properties, safe keeping of

utility areas and through the contract with Norse to control unwanted vegetation on schools, care homes, libraries, fire stations and playing fields.

- Glyphosate-based herbicides were used by tenants of county farms, but this was not under direct control of the Council. The Council offered guidance and support to them to achieve policy objectives and committed to providing guidance when the new policy was adopted.
- The position related to academy schools was complex due to the arms-length relationship; these institutions were tenants of the Council. Children's Services implemented how weed control was implemented however academies could specify their own requirements.
- Concerns over the use of glyphosate-based herbicides had mounted nationally, with links to some reports showing health issues if exposed over long periods of time. Wild Justice called for local authorities to reduce their use of glyphosate-based herbicides to reduce the impact on nature and people. Some local authorities and councils were moving away from its use to help nature recover and address health concerns.
- In agriculture, glyphosate-based herbicides were widely used in the UK and its use supported climate objectives. Farming for Change set out the vision to phase out pesticides.
- The council had a legal duty to follow the code of practice complying to all professional users of such products.
- The policy set out in the report set out in what circumstances continued use of glyphosate would be permitted, where it would never be used and where the Council and third parties would adopt alternative measures to control vegetation. This policy was created with an officer lead group and advice from external consultation.
- The policy was an important element to the council's aim to improve resilience of nature corridors, carbon capture and the action plan for pollinators. Loss of some plants such as dandelions reduced food for pollinators; the council was delivering on better habitats on verges for pollinators as part of its Pollinator Action Plan, taken to Infrastructure and Development Select Committee in July 2021 as part of the Green Ways to Green Spaces report. Reduced use of glyphosate was critical to this approach, however switching away from its use entirely would mean more labour intensive and mechanical methods which would increase carbon emissions. Therefore, the policy had a measured and balanced approach.
- The policy would reduce glyphosate-based herbicide use by 50%, benefiting biodiversity.
- The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

9.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services thanked officers for including children's services in the working group as input regarding school fields was welcomed; this policy would be passed on to academies.

9.3 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention was proud of the environmental credentials of Norfolk County Council and felt this report supported this. He noted that it was a difficult balance as weeds needed controlling however felt this was proportionate and thanked officers for the work put in

9.4 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy noted there was a large chemical firm in Norfolk looking for alternatives to Glyphosate and the Council could support them through this policy.

9.5 The Chairman noted the proportionate approach set out in the policy.

9.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the NCC Glyphosate Policy (Appendix 1 of the report)

9.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

In the EU glyphosate use is approved until 15th December 2023. In the UK it is fully approved by the UK government as an active ingredient for plant protection products until the end of 2025. Beyond that its future is not certain.

The integrated approach to weed management (IWM) and robust recording and monitoring methods in the Policy give NCC a much greater understanding at an organisational level of where weeds need to be controlled, and where alternative approaches (to the use of chemicals) can be applied, and environmental gains accrued. Re-evaluating where greater weediness can be tolerated on an annual basis is better practice than ‘business as usual’. Opportunities to provide training and support for County Farm tenants who wish to move away from the use of glyphosate on their tenanted farms will enable NCC to lead by example at the level of smallscale agriculture businesses.

9.8 **Alternative Options**

No other alternative options are suggested.

10. Norfolk Speed Management Strategy

10.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the revised Norfolk Speed Management Strategy, a Norfolk County Council document that provided countywide strategic direction and guidance on how speed is safely managed on Norfolk’s roads.

10.1.2 The Vice-Chairman introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The revised strategy was based on new, 2022 versions of the highway code and other new strategies and featured a move towards more local, community-based decision making.
- The strategy had input from Norfolk Constabulary including the Safety Camera Partnership.
- Reference was made to speed management measures, typical costs and funding options in the appendix to the report. This identified what measures would be possible.
- The recently introduced road safety fund would allow local communities to have more say in delivering community lead road safety and speed management programmes.
- This strategy had recently been presented to the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee in November 2022 and was well received, with comments set out in the report
- The Vice-Chairman moved the recommendations set out in the report.

10.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste felt this was a good report, covering the aspects that communities were asking for. He was pleased that it included other elements such as speed cameras.

10.3 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships felt that that parish and town councils would support this strategy and therefore she welcomed it

10.4 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention welcomed the review of this strategy. He noted paragraph 1.4 of the report, talking about the desire from local and central government towards increased local decision-making initiatives. He felt that this strategy showed that the Council was mindful of how everyone used Norfolk's roads moving forward and supported local involvement.

10.5 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services welcomed the report, particularly the paragraphs referencing reduced speed limits outside schools. He was sorry that the school streets initiative had not received more support.

10.6 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management reported that when he first became a councillor, the first issue he faced was speeding trucks through a rural village and therefore anything that could be done to reduce the impact of speeding in rural areas was positive.

10.7 The Chairman noted that local representatives knew local issues and how often they were raised and that the strategy had been well received. Paragraph 6.2 of the report stated that "it should be noted that schemes and measures can only be taken forward with appropriate funding", and on page 407 of the Cabinet papers it was noted that there were no plans to use the road safety reserve fund of £207,000; the Chairman noted that this could be used to support this strategy.

10.8 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree the revised Norfolk Speed Management Strategy (NSMS).

10.9 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The previous version of the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy was produced in 2014. Since then, parts of the Council's, Constabulary's and local communities' approaches to speed management have changed, to reflect changing demands, new initiatives and other drivers described in Section 1 of the report.

The Council's new Road Safety Community Fund (RSCF) initiative was launched during the summer of 2021 and presented to Cabinet on 6 September 2021. This was deemed an appropriate time to also refresh and update the 2014 Norfolk Speed Management Strategy, to capture these changes and to produce a new and updated Norfolk Speed Management Strategy document.

As a result, the 4-year RSCF programme included undertaking a review of the Norfolk Speed Management Strategy during the first year (2022) and led to the compilation of the revised Norfolk Speed Management Strategy document included in Appendix A of the report and discussed in the report.

10.10 **Alternative Options**

Norfolk County Council could continue to use the former Norfolk Speed Management Strategy until further changes in national legislation or guidelines (e.g. Department for Transport) are published. However, as there have been a number of important changes in approaches to speed management and associated strategies and policies since 2014, a review and update was considered necessary.

11. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Funding

11.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the changes to the distribution for the Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2023 in line with the Department of Education's National Funding Formula arrangements.

11.1.2 The Executive Director for Children's Services referenced paragraph 2.23 of the report which referred to the disapplication of regulations request to the Secretary of State in November 2022. Since the production of the report the Schools' Forum had voted positively to support the disapplication request which would help the Secretary of State to make their decision.

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

- This was an annual report to Cabinet. The Dedicated Schools Grant was made up of four blocks of money: school block, high needs block, early years block and central block
- There had been difficulties in the past funding the high needs block and the deficit which had resulted. Children's Services had worked with the Department for Education since spring 2022 and the first local inclusion strategy had been developed, working with them, to reduce the deficit over 6 years.
- The schools' block followed the national funding formula, which had changed this year.
- The council was waiting for the minister to agree the decision to go forward with the first local inclusion, and on that basis the Schools' Forum had supported this.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services moved the recommendations set out in the supplementary report.

11.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance welcomed the comments from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and acknowledged the work of the children's services and finance team related to the Safety Valve project. He looked forward to the agreement from the Department of Education of the first local inclusion policy which would set up the council to sort out the anomaly in the accounts of the high needs block deficit and also looked forward to teams working with the Department for Education to conclude this successfully.

11.3 The Chairman felt that the Council needed confirmation that the Department for Education would move forward with the Safety Valve Project as they had previously confirmed.

11.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree:

1. the Dedicated Schools Grant funding including
    a. the changes to the schools funding formula;
    b. the changes to the early years funding entitlements formula;

c. agreeing the high needs block budget, noting that it has been assessed to meet our statutory duties and it adds to the DSG cumulative deficit in line with the Safety Valve plan submitted to the Secretary of State for Education for approval;

2. to delegate decision making powers to the Executive Director of Children's Services, in conjunction with the Lead Member for Children's Services, to agree the final funding cap, or allocation of additional funds, once the final DSG calculations of individual school allocations are known and in line with the principles of Cabinet's decision.

11.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report

11.6 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 5 of the report

12. Fee levels for adult social care providers 2023/24

12.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the Council's legal duties under the Care Act 2014 to promote the effective and efficient operation of this market including its sustainability and maintaining adequate fee levels, setting out proposals for a fee uplift in 2023/24 and reporting the outcome of a Fair Cost of Care exercise.

12.1.2 The Executive Director for Adult Social Services reported to Cabinet that Norfolk County Council purchased most of their care from the private sector. This year the Council had been asked to include a Fair Cost of Care in its determinations to establish what the median rate was in the market. This process had been deferred for 2 years, with a requirement that the Council published a sustainability plan in February 2023. The Council had a strong quality improvement plan, co-produced with providers and subject to a separate report previously brought to Cabinet.

12.1.3 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention introduced the report to Cabinet:

- This report recommended an increase on the Council's spend to care providers of £30m, which was an immense extra investment in the care market at a time when budgets were being squeezed. This was one of the largest increases ever proposed, alongside some of the highest levels of inflation seen.
- Norfolk County Council invested more than £344m per year purchasing external care from private care providers and had a duty to promote the operation of the market, including sustainability and maintaining adequate fee levels. The proposals in this report would allow the council to meet its policy of driving quality.
- It was good news that the council could invest in increasing the level of pay workers as this had not been traditionally an area of high pay
- The proposals in the report would seek to balance the requirement of meeting the duties of the Care Act and balancing the budget.
- The level of investment would be reached by using the new funding announced in the autumn statement and the ability to raise the social

care precept, however £28m efficiency savings would still be required in the budget.
- The Council continued to have active dialogue with care providers and care associations and had consulted with providers on the proposals.
- Fee levels had to meet market level and meet long term supply; shortage in care supply was a critical national issue. The proposal offered higher uplifts for areas where demand outstripped supply.
- The cost of care exercise was carried out in 2021-22 and an extra £2.9m per year was invested. In 2023-24 the Government had delayed the policy changes including to section 18 of the Care Act. The Council was therefore moving towards a Fair Cost of Care within the Government's timescales and committed to have it in place in this time.
- The stability of the care market was actively monitored.

12.2 The Chairman noted that the report demonstrated the Council's investment in the care market; the Council was in a cycle of change and the Government needed to do something to support this but was not moving forward as quickly as needed. Paragraph 1.6.5 of the report discussed the work being done to support the recruitment and retention of care providers.

12.3 The Vice-Chairman noted recommendation C which was very important as the Council needed to keep going to Government to ensure the right things were being achieved for the people of Norfolk. He felt Norfolk County Council could be proud that it went above and beyond for its people.

12.4 The Cabinet Member for Finance felt that the government needed a long-term strategy for Adult Social Care as well as in the main, as one-off grants made it difficult for local authorities to plan in the long term.

12.5 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services noted the difficulties that the sector experienced in recruitment and retention and hoped that increasing the percentages given to them would support them with this. He also noted that continuing to lobby the Government was important, something which Children's Services also continued to do.

12.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to

a) Agree to award a £30m increase in fee levels, as described in detail in section 2 of this paper
b) As part of the Government's Social Care Reform, commit to moving towards paying the median cost of care within Government's timescales and within the funding afforded to the Council for this specific purpose
c) Agree to continue to lobby the Government to make the case for sustainable fair funding for Norfolk

12.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report

12.8 **Alternative Options**

The option recommended within this report is affordable within the Council's budget planning approach and alternative options are not presented. However, Members could choose to make different budget decisions as part of the County Council budget process.

13. Finance Monitoring Report 2022-23 P8: November 2022

13.1.1 Cabinet received the report giving a summary of the forecast financial position for the 2022-23 Revenue and Capital Budgets, General Balances, and the Council's Reserves at 31 March 2023, together with related financial information.

13.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The Cabinet Member for Finance was confident that the budget would be in balance by year-end however an overspend continued to be reported of just over £2m. At 0.5% of the net budget this was not significant, however all departments were helped by the way post Covid grant funding was used, as shown in table 4a of the report. In 2023-24 this would no longer be the case, however the impact from the pandemic continued to be significant.
- In Children's Services, despite use of departmental reserves set aside to deal with added pressures, ongoing and pandemic related, the department was set to overspend by £14.5m this year, 2022-23, on top of the £6.5m overspend from 2021-22. External social care costs continued to be at the root of this as places in residential care homes were fewer and more expensive and the pandemic had reduced the availability of foster carers. This was worsened by the rigid regulatory framework adding to the burden of providing placements.
- There had been a significant increase in home to school transport costs and a change in the direction to tribunals was urgently needed.
- Due to these issues, there was an overspend on social care placements of £13m and a further overspend of £6.7m from home to school transport bringing the amount paid by Norfolk residents to £50m per year. Most of this cost was due to the high cost of supporting children needing high-cost assistance to and from school. The implementation of the department's Safety Valve project and ongoing provision of additional Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) schools would hopefully reduce this.
- The creation of the Integrated Care Board in County Hall should help to find ways to mitigate costs in picking up work from services within their remits.
- The combined effect of pressures in Children's Services meant finding an additional £27m in the 2023-24 budget.
- Adult Social Care were forecasting a negative in-year position after using £4m departmental reserves, mostly due to continuing to manage backlogs which built up over the previous 18 months preparing for the, now delayed, social care reform. The Adult Social Care market in Norfolk and nationally saw increased costs, increased demand and complexity of need.
- Norfolk's population was set to increase by 56,000 over the next 10 years, with 78% of this in the over 65 age group. The average life expectancy for men was 80 years and 84 for women, with the number of years spent in good health expected to be 63. 25% of Norfolk's population was over 65 compared to 18.5% nationally and this was why a £30m uplift had been proposed to the external care sector, the largest ever seen. Cost of Care was likely to be an ongoing issue.

- Community and Environmental Services had been impacted by increased electricity prices, with an overspend of £1.5m seen in street lighting costs, offset by savings elsewhere. Cost pressures on the museum service from interrupted admissions during the Castle Keep project and an expected higher than budgeted for wage settlement in the Fire Service would mean £6.1m departmental reserves would be used in the current year, 2022-23.
- The implementation of the My Oracle HR system had seen some issues, but overall the roll out had gone well, ensuring users were paid quickly and effectively and giving £400,000 benefits realisation to go forward to future years as non-delivery of savings from 2022-23.
- Treasury management continued to report healthy budgets at £241m at the end of the year with additional borrowing of £50m. Borrowing rates were volatile after the September 2022 budget however the Council took advantage of a dip in rates and borrowed £10m at 3.56%.
- This year the capital programme was expected to be £304.9m, as referred to in tables 1 and 4 of the report. Of this, 60% was made up from external grants and contributions with £117.3 made up of prudential borrowing. Changes to this were shown in appendix 3 of the report.
- Appendix 4 of the report showed the winding up of Norfolk County Council Nurseries, established when the Council stepped in to provide childcare in Yarmouth following the failure of a provider. When this became viable, ownership was transferred to new providers and the business was no longer required. The Cabinet Member for Finance thanked officers for the swift and professional way this was carried out.
- The Cabinet Member for Finance thanked The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management and his team for their management of the property portfolio which meant that capital receipts totalled £54.6 in the current financial year, 22-23. The use of some of these receipts was shown in table 5b of the report.

13.2 The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services reported that Children’s Services were still experiencing issues from the covid pandemic and thanked the Council for helping Children’s Services come to a balanced budget despite the overspend. the main factors impacting Children’s Service were placement costs for children rising due to increased needs and the increased cost of home to school transport due to increased cost of fuel and wages. New Roads was returning more dividends than anticipated and supporting the budget. Paragraph 3.10 of the report showed the issues for Children’s Services caused by delays in the court system; they were being engaged with to mitigate these issues which were increasing costs and affecting young people.

13.3 The Chairman noted that issues being faced by Norfolk County Council’s Children’s Services were seen across the country and it was important to work in conjunction with other local authorities to address them.

13.4 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention noted the overspend for Adult Social Services however that it was a small percentage on the overall Adult Social Services budget and congratulated the Executive Director and team for the progress made this year coming out of the covid 19 pandemic. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance for drawing attention to the demographic of Norfolk. Norfolk had a large number of older people choosing to live here which gave the Council specific set of issues to manage in coming years and was important to discuss with Government.

13.5 the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste thanked The Cabinet Member for Finance and team for their work; he noted paragraph 2.28 of the report talking about waste volumes at recycling centres being volatile.

13.6 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships discussed the museum service which had benefited from external funding from people who wanted to support the service to buy new paintings and exhibits as well as external funding gained for the Castle Keep.

13.7 Cabinet **RESOLVED**

1. To recommend to full Council the addition of **£0.427m** to the capital programme to address capital funding requirements funded mostly from various external sources as set out in detail in capital Appendix 3, paragraph 4.1 of the report as follows:
    - £0.299m external funding raised for Museum Painting Exhibits and Acquisitions
    - £0.095m increase in the Castle Keep Gateway to Medieval England budget for monitoring and quality assurance mitigation works which was approved at the December 22 Cabinet meeting
    - £0.033m miscellaneous minor adjustments to project budgets
2. To recommend to Full Council the addition of £2.511m to the capital programme for the MyOracle project in 2022-23 as set out in detail in Capital Appendix 3, paragraph 4.3 of the report.
3. Subject to full Council approval of recommendation 1 and 2 to delegate:
    3.1) To the Director of Procurement authority to undertake the necessary procurement processes including the determination of the minimum standards and selection criteria (if any) and the award criteria; to shortlist bidders; to make provisional award decisions (in consultation with the Chief Officer responsible for each scheme); to award contracts; to negotiate where the procurement procedure so permits; and to terminate award procedures if necessary.
    3.2) To the Director of Property authority (notwithstanding the limits set out at 5.13.6 and 5.13.7 of Financial Regulations) to negotiate or tender for or otherwise acquire the required land to deliver the schemes (including temporary land required for delivery of the works) and to dispose of land so acquired that is no longer required upon completion of the scheme;
    3.3) To each responsible chief officer authority to:
    - (in the case of two-stage design and build contracts) agree the price for the works upon completion of the design stage and direct that the works proceed; or alternatively direct that the works be recompeted
    - approve purchase orders, employer's instructions, compensation events or other contractual instructions necessary to effect changes in contracts that are necessitated by discoveries, unexpected ground conditions, planning conditions,

requirements arising from detailed design or minor changes in scope

- subject always to the forecast cost including works, land, fees and disbursements remaining within the agreed scheme or programme budget.
- That the officers exercising the delegated authorities set out above shall do so in accordance with the council's Policy Framework, with the approach to Social Value in Procurement endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting of 6 July 2020, and with the approach set out in the paper entitled "Sourcing strategy for council services" approved by Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting of 16 July 2018.

4. To Approve the proposal to dissolve NCC Nurseries Limited as set out in Appendix 4 paragraph 5 of the report.
5. To recognise the period 8 general fund revenue forecast of a £2.054m overspend (0.44% of net budget)**,** noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to reduce or eliminate potential over-spends where these occur within services to deliver a balance budget by the year end.
6. To recognise the period 8 forecast of 92% savings delivery in 2022-23, noting also that Executive Directors will continue to take measures to mitigate potential savings shortfalls through alternative savings or underspends;
7. To note the forecast General Balances at 31 March 2023 of **£24.340m**, assuming the Council will mitigate the overspends reported in P8 of the report.
8. To note the expenditure and funding of the revised current and future 2021-26 capital programmes.

13.8 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Three appendices are attached to this report giving details of the forecast revenue and capital financial outturn positions:

Appendix 1 of the report summarises the revenue outturn position, including:
- Forecast over and under spends
- Changes to the approved budget
- Reserves
- Savings

Appendix 2 of the report summarises the key working capital position, including:
- Treasury management
- Payment performance and debt recovery.

Appendix 3 of the report summarises the capital outturn position, and includes:3
- Current and future capital programmes
- Capital programme funding
- Income from property sales and other capital receipts.

Appendix 4 of the report summarises the proposal to dissolve NCC Nurseries Limited.

Additional capital funds will enable services to invest in assets and infrastructure as described in Appendix 3 section 4 of the report.

13.9 **Alternative Options**

To deliver a balanced budget, no viable alternative options have been identified to the recommendations in this report. In terms of financing the proposed capital expenditure, no further grant or revenue funding has been identified to fund the expenditure, apart from the funding noted in Appendix 3 of the report.

14 **2023-24 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27**

14.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an overview of the Council's strategic and financial planning for 2023-24 to 2026-27 and setting out the detailed information to support Cabinet's Revenue Budget and council tax recommendations to the County Council, including the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services' (s151 Officer's) statutory assessment of the robustness of the overall budget.

14.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report to Cabinet:

- At £60m, the scale of the budget gap identified in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in February 2022 was one of the largest that the Council had to bridge and had done so while dealing with material cost pressures which had emerged since.
- A balanced budget proposal was set out for 2023-24 however this came with some costs including a necessity to increase council tax by the maximum allowable before going to referendum. This would raise £23.356m which would help to cover the increase in costs of £148m. Total savings of £59.704m were budgeted to pay for these.
- The balance of cost increases would largely be met by additional funding announced in the provisional settlement which was better than expected in the short term. This meant the Council would be spending more money next year than last year at £494m vs £464m on Norfolk's services.
- Since the budget in February 2022, there had been severe headwinds in the wider economy and public finances which increased costs to the Council. The 2022/23 pay award was around £8.1m more than originally budgeted; the Fire Service had yet to agree its settlement. This feeds through to an increased pay award assumption for 2023-24 of £6.8m. Pay awards added up to £14.9m and because many external contracts were linked to CPI and RPI the Council was budgeting for a further £7.4m inflationary pressures.
- There had been an overspend of £20m in Children's Services in the current year 2022-23, to add to the coming financial year base, 2023-24.
- There was significant impact from the rise in National Living Wage particularly for third party contracts adding an additional cost of £9.25m to Adult Social Care and an additional £30m had been provided to maintain this sector.
- In addition to the £20m additional revenue funding to Children's Services, an additional £5.5m would need to be provided in 2024 and the following five years as part of the Council's contribution to address the High Needs Block deficit. This alone was more than a 1%increase in council tax. The Dedicated Schools Grant deficits driven by high needs block pressures were a national issue. The increase in National Living Wage was putting

pressure on all care providers and inflationary and pay pressures were severe.

- The Government assumed that authorities would raise council tax by the maximum available while setting an effective cap via the referendum threshold. It was vital to ensure that pressures were dealt with properly, ensuring that measures were not one off or short term. New funding in the settlement should be seen in the context of material and ongoing pressures and the Council must continue to work hard to keep pace with increasing inflationary and demand pressures seen in service areas.
- This year’s local authority settlement was for one year only and Government expected local authorities to raise local council tax income in line with the referendum threshold to address general inflationary pressures and specific social care costs. Additional income from this was included in funding increase figures quoted by Government. Of the total core spending power in the 2023-24 provisional settlement, 57% came from assumed council tax increase set at 4.99%.
- The Council consulted on £32m savings following Cabinet consideration in October 2022. The findings of this consultation are set out in appendix 5 of the report.
- Over the summer the council consulted on changes to the mobile library service and the outcome of this is shown in appendix 7 of the report. From the consultation the original proposal to reduce mobile libraries was curtailed.
- Following the development of further savings to deliver a balanced budget there would be further consultations detailed on page 230 of the report.
- A wide range of council tax options were consulted on; a balanced response was received on a 2.99% increase which was not an option to the council or its peer groups. The proposed increase of 4.99% was a below inflation increase.
- Page 253 of the report showed the net revenue budget summarised by department in table 4 of the report. 40% of savings would come from transforming the way services were delivered, either from the strategic review, internal transformation or Connecting Communities.
- Strategic review savings were included as part of departmental savings as this is how they would be realised however a summary of savings made as part of this review were shown on page 260, table 9 of the report. In some cases, staff consultation would be needed.
- Column 2 of table 4 of the report showed departmental increases in financial pressures before savings. In the 2023-24 budget it was proposed that additional Adult Social Care grant funding be recognised in full in the Adult Social Care budget resulting in a reduction in the department’s net budget for 2023-24. This reflected a shift driven by Government funding policy decisions towards Adult Social Care being increasingly supported via specific funding rather than general council tax.
- The purpose of the net budget was to show residents what the Council spent their taxes on; the gross budget of over £1.6bn next year, 2023-24, would show the whole picture of what the council spends including a large increase in what is available for Adult Social Care. The funding received for Adult Social Care was significant however was one off making the medium-term look concerning.
- Adult Social Services’ strategy Promoting Independence: Living Well and Changing Lives represented the second phase of the strategy and had 8 core ambitions set out in paragraph 8.2 of the report. These were critical

to delivering adult social care in a sustainable way which offered value for money, was progressive and put prevention first. The financial strategy built on the continued development of promoting independence and focussed on areas of change.

- Additional funding of Children's Services meant that the department had increased significantly as a percentage of the net budget. The exponential increase to home to school transport costs, social care placements and support costs meant a significant increase had been built into the cost base. Despite evidence from the Association of Directors of Children's Services showing the need for primary legislation in a number of areas it was likely that the department will need to continue to follow what has been demonstrated already in Adults Social Services, rather than rely on significant changes in policy.
- Community and Environmental services covered a huge range of services, and the list of additional costs and savings were diverse. These impacted on and were used by most residents, visitors and businesses to the County. Through this department the council focussed on norfolk as a place, its heritage, environment and infrastructure. Norfolk's economic recovery was being supported with the delivery of the Norfolk and Suffolk Renewal Plan and development of the Norfolk Investment Framework.
- The Council was supporting community recovery and development through the Social Infrastructure Fund and Community Renewal Fund and providing digital and physical infrastructure individuals and businesses in Norfolk need to thrive, including the best possible Broadband infrastructure that could be secured. The Council was working to reduce its impact on the environment and deliver the plan supporting the Council's Environmental Policy, including the new Electric Vehicle Strategy. The ability to make these investment decisions, both reactively to help cope with the pandemic and proactively to overcome its aftermath, had not come out of nowhere: a sustained and transformative programme had been set out by this Administration in our plan "Better Together for Norfolk", providing a clear roadmap to deliver on our priorities: a vibrant and sustainable economy; better opportunities for children and young people; healthy, fulfilling and independent lives; a greener more resilient future. Through improving educational outcomes, growing the skills our key sectors need, helping to create good quality jobs, and putting in place affordable housing and the appropriate infrastructure the life-chances of our residents can be improved, and the economy can be strengthened.
- Delivering services whilst dealing with a period of profound, complex demographic and societal challenges required forensic attention to financial detail. The Cabinet Member for Finance supported the work done by the Business Transformation and Smarter Working team who would be at the heart of the drive to reshape the organisation during the next phase of the Strategic Review, using lessons learned to de-silo the organisation wherever possible. Delivering change in an organisation as large and as complex as Norfolk County Council would be difficult, and it would be essential to work with service users, residents, staff and our partners.
- Budget Planning started with a forecast £60 million hole and officers then had to deal with an additional £20 million of economic and inflationary costs, nearly £15 million further legislative requirements, and £30 million additional policy-derived costs, such as additional funding for Childrens services. Set against this the savings necessary had been made, helped,

in part, by a better specific, one-off Government settlement and requiring a 4.99% increase in Council tax.

- The Cabinet Member for Finance believed that in February a robust budget could be presented to Full Council which gave the Council time to prepare for a potentially different Local Authority landscape in the medium term. The administration had a clear vision: a Budget Based on the Future, to enable the Council to step up to the central role asked of us by Government: it is the County that will be delivering levelling up; the County that will continue to deliver social care; the County that the Government is looking towards to deliver on devolution.
- The aim of the Medium Term Financial Strategy was to show a balanced position over a four year period. At present further savings or additional revenue funding need to be identified.
- A balanced budget for 2023-24 was proposed, but gaps remained in subsequent years, for an overall deficit in the Medium Term Financial Strategy of £124.127m.
- The make up of the medium term deficit was different this year, with a higher gap forecast in 2025/26/27 as the front end loading effects of this years' Government support to Adult services, and to a lesser extent the following year, came to an end. It was possible that a long term settlement may be in place by then but there was uncertainty about the timing and implications of reform of local government funding.
- Compared to next year, that faced for 2023/24 at £45 million remained a daunting task, particularly if long term funding commitments remained beyond the Government's power to deliver. A £10 million saving from Phase 2 of the Strategic Review had not been included; ongoing reform in the coming financial year was anticipated as the cultural shift in the review continued to take shape. A considerable proportion of the Council's services continued to be delivered externally through partners, private sector contracts and wholly owned subsidiaries, including Norse. These arrangements were a key driver of the Council's cost pressures and many costs were linked to CPI, RPI etc. Demographics ensured demand for services continued to rise so Phase 2 of the Strategic Review would look for savings by focussing on better end to end procurement policies, more challenge on re-procurement, better use of technology and looking at which services we should be contracting for at all.
- Longer term certainty was key to enabling robust decision-making and overall financial stability of local authorities. The Local Government financial settlements remain wedded to providing for one year only. Increasingly, the government had provided a larger proportion of funding through one-off specific grants, which made long term planning more difficult. Cabinet would continue to advocate strongly for Norfolk, press Government for our fair share of local authority funding and bring forward long overdue reforms to press for a devolution settlement which would set us on a road to fix local authority funding in the long term.
- This is budget which supports communities through increased investment in services, recognising the cost of living crunch and starts to make the council fit for the future, as a champion for the county.

14.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services noted that a £43.5m increase was proposed for the Children's Services budget. There had been investment in SEND schools as there was an aim to improve outcomes for children with SEND and where possible to enable them to attend schools closer to their homes and progress alongside children of a similar age in their area. Early Intervention would continue with an aim for fewer Education Health and Care Plans and to increase the confidence of parents in the system. The Eastern Region Association of Directors of Children's Services published a paper on sufficiency which identified issues and solutions that were needed to continue to lobby Government about. The number of children in care was stable however the costs continued to increase. The New Roads initiative was proving to be more successful than first thought.

14.3 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy hoped that the remainder of the business rates pool would be retained for business development. The Chairman noted that current figures had been used in the way they were intended but stated that future money from the business pool must be used for economic development or the County would lose out on the potential to grow the economy.

14.4 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention was happy to endorse this budget. He was unhappy with some comments from opposition councillors about the budget, pointing out that the budget proposed to do more with increased investment in departments. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention was pleased to support an increase in the gross budget for Adult Social Care and noted that Children's Services was receiving a substantial increase in spend in the coming year as well.

14.5 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships referred to recommendation 2. The Council had listened to what people said about the continued use of mobile libraries; it had not been possible to find the savings required in this area as there was still a need for this service in parts of the County however £107,000 of savings were being made and routes were being reviewed and removing stocks that were no longer needed and moving routes to be no closer than 1.5 miles from branch libraries except for where there were significant geographical libraries. Libraries provided by the voluntary service were being publicised for people to access if they could not access branch or mobile libraries, and one-off targeted services would be provided at sites such as care homes and traveller sites. The equality impact assessment 2022-26 referenced in recommendation 3 had been updated and taken to Select Committee and would be brought to Cabinet in March 2023 to ensure the Council was meeting its legal requirements.

14.6 The Chairman noted that there was work to do to manage inflation and demand. The net budget had increased despite the savings which were needed to reach a balanced budget. The Chairman referred to page 379 of the report which stated that "Core spending power risks painting an unrealistic picture of how well a council might be faring. For example, Norfolk's indicative core spending power has risen from £606.3m in 2015-16 to £857.1m in 2023-24, an increase of £250.8m, however the vast majority of this increase has been delivered through increased council tax, effectively transferring the burden to local council tax payers. During this time the council has also had to plan to make substantial savings to meet wider cost pressures and reductions in funding and enable the setting of a balanced budget." The strategic review had raised £17m savings so far through efficiencies and would be important to deliver change. The Chairman moved the recommendations set out in the report with the following amendments: Recommendation 6g spoke about bringing back a report to

Cabinet on the Strategic Review. The Chairman noted that a report would in fact be brought back to Cabinet in March 2023 and recommendation 6g would be updated to reflect this. Recommendation 5 would be updated to include that that “future Business Rates Pool money should be allocated to economic development”.

14.7 The Vice-Chairman noted the discussion around devolution on page 239 of the report and the benefits that having a deal would have for unlocking housing, employment sites, investing in skills, adult education, transport and raising influence nationally and regionally to help shape future policy and funding decisions, among others.

14.8 Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1) To consider the statements regarding the uncertain planning environment, robustness of budget estimates, assumptions and risks relating to the 2023-24 budget, and authorise the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, to make any changes required to reflect Final Local Government Finance Settlement information (if available), or changes in council tax and business rates forecasts from District Councils, in order to maintain a balanced budget position for presentation to Full Council. In recognition of the budget gap forecast for 2024-25, and to enable a final balanced Budget position to be recommended to County Council, Cabinet agreed the following principles:
    a) that any additional resources which become available should be used to delay the use of one-off funding from reserves from 2023-24 to 2024-25, or
    b) that any income shortfall should be addressed from the Corporate Business Risk Reserve (to the extent possible). Where the Corporate Business Risk Reserve is insufficient, to note that the ultimate source of funding to balance the Budget will be the General Fund.
2) To review the findings of public consultation as set out in Section 13 of Appendix 1 of the report, in full in Appendix 5 of the report, and in Appendix 7 of the report in relation to Mobile Libraries, and consider these when recommending the budget changes required to deliver a balanced budget as set out in Appendix 1.
3) To consider and comment on the findings of equality impact assessments, as set out in Appendix 6 to this report (also Appendix 7 of the report in relation to Mobile Libraries), and in doing so, note the Council’s duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:
    - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
    - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
    - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4) To note that the Council has responded to the consultation undertaken on the Provisional Local Government Settlement for 2023-24 as detailed in Section 3 of Appendix 1 of the report.
5) To note that the Council will continue to operate a Business Rates Pool for 2023-24 in partnership with Norfolk District Councils on the same terms as the existing 2022-23 Pool and as set out in Section 6 of Appendix 1 of the report, and approve the use of 2022-23 Pool funds as set out and that future Business Rates Pool money should be allocated to economic development.
6) To agree to recommend to County Council:
    a) The level of risk and budget assumptions set out in the Robustness of Estimates report (Appendix 4 of the report), which underpin the revenue and capital budget decisions and planning for 2023-27.
    b) The general principle of seeking to increase general fund balances as part of closing the 2022-23 accounts and that in 2023-24 any further additional resources which become available during the year should be added to the general fund balance wherever possible.
    c) The findings of public consultation (Appendix 5 of the report), which should be considered when agreeing the 2023-24 Budget (Appendix 1 of the report).
    d) To note the advice of the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services (Section 151 Officer), in Section 5 of Appendix 1 of the report, on the financial impact of an increase in council tax and the sustainability of the Council's medium term position.
    e) That the Council's 2023-24 Budget will include a general council tax increase of 2.99% and a 2.00% increase in the Adult Social Care precept, an overall increase of 4.99% (shown in Section 5 of Appendix 1 of the report), as recommended by the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, and resulting in an increased overall County Council Net Revenue Budget of £493.707m for 2023-24, including budget increases of £169.523m and budget decreases of -£139.939m as set out in Table 15 of Appendix 1 of the report, and the actions required to deliver the proposed savings, subject to any changes required in line with recommendation 1 above to enable a balanced budget to be proposed. This would result in a budget gap of £45.920m to be addressed for 2024-25, and £124.127m over the life of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
    f) The budget proposals set out for 2024-25 to 2026-27, including authorising Executive Directors to take the action required to deliver budget savings for 2024-25 to 2026-27 as appropriate.
    g) With regard to the future years, that further plans, including phase two of the Strategic Review, to meet the remaining budget shortfalls in the period 2024-25 to 2026-27 are developed and brought back to Cabinet during 2023-24 in line with the proposed timetable and that a report on the next steps of the Strategic Review will be brought to the March Cabinet meeting.
    h) Noting Government's assumptions that local authorities will raise the maximum council tax available to them, and that the final level of council tax for future years is subject to Member decisions annually (informed by any referendum principles defined by the Government), to confirm, or otherwise, the assumptions set out in the Medium Term Financial

Strategy (MTFS Table 2 in Appendix 2 of the report) that the Council's budget planning for 2024-25 will include for planning purposes:

i) general council tax increases of 2.99% (1.99% from 2025-26);

ii) Adult Social Care precept increases of 2.00%(1.00% 2025-26 and 0.00% 2026-27); and

iii) that if the referendum threshold were increased in the period 2024-25 to 2026-27 to above 2.99%, or any further discretion were offered to increase the Adult Social Care precept (or similar), the Section 151 Officer would recommend the Council take full advantage of any flexibility in view of the overall financial position.

i) That the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services be authorised to transfer from the County Fund to the Salaries and General Accounts all sums necessary in respect of revenue and capital expenditure provided in the 2023-24 Budget, to make payments, to raise and repay loans, and to invest funds.

j) To agree the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, including the two policy objectives to be achieved:

i) Revenue: To identify further funding or savings for 2024-25 to 2026-27 to produce a balanced budget in all years 2023-27 in accordance with the timetable set out in the Revenue Budget report (Section 4 of Appendix 1 of the report).

ii) Capital: To continue to provide a framework for identifying and prioritising capital requirements and proposals to ensure that all capital investment is targeted at meeting the Council's priorities.

k) The mitigating actions proposed in the equality impact assessments (Appendix 6 of the report).

l) Note the planned reduction in non-schools earmarked and general reserves of 48.94% over five years, from £182.994m (March 2022) to £93.441m (March 2027) (Section 6 of Appendix 3 of the report);

m) Note the policy on reserves and provisions in Section 3 of Appendix 3 of the report;

n) Agree, based on current planning assumptions and risk forecasts set out in Section 5 of Appendix 3 of the report:

i) for 2023-24, a minimum level of general balances of £25.340m, and

ii) a forecast minimum level for planning purposes of

- 2024-25, £26.590m;
- 2025-26, £27.840m; and
- 2026-27, £29.090m.

as part of the consideration of the budget plans for 2023-27 and supporting these budget recommendations;

o) Agree the use of non-school Earmarked Reserves, as set out in Section 6 of Appendix 3 of the report.

14.9 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report

14.10 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 5 of the report

15. Capital Strategy and Programme 2023-24

15.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the proposed capital strategy and programme and including information on the funding available to support that programme.

15.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The Council was required to set a capital programme prior to the beginning of each financial year and commit the revenue and capital resources to deliver the programme.
- The capital programme focussed on delivery of the core objectives set out in Better Together for Norfolk. Growth in the economy was seen to be synonymous with caring for communities and the most vulnerable in them.
- The strategy was to make a different to the county's economic infrastructure educational infrastructure, nurturing its environment and cultural infrastructure. The programme continued the work set out during and after the pandemic to regenerate the economy and focus on better health outcomes for Norfolk's residents. By improving educational outcomes, growing the skills key sectors need, helping create good quality jobs, and putting in place the appropriate infrastructure to attract those jobs this would improve life chances of residents and strengthen the economy.
- The administration had delivered on its manifesto pledges by
    - Investing in libraries through maintaining the 47 libraries around the County and spending £7.5m in developing many of them into Community hubs. £2m had been committed to assist major urban regeneration projects in Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn to provide Multi use community hubs, as well as rebuilding or refurbishing libraries in Hunstanton, Sprowston to add recently completed work in Gorleston, Wymondham, Dereham and Attleborough.
    - Investing in Museums including £8.1m on the internationally significant Castle Keep project and £1.5m on Norfolk's cultural and heritage facilities
    - Investing in the commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030.
    - Investing £51m in Housing with Care schemes and villages across the County together with Norsecare, continuing to offer the highest quality care to our most vulnerable residents.
    - Investing in new technology by adding £42 million to the roll out of faster broadband, enabling Government and private sector contributions of £64m on superfast broadband and £114m on Project Gigabit.
    - Rolling out a fibre network, in towns the City, and across rural Norfolk.
    - Investing in technology to allow those who want to remain in their own homes for longer to do so by offering support, connectivity and safety in the home.

    - Investing £28m in new SEND schools, main stream schools and Special Resource Bases in the coming financial year, 2023-24, to banish the attainment gap between Norfolk's young people and the Country overall.
    - Investing in physical infrastructure so people can get to work and home quickly and cheaply and so businesses can get goods out of the County and investment in. Roads such as the Norwich Western Link, Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing and Long Stratton bypass, key industries and economic development were key to ensuring growth.
- The county deal was significant, with £600m in new investment in in infrastructure projects, environmental projects, coastal defence and economic development. It would help the Council target funding and resources on local priorities, unlock housing and employment sites, invest directly in the skills we need, control the transport priorities we need, ensure we continue to benefit from the shared prosperity fund and make more direct and strategic economic plans for Norfolk. The Deal for Norfolk would allow the Council to start to invest directly in in locally controlled issues that are currently decided in Whitehall.
- The devolution deal would add to a range of capital funding successes that the administration had brought to Norfolk: the latest tranche of Levelling Up funds saw two successful bids from Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn. These £20m and £24m deals add to the collaborative investments we have seen including the £65.4m Town Fund, Future High street Fund and Community Renewal fund, the getting Building fund, Growth deal and Growing Places Fund, enterprise zones, as well as Transforming Cities fund, Active Travel Fund and £49.5m Bus Back better fund.
- £35m in new schemes were set out in the summary and detailed on page 779 of the report. The new schemes to be added to the 2023-27 programme totalled £35.056m and included County Farms refurbishment and carbon reduction schemes (£9.4m), rolling Technology Improvement programme (£8.2m), Scottow Enterprise Park refurbishment (£8.6m), Estate Buildings Decarbonisation initiatives (£4m), highways improvements (£2.5m), Fire and Rescue services equipment and site improvements (£1.2m), expansion of waste recycling sites and services (£0.51m), 1 Million Trees for Norfolk (£0.5m)
- Nearly half this sum was a continued response to the Council's commitment to achieve net zero in Norfolk in 2030. This would join the £337.4m already committed for the coming financial year of:
    - Childrens Services continued development of SEND schools and a robust programme of upgrading mainstream schools or building new ones
    - Adults Social Care continued Housing with care programme which would provide new care villages in Norfolk,
    - developing and maintaining the transport network: £412m on maintenance, and £49m on projects such as Long Stratton bypass, Norwich Western Link and other vitally needed road improvements.
- It was important for local members to work with local communities to improve their area, so the Local Members Fund was proposed to be increased by £1000, to £11,000 per year. This was eligible to be used on environments schemes as well as road and footpath schemes. Together with the 1,000,000 trees for Norfolk, the funds put aside to develop the 42

mile Jubilee trail network, the additional £2.4m contributed by ourselves and Defra to enhance our over 1200 mile Norfolk Trail network.

- In addition to the Quarterly Treasury Management Panel, the Capital Programme Review Board reviewed the capital requirements of spending departments to ensure schemes were prioritised and reviewed. The Capital Review Board undertook a detailed review of the 2022-23 capital forecast of existing projects in September 2022 across services with relevant officers. This review identified £155.845m slippage in the 2022-23 capital plan which had been transferred to future years, leaving £280.438m planned expenditure for 2022-23 and £916.781m for future years. However, a further £27m was expected to be reprofiled meaning the out-turn for 2022/23 would be lower. Capital spending plans would be under continued review.
- The Revenue Budget would provide the Council with the resources to build on Children's Services in the wake of the excellent Ofsted report, to develop the transformation programme that was delivering better outcomes for less money to our elderly and to continue to enhance a range of services through our Communities and Environmental Services teams, this Capital Programme will underpin the firm long term commitment to put in place the infrastructure necessary to enable Departments to deliver their services.

15.2 The Vice-Chairman discussed page 781 of the report concerning highways funding. The Government had approved a £26.2 million contribution to the A140 Long Stratton Bypass, subject to Full Business Case, and was considering business case proposals for the Norwich Western Link and the A10 West Winch Housing Access Road. Norfolk would receive a proportion of the Government's £450 million local electric vehicle infrastructure scheme for local authorities to support local electric vehicle infrastructure delivery. Norfolk's Bus Service Improvement Plan had received £49.5 million funding from central Government and £3.2 million to purchase 14 electric buses as part of the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) funding. In May 2020, Government announced funding allocations for the active travel fund which would support the Council to develop cycling and walking facilities. Pollution levels in Norwich were now reducing and the introduction of electric buses would support this further.

15.3 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that the council had been successful in a grant for improving Dereham flood risks which would benefit residents and a £657k grant to improve sustainable tourism.

15.4 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services discussed that there would be a £3m expansion programme for children's homes to meet demand and mitigate costs in this area.

15.5 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention welcomed the announcement of 14 new efficient double decker buses. He noted that the size of the capital programme showed the ambition of the council and therefore supported the report.

15.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To agree the Capital Strategy at Appendix A of the report as a framework for the prioritisation and continued development of the Council's capital programme;
2. To agree the proposed 2023-27+ capital programme of £956.971m, subject to additional amounts for schemes yet to be re-profiled from 2022-23;
3. To refer the programme to the County Council for approval, including the new and extended capital schemes outlined in Appendix D of the report;
4. To recommend to County Council the Council's Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2023-24 as set out in Section 5 of the report;
5. To note known grant settlements as summarised in Section 3 of the report and agree that future capital grants will be added to the programme when confirmed;
6. To note the forecast of estimated capital receipts to be generated to achieve the target of £18m, subject to market conditions, over the next three years to support schemes not funded from other sources, as set out in Table 5 of the report.

15.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The attached Annex summarises the development of the proposed capital programme, including proposed new schemes, and a summary of forecast capital receipts.

15.8 **Alternative Options**

The papers appended to this report represent the culmination of the process to develop capital schemes to be recommended to Full Council which will improve services, promote efficiencies, and address deficiencies. However, at this stage it remains the case that new capital proposals have not been agreed and could be removed from the proposed capital programme.

16. Annual Investment and Treasury Strategy 2023-24

16.1.1 Cabinet received the report presenting the Council's borrowing and investment strategies for 2023-24 providing the framework for managing the capital borrowing requirement within prudential and financially sustainable limits

16.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report to Cabinet

- Council was required to operate a balanced budget meaning that what was raised was what could be spent. The treasury function helped this by monitoring cashflow to ensure it was available when needed and that surplus money was invested. The treasury also helped facilitate funding of planned capital investment borrowing needs and that the Council could meet repayment obligations over the long term
- Treasury indicators showed that external debt fell within the prudential indicators that the Council was set.
- Borrowing rates would increase in 2023-24. The cost of borrowing would impact on how capital programmes were viewed moving forward which is why the prioritisation model was important in treasury management.
- Three treasury reports were brought to Cabinet each year and this report was the most important. It was forward looking and covered future capital and investment plans together with prudential indicators to ensure that the Council was not over-borrowing.

- The capital expenditure forecast was a key driver of borrowing activity and checks were in place to monitor them shown in appendices 1-5 of the report.
- The minimum revenue provision policy was the minimum amount to provide to ensure the Council could pay its debts and that external debt position was maintained below the total capital finance requirement or CFR. CFR drives borrowing need.
- A rigorous approach to departments' capital requirements had initiated the concept of slippage and redeployment into the capital expenditure requirements. Redeployment of budgets which no longer merit the cost of borrowing had allowed the Council to minimise uplift in budgets requested for new schemes to £35m in 23-24. Slippage occurred when departmental capital spend was delayed compared to planned expenditure. Early identification of slippage and "redeployment" of budgets allowed improved management of the capital programme and stricter control over new borrowing.
- The external debt until 2025-26 was set out on page B55 of the supplementary report. By the end of March the gross debt was estimated to be £1.29bn.
- Treasury management ensures that the Council operates in prudential boundaries, shown within the report. The main ones specify an operational boundary which ensures the external debt is lower than CFR which represents and a statutory controlled limit.
- A third benchmark had also been added, the liability benchmark.
- The Council was well within the prudential boundaries however smoothing of the capital programme would increase headroom along with a robust programme to realise capital receipts.
- Borrowing projections were summarised on page B60 of the supplementary report. The Council was maintaining an under-borrowed position at that time, with the borrowing need not fully funded with debt. This was because it was believed rates would fall and cash balances were being used as a temporary measure.
- So far £10m had been borrowed in the current financial year and an additional £40m may be borrowed before the end of March 2023.
- The investment strategy was bounded by tight criteria defining investment types as set out in appendices 6-9 of the report. Greater scrutiny was needed to ensure value for money in investment decision making.
- Investments in commercial activity were non-treasury activity and not included in this report as they were classified as capital expenditure and monitored regularly.

16.2 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to endorse and recommend to County Council the Annual Investment and Treasury Strategy for 2023-24 as set out in Annex 1 of the report, including:

- The Capital Prudential Indicators included in the body of the report
- The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2023-24 in Appendix 1 of the report
- The list of approved counterparties at Appendix 4 of the report
- The Treasury Management Prudential Indicators detailed in Appendix 5 of the report

For inclusion within the policy framework

16.3 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The primary objectives of the Council's Investment and Treasury Strategy are to safeguard the timely repayment of principal and interest, whilst ensuring adequate liquidity for cashflow and the generation of investment yield. A flexible approach to borrowing for capital purposes will be maintained both in terms of timing, and in terms of possible sources of borrowing including the Public Work Loans Board (PWLB) and the UK Municipal Bonds Agency (UKMBA). This strategy is prudent while investment returns are low and the investment environment remains challenging.

The Investment and Treasury Strategy summarises:

- The Council's capital plans (including prudential indicators);
- A Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
- The Treasury Management Strategy (how the investments and borrowings are organised) including treasury indicators; and
- An Investment Strategy (including parameters on how investments are to be managed).

16.4 **Alternative Options**

In order to achieve sound treasury management in accordance with the statutory and other guidance, no viable alternative options have been identified to the recommendation in this report.

17 Reports of the Cabinet Member and Officer Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting

17.1 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to **note** the Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting

The meeting ended at 12:31

Chairman of Cabinet

Cabinet
30 January 2023
Public & Local Member Questions
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	Public Question Time
6.1	**Question from Daniel Douglas** Many local people are concerned about the continuation of Bus Service 30 which is a Norfolk County Council tendered service. What is the date of termination of the current contract? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport** There are currently no plans to change or withdraw this bus service. This has been confirmed through discussions with the bus operator. **Supplementary question from Daniel Douglas** Can the cabinet member confirm the continuation of the service in the current form during 2023? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport** At present, Norfolk County Council and First Bus plan to run the service in its current form through 2023.
6.2	**Question from Megan Durrant of NorCa** What parts of the proposal will take into account provider feedback from the fair cost of care and the fee uplift consultation that NorCA carried out in regards to the whole of the care market? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention** Thank you for your question. I would also like to thank NorCA for its' role in collating views from across the care market within its response to the consultation. It is recognised that whilst this is only one response it represents wider feedback from the sector. As you will be aware engagement has been ongoing in relation to prices and market sustainability. The Council gathered evidence through wider engagement with providers and NorCA ahead of the proposal, as well as through the more formal consultation on the proposed fee increase. This has enabled the views to be part of the ongoing budget planning process and has supported increased funding within the prioritisation process for the County Council budget at a time of significant financial constraints. The Council is recommending the maximum increase in Council Tax to fund the increased demand in social care and has also made commitment towards this level of increase for 2024-25. This includes the maximum level of increase of the Adult Social Care Precept and demonstrates the Council's commitment to doing all it can to fund adult social care. This has enabled an additional £30m to be directed to the adult social care market through the recommended fee increase. The full consultation responses were considered in advance of the final paper being submitted and helped shape the actions and recommendations included in the paper. In particular the commitment to move towards paying the median cost of care within Government's timescales and within the Government funding afforded to the Council for this purpose and to this end to continue to lobby the Government to make the cases for sustainable fair funding for Norfolk. As part of lobbying it also

	provides us with the opportunity to help raise the issues presented by providers including in relation to rising inflation and in particular energy, insurance and agency costs. The fee uplift consultation related to the annual increase in fees. It is recognised that this year this process has been alongside the cost of care work that was part of the now delayed Social Care Reform. This particular work focused on older people residential and nursing and 18+ home support only – as prescribed by the government. The work has provided a tremendous insight into the costs and range of business models within the sector and this will steer our planning for reform, our medium term financial planning and indeed lobbying Government in relation to the funding needed to reach median costs of care. The results of that work have been published in full and provide insight into some of the more pressing issues for the sector – we have set out in the paper that we intend to review the standard residential care category and we would also like to explore how we can help influence change in wider issues, such as the spiralling cost of agency staff. The NorCA feedback also highlighted that the cost of care exercises completed this year did not cover all parts of the social care sector and therefore the report did not include the same level of detail. As set out in the paper, these have been two distinct exercises and not all areas were part of the scope of the social care reform work. We are in the process of planning how to work alongside the WAA market (NorCA know this and are part of the planning), to review finances, outcomes for people, and quality and consider our commissioning approach to secure the sustainability of a high quality WAA sector. For supported living services, providers included on the framework submitted their costs and as per WAA, the cost elements identified by providers have been uplifted annually. All day service providers set their own rates, as the services are all so different. Day service providers who have responded to the consultation have mainly flagged concerns over the level of referrals and not concerns about the proposed uplift.

Cabinet
30 January 2023
Local Member Questions

	Local Member Issues/Questions
7.1	**Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp** CQC Inspectors recently rated four Norfolk Care Homes inadequate, that provide services for people with Learning Disabilities and Autism. Care Homes in Norfolk are quality assured by NCC. The CQC Inspectors found people's independence was not supported, their lives were restricted and in two of the care homes, residents were not safe but at risk of avoidable harm. What is NCC doing to ensure the voices of service users in every Care Home are listened to, to help improve services, and make them safe, meaningful, transformative and empowering and to reduce the risk of inpatient care in treatment and assessment Centres. **Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention** Thank you for your question. I would like to take issue with your statement which is not correct; the CQC inspect and rate Care Providers which are independent businesses with many self funding residents. Norfolk County Council has a role in assuring that the care of the people that it pays for is up to the required standard. The Council acts on the findings of the CQC but can also support regulated Care Providers that the Council commissions services with and will prioritise visits where concerns are raised – for example via safeguarding routes. Where services are not compliant officers will offer to work with Care Providers to support improvement action plans and will seek assurances around progress. The Council also shares any concerns it may have with the CQC. The oversight and collaboration across both organisations increases the level of assurance where concerns are raised. Normally, this enables Care Providers to turnaround quality and implement the necessary improvements. It is a requirement for independent Care Providers to have effective ways for people to provide feedback and officers have recently held an engagement event on this topic, which highlighted some of the excellent practice in place within the sector. This could be improved more widely and there is an ambition to maximise the wider routes for supporting feedback. The Council is supporting the ICS Social Care Quality Improvement Programme, which is taking a collaborative approach to addressing the wider factors that can support good quality care provision. One of the workstreams within this programme is focused on improving feedback from individuals, their families and carers. This work, which will be supported across the programme, is being led by Healthwatch Norfolk and is addressing how to increase feedback and its effective use.

7.2	**Question from Cllr Brian Watkins** Following the 'in principle' approval of the County Deal for Norfolk at the Council EGM on Tuesday 17th January, how does the Leader intend to engage more positively with Norfolk's district councils to ensure that their views and concerns are properly taken on board as the process moves forward? **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy** We remain committed to our partnership with District councils, to identify priorities and make a success of devolution. In implementing the County Deal we will continue to build on our partnerships arrangements through the Public Sector Leaders' Board, the Norfolk Investment Framework Steering Group, Development Corporations with planning authorities to drive development and other such initiatives. We see this as a County Deal for Norfolk, and we will work with any willing partner in Norfolk – and beyond – to make our county better. **Second Question from Cllr Brian Watkins** Could the Leader provide an update on progress with the Council's strategic review and whether he is confident that it will deliver the promised £16 million of savings in the 2023/24 year that have been suggested? **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy** The budget paper elsewhere on the agenda indicates savings of £17.063m linked to the strategic review. The means of delivering the savings include pay savings as well as non-pay efficiencies. We will soon be commencing the formal HR consultation for workforce changes. In addition, we are preparing the wider implementation plans for these changes as well as beginning the development of our plans for how we will build on this year's efforts and ensure we have identified the further activities that will be in future phases of implementation to support the potential 2024-25 target referenced in the budget paper. I would draw the Member's attention to page 258 of the cabinet papers and sections 4.23 for more information.
7.3	**Question from Cllr Rob Colwell** What message do you have for the Council's staff who are worried about their future job prospects as a result of the Strategic Review? **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy** We understand that change of this nature does cause anxiety for staff. Recently, and prior to the launch of the consultation, each Executive Director has hosted a drop-in session for staff to keep them updated on what is in scope, the timescales and process for implementing change. We have also kept intranet pages and FAQs updated so that staff can keep themselves informed. As with all changes that could lead to job losses, and not just for the Strategic Review, we will be consulting in line with our established policies and best practice. This means we will look to avoid compulsory redundancy wherever possible, for example through enabling redeployment and also in how we manage the application process for changed posts in the new models. We will also support staff with offering a range of development support for Interview preparation and redeployment support. During the consultation we will support meetings with affected staff and provide opportunities for them to understand the detailed models and options available to them. We would encourage affected staff to participate actively in the process and

	thus draw on the support available to them. This includes accessing the wellbeing support available through the Norfolk Support Line and the financial & wellbeing hub on the Norfolk Rewards platform.
7.4	**Question from Cllr Lucy Shires** Have we received any confirmation that the Household Support Fund will continue in to the next financial year, and if so, do we know how much we expect to receive? **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy** The government confirmed in the autumn budget statement that the Household Support Fund will continue for the financial year 2023/24; we are awaiting the final guidance and funding decisions but expect funding coming to Norfolk to be in line with previous iterations of the Household Support Fund **Second question from Councillor Shires** The LGA is calling for tougher powers for councils to oversee and regulate 'out of school' settings, including being able to shut down illegal schools. A recent independent report commissioned by the Department of Education has revealed safeguarding concerns about a number of settings regularly attended by children and young people. Does the Cabinet member think that the introduction of such powers would be a good move for Norfolk? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services** It is important to note that the term 'out of school' settings can relate to both out-of-school-hours activities and clubs (such as sports, youth clubs and scout groups, for example) and settings which are also referred to as 'unregistered, or unregulated alternative provision'. The latter is often also referred to simply as 'AP'. Norfolk County Council Children's Services has a process in place for the quality assurance of unregistered alternative provision. Further information can be found at Unregulated alternative provision templates - Schools (norfolk.gov.uk). This area is overseen by a Senior Adviser in the Education Quality Assurance Intervention and Regulation Service. The Service has produced a suite of documents designed to ensure that schools and local authority colleagues commission places in unregistered alternative provision safely. The Service recognises that there is a lack of a national approach to regulating these settings but is working in liaison with the Department for Education to ensure that Norfolk's voice is heard, and that our expertise is shared. The Service also works with the regional Ofsted lead for the inspection of illegal schools and shares information as relevant. Ofsted have the powers to shut down illegal schools; this is not a local authority duty. Norfolk County Council's quality assurance process is currently voluntary (in the absence of any local government regulatory powers). However, the process is well-received and frequently sought out by providers. The Service has communicated directly with the Department for Education that it is very willing to engage with a national programme of regulation.

7.5	**Question from Cllr Paul Neale** Norfolk is especially vulnerable to the nutrient neutrality crisis, not least because more than 40 rivers in our region are heavily polluted. The crisis is dragging on, and there needs to be a joined-up approach. Can the Cabinet Member please comment on whether there is sufficient joined-up working to deal with this? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste** Natural England has released new Nutrient Neutrality catchment areas incorporating the Wensum and Broads catchments which affects the majority of Norfolk and all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to some extent. LPAs cannot determine housing related planning applications in affected areas until appropriate mitigation measures to deal with increased phosphates and nitrates arising from 'additional overnight accommodation' have been suitably assessed. We understand the need to find a solution to help unlock much needed housing and jobs, without adding further harm to our precious environment, and we are working closely with LPA partners. Collectively we have built on the initial NE advice to bring forward an evidenced solution for Norfolk. The most affected LPAs are working in partnership with the water industry to allow the grant of planning permissions linked to a programme of mitigation funded by a developer ‘credits’ system to be delivered through a proposed Joint Venture (JV). It is expected that the JV will be in place by spring '23. Given the scale and complexity of of the issues faced, to be able to secure a way forward in the timescale we have has only been possible through effective joint working between all parties. **Second question from Cllr Paul Neale** Can the Cabinet Member please tell us why the training on unconscious/structural bias that was committed to in the July 2020 Black Lives Matter motion has not been delivered. **Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships.** Training on unconscious bias and white privilege was not provided, because the Government instructed local authorities not to do so (see the Government’s Policy Paper “Inclusive Britain: Government Response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 17 March 2022 for more information). The Council is currently reviewing the EDI Learning offer including training available to members. It is aimed to launch a refreshed offer later this year. In the meantime, other actions relating to the July 2020 motion have been delivered or exceeded and there is no complacency about the work still ahead to eliminate racism, as set out in the report to Corporate Select Committee on 16 January this year.
7.6	**Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn** It is encouraging to know that there are moves towards better policy practice on the implementation of the Environmental Policy - eg: the introduction of an Internal Carbon Price so that we can define where council resources are best spent and define the impact of decisions. However, there is still a lack of quantifiable carbon

	reduction targets and a prioritisation mechanism to deliver on the Environmental Policy - when will these be introduced? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste** Thank you for your question. We agree that target-setting is important and plan to bring our County Council Climate Strategy to April cabinet, including appropriate targets for those areas where NCC has sufficient influence or control.
7.7	**Question from Cllr Matt Reilly** Last week, Norfolk missed out on Levelling Up funding that would have seen the Norwich City Centre taxi rank relocated to between City Hall and the Forum. This would have enabled the creation of a new pedestrianised area below the Guildhall and provided a new sensible location for the taxi rank, much needed after the pedestrianisation of Exchange Street. Will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport agree to meet with black cab drivers to discuss Exchange Street in light of the fact that this funding has not been secured? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport** Norfolk as a whole received £44m from the levelling up fund, which is an excellent result for the County. The Levelling Up funding application to government for the Guidhall Hill area of Norwich was submitted by the City Council and we will discuss with them what options are available for those proposals to be taken forwards. Once a clear plan of action has been agreed, we will collectively work with stakeholders on those next steps, which will include engagement with taxi drivers and other users of the transport network in that area.
7.8	**Question from Cllr Brenda Jones** Whilst the Council is paying the inflationary increases for care, it is not yet paying the 'fair cost.' Will the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention commit to paying the fair cost in 2023-2024, and confirm how he will ensure that quality improves as a result? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention** Thank you for the question. The Fair Cost of Care exercise was done in readiness for Social Care Reform which will see changes to the Care Provider market to even out the fees paid by self funders and those paid by councils. Social Care Reform has been delayed by the Government until October 2025 and we are not being asked to implement the changes until then. This means that for 2023/24 the existing market arrangements still stand, and there will still be a differential in what Care Providers are allowed to charge for care. Today's Cabinet paper "Fee levels for Adult Social Care Providers 2023/24" describes the difficult economic climate many industries, including the Care Market are operating in. As such, as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health

	and Prevention I have secured the single biggest investment into Norfolk's Care Market with a proposed £30m increase from 2023/24. This level of proposed investment demonstrates the high priority Cabinet has for the Adult Social Care Provider market, especially when we consider the challenges described within the Budget Paper also on today's agenda. You will have seen in the fee level paper it is recommended to Cabinet that as part of the Government's Social Care Reform, we commit to moving towards paying the median cost of care within Government's timescales and within the Government funding afforded to the Council for this specific purpose. In regards to quality improvement you will already know that Cabinet agreed in June 2022 to the creation and delivery of a Social Care Quality Framework for Norfolk. Section 2.9 of this report articulates that "it is not believed that this [price] is a primary factor in quality concerns". As articulated in the paper, we believe that quality improvement is broader than price and therefore through this structured programme of work we are working together with Care Providers and partner organisations to support system wide development to help improve the underlying assessed quality of social care delivered in Norfolk. **Supplementary Question from Cllr Brenda Jones** We all welcome the good outcome for Children in the county. With CQC inspection being reintroduced for Adult Social Care services from April 2023, can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention confirm they have all the resources they need to be equally good? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention** Thank you for your question. I thank you also for recognising the excellent work achieved by Children's Services, Adult Social Care Services are also working just as hard to prepare for the forthcoming new CQC assurance regime. As you will be aware this includes a lead officer, a Performance Improvement Group (chaired by Cllr Gurney) to drive our plans and focus on standards and quality alongside a rigorous inspection of data and information provided to the CQC. Norfolk County Council participated in a "mock inspection" in July from the LGA and the very helpful recommendations are also helping shape our improvement actions. However, due to the huge increase in demand due to the aging population, Adult Social Services are facing unprecedented challenges in market, system and workforce. I have said this before, until there is a national solution to the effect of the demographic changes, the extra demand year on year will inevitably impact a CQC judgement.
7.9	**Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare** Once again, published budget papers give no details of where the bulk of savings are to be made. Will the Leader give an assurance that important services like Whitlingham Outdoor Centre and music services will not be reduced once this budget has been approved? **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy** The published budget papers set out in detail within the Service budget tables (Table 26 on page 302 to Table 31 on page 336) the proposals for how savings will be achieved in 2023-24. There is no expectation within the 2023-24 Budget for savings

	to be delivered from Whitlingham Outdoor Centre or from the Norfolk Music Service. In common with all the Council's traded services, these are kept under continuous review to ensure they remain economically viable.
7.10	**Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham** The budget papers show that savings of £17.063 million have been attributed to the Strategic Review. How many posts, and therefore people at Norfolk County Council are potentially at risk of redundancy based on this proposed figure? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance** The Strategic Review savings planned for 2023-24 are anticipated to be made through a range of measures, and will be delivered over the course of 2023-24, with further phases of savings anticipated for future years as set out in the response to the earlier question. The final reconciliation of organisational structures is currently underway and we will confirm the exact number of posts anticipated for this stage when the initial consultation is launched. The number of planned posts may ultimately be different to the eventual number of people who are made redundant subject to the success of mitigation measures such as redeployment or disestablishing posts that are currently vacant. The final structures may also change in response to the consultation.
7.11	**Question from Cllr Ben Price** How is the council reconsidering the environmental impacts of road-building schemes in light of the High Court Challenge to the A47 dualling schemes, which will be heard in May? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport** The three National Highways A47 schemes have confirmed DCOs. The challenge to the National Highways' schemes will be monitored and the outcome of the judicial review will be considered when it is available. It is too early to say if there will be any implications for any County Council projects. **Second question from Cllr Ben Price** Can the cabinet member for the Environment please provide details of concrete actions that will be taken to demonstrate the environmental benefits of the "in principle" County Deal, with details of timescales and funding allocations? **Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste** We are as always committed to preserving and enhancing our natural heritage and addressing the impact of climate change, as evidenced by our Environmental Policy. The County Deal gives us a platform from which to negotiate with Government on the County's priorities for net zero and climate change. As stated in the Deal, we will work with all local government partners and through the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership to collectively identify our priority areas, and this work is ongoing. Funding related to this topic will flow after the election of the Directly Elected Leader. Specific areas include funding to support a revised Local Transport Plan which will be over 2 years to support projects that will deliver quantifiable Carbon Reductions.