

**Cabinet**  
**3 April 2023**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

	<b>Public Question Time</b>
6.1	<p><b>Question from Dillon Crawford</b>  Does the Cabinet believe that the County Deal for Norfolk will be effective for delivering more transparency?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</b>  A directly elected leader for Norfolk would be accountable to the council through our own constitution, and to government and the people of Norfolk through the "Accountability Framework" published on Wednesday 15th March. by the Department for Levelling Up. This sets out the protocols for reporting and accountability for all areas with a devolution deal. This will cover the delivery of Norfolk's plans and ambitions through the county deal. We believe that a county deal will in fact increase transparency and accountability for these very reasons.</p>
6.2	<p><b>Question from Samantha Allison</b>  What assurances can the cabinet /full council give to the men/women of norfolk that the 15/20 minute cities will not be the doorway to digital id, travel restriction, more cameras, and fines for credit systems of pollution, fake pollution zones, and finally comunist china style fences and security.</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b>  We are at a very early stage with looking at the concept of 15/20 minute neighbourhoods in Norfolk. However, we have already been asked a number of questions on the topic, so to help we have recently uploaded some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to the County Council website to provide a high-level summary of this potential approach. It is important to note that the concept of a 20-minute neighbourhood will mean different things to different people and that no decisions have been taken at this stage on if, when and where this concept could be implemented and the form it may take. We also recognise that the needs of local people and businesses will need to be understood before anything can be proposed for consultation and further consideration.</p> <p>Further work on this concept will help to identify whether outcomes can be delivered that enable people to be more active, improving their mental and physical health, improve air quality, strengthen community bonds and encourage local shops and services to thrive.</p>
6.3	<p><b>Question from Peter Lambert</b>  Under section 86 of the Education Act 1996, parents have the right to express a preference for any state-funded school in England and Wales. This includes community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided schools, and academies. Do the plans of 20 minute districts restrict the choices that parents will be able to make in choosing secondary schools. In particular used to reduce the right to appeal a Decision.</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b>  We are at a very early stage with looking at the concept of 15/20 minute neighbourhoods in Norfolk. Providing convenient and fully accessible access to</p>

schools, along with other essential services, will be considered as we explore this concept.

Initial thoughts are that there would be no change to the approach for Admissions set out within the Admissions Code and parents right to express a preference for schools (either First Admissions at primary or Year 7 Admissions for secondary). This includes the appeals process.

**Supplementary question from Peter Lambert**

What affordable options are there to provide a choice of at least 2 secondary schools within travel time less than 20 minutes. The logical mitigating factor is to provide more secondary schools locally. These will be smaller, more expensive and have less choice of subjects. Please advise how many schools would be needed to meet this policy. Does the government funds cover this cost.

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

We are at a very early stage with looking at the concept of 15/20 minute neighbourhoods in Norfolk and detailed analysis would be needed to provide an appropriate response. However, initial thoughts are that there would be no change to the approach for Admissions set out within the Admissions Code and parents right to express a preference for schools.

6.4

**Question from Liz Cross, Home Start**

The Princess of Wales's Royal Foundation, Central Governments Start for Life roll out and Norfolk County Council's Flourish Pledge all support the need to prioritise early childhood and document the importance of children's early years being vital to support their future health, happiness, resilience and lifelong outcomes.

Home-Start Norfolk, a family support charity supporting thousands of families over the last 35 years has seen a 91% increase in demand for its service, and 70% of those referrals come from the statutory sector. Therefore, why is it that Home-Start Norfolk is fighting for survival due to further cuts in its funding from the sector?

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Norfolk benefits from a vibrant voluntary and community sector that delivers fantastic support to children and their families. They are a key partner in helping children and young people to flourish. All charities, including Home Start Norfolk, are facing financial challenges, as are many of the families they work with. Home Start have been funded by Action for Children for the last three years as part of our Early Childhood and Family Service and this service level agreement is ending as planned in March 2023. Action for Children have been in discussion with Home Start since 2022 about them providing a new service from April and I welcome this given our early childhood focus on 0-5s. As part of supporting children and their families, we are keen to develop opportunities for peer support for families. We will continue to work with charities such as Home Start to develop how families can benefit from peer support and volunteers and, should funding become available, to potentially commission new services.

**Cabinet**  
**3 April 2023**  
**Local Member Questions**

	<b>Member Question Time</b>
7.1	<p><b>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</b> Residents are constantly reporting potholes on Norfolk's streets and roads. Sometimes, councillors have to get involved to get potholes repaired. Yet recently, there have been a number of cases where the patching work on potholes has been such poor quality that the holes have opened up again after just a few weeks – for example on Bowthorpe Road and Hellesdon Mill Lane. Does the Cabinet Member accept that the quality of repairs on potholes is below standard and can he explain what checks the council undertake for quality with the contractor, providing me some assurance regarding the sites I have highlighted.</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b> I am sorry to hear of these cases which I have asked the local Highways team to investigate. Initial feedback is that these failures are isolated incidents or new potholes forming next to the repair. The Council's approach is to undertake permanent pothole repairs first time and this works in the majority of cases.</p> <p>I would also point out that the first three months of the year is the time when roads are most susceptible to potholes forming due to the cold and wet weather. This is a national problem and I was pleased to see the government recognise this and announced additional funding in the recent Budget for pothole repairs. Norfolk will receive over £6m of additional funding, the majority of which will be spent on proactive maintenance to stop potholes appearing in the first place. This is key and is part of this Council's proactive asset management approach.</p> <p>As part of this approach, there is also already a resurfacing scheme planned for the junction of Farrow Road and Bowthorpe Road later this year.</p> <p><b>Second question from Cllr Paul Neale</b> A workplace parking levy would raise around £3m a year in revenue that could be used to improve the reliability of buses around Norwich. Will you commit to a feasibility assessment for a workplace parking levy?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b> Consideration of a workplace parking levy is outlined in the Transport for Norwich Strategy as one of a series of measures that would need significant further study over the coming years, with the overall aim of improving air quality. This will be done through a mix of technical study work alongside extensive engagement with partners, businesses and the general public.</p> <p>An Enhanced Partnership has been formed between the County Council and local bus operators to enable us to deliver Norfolk's Bus Service Improvement Plan. Late last year, just under £50m of funding was awarded to Norfolk to improve public transport across Norwich and Norfolk by offering more simple and affordable fares and improved bus service frequency and reliability. Officers are working closely with</p>

	<p>bus operators on this and some measures to improve reliability and enhanced bus services have already been implemented with more to follow over the next two years.</p>
7.2	<p><b>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</b> The “reference design” proposed for the NWL viaduct included a 2.5m gap between the carriageways. Alongside both carriageways the design allowed a 1m-wide hard strip, 2.5m-wide verge and a 0.5m-wide barrier plinth. At the outer edges an additional 1.2m-wide working zone and parapet plinth was proposed. The “tender design” submitted by Ferrovial proposed no central gap, instead just a barrier with no verges. The outer edges of the carriageways are a simple single plinth for a combined parapet and safety barrier. Please could Cabinet Member explain why this inferior tender design was accepted?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure and Transport</b> The single deck solution provided by the contractor has reduced the overall width of the viaduct and this reduces the levels of shading to the river and valley below by 20%. This was a key consideration for the rivers Special Area of Conservation status.</p> <p>By reducing the width of the viaduct, the number of supporting piers has also been reduced, which results in less impact to the valley and floodplain. There has also been a significant reduction in the overall weight of the structure, which also reduces the foundation design, resulting in further benefits.</p> <p>I therefore don't agree with the suggestion that the contractor's design is inferior. The accepted design meets the specification requirements and addresses the specific constraints that exist. It has optimised the overall solution and has reduced the impact of the structure, providing notable environmental benefits.</p> <p><b>Supplementary question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</b> Norfolk Constabulary advise that in the case of breakdown, passengers should get out of the car and seek refuge on the verge beyond the safety barrier. Yet the NWL viaduct proposes no verges and no refuge zone behind the safety barrier. Does the Cabinet Member believe that there will not be any breakdowns on the viaduct, or does he believe that the advice from Norfolk Police is unnecessary?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure and Transport</b> The Norwich Western Link (NWL) viaduct would be similar in layout to the A47 River Yare viaduct to the east of Norwich. Highway improvement projects, such as the NWL, are subject to independent safety audit processes. The NWL viaduct is designed to national design standards and is only 500m long.</p> <p>If, in the very rare likelihood of there being a breakdown on the viaduct, the general advice would be to keep to the left and travel to a place of safety before stopping. Beyond the extents of the viaduct there is a 2.5m verge. On the viaduct itself there is a minimum of a 0.6m hard verge and a 1.0m hardstrip at the edge of the carriageway that can be used in an absolute emergency.</p>
7.3	<p><b>Question from Cllr Ben Price</b> The Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Development Plan has announced new road schemes that were not in the Local Transport Plan voted on by Full Council. These</p>

include the North Walsham Western Link Road and an Attleborough Link Road. The LTP has to demonstrate quantifiable carbon reduction pathways, but these new road schemes seem to have been announced without any sustainability appraisal. Without a sustainability appraisal or measurement of carbon emissions, there is no evidence that these roads can be built while remaining in Norfolk's carbon budget. Does the Cabinet Member accept that with no sustainability appraisal, the council cannot say these projects fit within the LTP4?

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport**

The NSIDP does not set the agenda for development or delivery of projects across the county, it simply draws together information on the key infrastructure projects being taken forward, many of which are being led by other interests and organisations and not therefore in the control of, or being delivered by, the county council. These two projects have been included in previous versions of NSIDP, which is produced collaboratively with a range of partners to provide an overview of strategic infrastructure projects across the county. In the case of the two projects mentioned, these are developer proposals for infrastructure to serve new housing. However, if delivered in the right way, they could have significant benefits for local communities.

If the proposals continue to be promoted and subsequently come forward, they will be subject to relevant assessments required by the appropriate decision-makers, in this case district councils via the planning processes, at which point the county council – as a statutory consultee – will be able to make any relevant comments.

**Second question from Cllr Ben Price**

Children as young as 8 are being strip-searched by police, including in schools. This is a traumatic and humiliating experience for many children. Black children are disproportionately more likely to be targeted for strip-searches. The Children's Commissioner has raised concerns about the lack of safeguarding when children are strip-searched. What is the Cabinet Member doing to work with schools and children's services to ensure there are adequate safeguards in place?

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:**

Children's Services Teams work in partnership with Norfolk Constabulary and the wider Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership on a range of issues related to safeguarding, crime prevention and support for young people. In order to support schools with issues related to exploitation, we host a termly Child Exploitation Network to support the work of Designated Safeguarding Leads across Norfolk in tackling child exploitation.

The network aims to:

- Share best practice across education and multi-agency colleagues
- Provide updates about training and responses across the multi-agency partnership
- Share current developments around the exploitation of children
- Provide an arena for reflective practice discussions
- Promote collaborative multi-agency working
- Identify areas for development
- Review the child exploitation toolkit for education settings

The issue of searching pupils was discussed at last Exploitation Network; schools have the powers to search pupils and in exercising this right are advised to ensure any searches are justified and proportionate and follow the [Department for Education Guidance](#) including their obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights including a pupil's right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy. If a child refuses to allow a school to search them, then they may call the police to assist. However, the police will only then carry out a stop search (a search of outer clothing only) where the police are satisfied there is sufficient grounds and a teacher is always present. We are not aware of any incidents of children being strip searched in a Norfolk School but in response to the learning from Case Q, Norfolk Constabulary refreshed their training and procedures for staff in this area.

An exploitation toolkit is currently being developed for schools by a range of teams and will provide further, relevant guidance on this and related matters.