

Infrastructure and Development Committee
15 March 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

Agenda item 5	Public Question Time
5.1	No questions received.
Agenda item 6	Local Member Issues/Questions
6.1	<p>Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone What incentives or pressures are being put on bus operators to refresh and improve their current vehicle fleets, not only for the purpose of improving emissions, but to also see the addition of standard features such as luggage racks, seat comfort, and Wi-Fi? I am especially interested in the route that runs through Briston.</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly All operators are encouraged to invest in their fleet and they do have an ongoing fleet replacement programme. However, without any specific funding to offer them there is little pressure we can give as we do not control the operators and services that they provide. If we specified a higher specification vehicle as part of any tendering process for County Council supported services, this would lead to cost pressures on our revenue budget (which is the case with the Briston service). However, whilst none of the Bus Service Improvement Plan funding was given specifically for vehicle replacements, we are asking operators to provide their own improvements to vehicles where they either receive BSIP funding for improving one of their services or where we provide a specific bus priority measure on a route. The Council will also proactively look for external funding opportunities, like our recent ZEBRA (zero emission bus) award, which will see 70 new, high specification electric buses coming to Norfolk</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price It is good to see that the council is now considering ANPR cameras for school streets. Green councillors submitted a budget amendment to provide capital for purchase of ANPR cameras, but all other parties (Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat) failed to support that. Does the Committee now agree that there is a need for capital to be committed to ANPR cameras so that school streets programmes can go ahead?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly At the current time, the provision of cameras is only an option to consider for the enforcement of temporary road closures outside schools and there are no firm plans to roll this out. The next phase of the School Streets trial will explore different approaches to enforcement and complementary school travel related measures, and will identify funding requirements, both capital and revenue, that would be required to take this forward.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Ben Price Many residents and taxi drivers have reported that private cars are driving through the multi-million pound bus gates that have been installed recently, apparently with no enforcement. Will the ANPR cameras be available to use to ensure that the bus gates are used effectively?</p>

	<p>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly We will continue to monitor traffic using bus gates and implement measures, such as ANPR cameras, that are appropriate to ensuring bus gates are used effectively.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn It is good to see seven coherent themes in the Climate Change Strategy. These, and the sectoral focus, provide a decent foundation for a strategic approach to addressing carbon emissions areawide. What is needed now is a more detailed evidence base on which to base policy - eg: the retrofitting skills gap, or the nature, distance and concentration of car journeys, so that policy can be focused on addressing these. Does the Committee agree that a more detailed strategic evidence base is needed?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly Thank you for your question. As you highlight, the climate strategy sets out a strategic framework of focus areas for organising the council's efforts to tackle climate change. The use of focus areas reflects a central principle of the council's strategic approach: targeting our efforts and resources where we feel we can have real impact, rather than trying to do anything and everything.</p> <p>In relation to county-wide emissions, it is important to recognise that local areas vary in relation to their building stocks, energy networks, travel patterns, transport infrastructure, industries, and land use patterns, among other things. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to local area decarbonisation and clean growth, nor to adaptation.</p> <p>As the upper-tier local authority for Norfolk, NCC can play a key role in helping shape the county's response to climate change in a way that reflects the local context and priorities. There is much merit in a strong, up-to-date evidence base, which where relevant is specific to the county, is needed for each focus area. This can guide our efforts to bring maximum benefits in line with the needs and priorities of Norfolk's residents and businesses.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Jamie Osborn The Climate Change Committee recommends a roughly 12% reduction in total car mileage in order to meet climate change targets. Will the Committee discuss whether a target for reducing total car miles should be set for Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly The council is taking a wide range of actions that encourage a shift from private car usage towards public transport or active travel. We refer you to Focus Area 3 of the strategy for detail on these and forward-looking priorities. More specifically to your question, we note that the Climate Change Committee doesn't recommend that local authorities set county-wide sectoral carbon budgets given that there are a range of factors affecting these emissions which are out of councils' direct control. The metric you highlight of reducing Norfolk's car mileage is an equivalent type of target in that many of its determinants lie out of our control. Therefore, a hard target as you propose for the council to deliver on reducing car mileage is not considered appropriate. But it would be appropriate to consider what further interventions the council can make to mitigate the emissions from personal travel, and how the intervention designs and measurements of success can draw on the evidence base discussed in the answer to your first question.</p>

6.4	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale When children are dropped off or picked up outside schools, far too many cars are left idling, producing enough toxic exhaust fumes to fill one pair of adult lungs 60 times a minute. In my ward I used discretionary funding to produce an initial design for idling signage from drawings produced by local school children, so the cost will be relatively small to roll this out to all schools. Will Norfolk County Council provide no idling signage outside every school in the County?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly We will be happy to consider the impact that no idling signage could have outside schools as part of the complementary school travel related measures being looked at as part of the next phase of the School Streets trial.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Paul Neale Item 2.27 of the Norfolk County Councils climate strategy says 'retrofitting buildings to improve insulation and replace fossil-fuel heating systems with electric or low carbon alternatives'. Was this ambition applied when County Hall had its recent major refurbishment?</p> <p>Response from the Chair, Cllr James Bensly Members may have seen the Scrutiny papers on the refurbishment – where this was discussed at length.</p> <p>As part of the County Hall refurb – principles around low energy use were implemented. In particular there was significant investment into the fabric of the building and the cladding, windows, and external façade of the building. There are powerful infra-red pictures that show the heat loss pre-and post-renovation works.</p> <p>Gas boilers were largely replaced and there was significant investment into low energy LED lights, as well as modern building management systems to intelligently control and minimise energy usage. This has resulted in a significant fall in the use of gas to power the building – there are however a number of small gas systems (mainly to help pre-heat air), which it is proposed to remove as part of the next phase of the decarbonisation works.</p> <p>County Hall was well ahead of the curve in terms of energy reduction, with this being one of the key project deliverables (for a project that completed in 2016).</p>
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