

Cabinet
30 January 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Daniel Douglas Can the cabinet member confirm the continuation of the service in the current form during 2023?</p> <p>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.</p>
6.2	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

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.

	Local Member Issues/Questions
7.1	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

7.2	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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.</p>
7.3	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

	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	<p>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?</p> <p>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</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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'.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Service has produced a suite of documents designed to ensure that schools and local authority colleagues commission places in unregistered alternative provision safely.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Given the scale and complexity 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.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Paul Neale</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</p> <p>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</p>

	<p>reduction targets and a prioritisation mechanism to deliver on the Environmental Policy - when will these be introduced?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>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.</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Matt Reilly</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Norfolk as a whole received £44m from the levelling up fund, which is an excellent result for the County.</p> <p>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.</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Brenda Jones</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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.</p>
7.9	<p>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?</p> <p>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</p>

	<p>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.</p>
7.10	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
7.11	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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?</p> <p>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.</p>