

Cabinet

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 3 July 2023 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 10am

Present:

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

Deputy Cabinet Members Present

Cllr Lana Hemsall	Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Greg Peck	Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Karen Vincent	Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Executive Directors Present:

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

The Chair spoke about the Norfolk Show and congratulated the Fire Service for winning most effective and well laid out display. They had demonstrated one of the new fire engines and met the Prince of Wales.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

2 Minutes from the meeting held on 5 June 2023

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June as an accurate record.

3 Declaration of Interests

- 3.1 None declared

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

4.1 No matters were referred.

5 Update from the Chair/Cabinet Members

5.1 No updates were given.

6. Public Question Time

6.1 The questions received are published in appendix A to these minutes.

6.2.1 Richard Adcock asked a supplementary question:

- Mr Adcock queried how eco-friendly Electric Vehicles were, as he believed that they cost up to 4 times more to buy and used 7 times more energy to build than other vehicles. Mr Adcock stated that Electric Vehicles used child labour in their construction and used fossil fuels in their running, stating that nuclear energy was not a green energy.
- Based on these points he queried how effective such vehicles were for the environment.

6.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste replied that he was informed by evidence provided by the Government and informed sources which said that Electric Vehicles were more environmentally friendly than fossil fuel based systems. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste stated that he was only able to be led by scientific evidence provided to him.

6.2.3 The Chair added that the Council supported alternative forms of fuel and was uniquely placed to look at hydrogen production and other synthetic fuels. Electric Vehicles were not the only way forward and if the Council could help bring these options on stream they would do so.

7 Local Member Questions/Issues

7.1 The questions received are published in appendix B to these minutes.

7.2.1 Cllr Webb asked a supplementary question

- Cllr Webb was surprised by the answer to her substantive question, as she felt families did not agree with the views outlined in this response. SENDCOs and mainstream schools wanted to be inclusive but Cllr Webb felt that early intervention was not available because of long waits for overstretched services, meaning schools were paying for alternative provision and using part time timetables.
- She noted that schools were judged on their attainment and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities would impact their data.
- She therefore asked how the programme would support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

7.2.2 The Chair pointed out that the Council was doing all it could to encourage schools to accept children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

7.2.3 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services replied that there were issues, but

the department were doing all they could to get Education Health and Care Plans on track. The new programme being rolled out was positive for staff and children, allowing needs to be identified earlier allowing preventative support to be provided.

8. Improving outcomes – an integrated approach to establishing Mental Health Collaboratives for Adults, Children and Young People

- 8.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out commitments to achieve better outcomes and wellbeing for people across Norfolk and Waveney, through driving integration between health and social care so that services are less fragmented and better designed and organised around the people who use them.
- 8.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing introduced the report to Cabinet:
- As part of the new Integrated Care System there was an ongoing commitment to work more closely with colleagues in the NHS, with wider providers and the voluntary service to have more strategic thinking about how outcomes could be improved and have a joined-up approach to addressing issues for the people we serve
 - A joined-up system had been agreed as an ambition for a while, but the changes were now starting to be seen.
 - Covid showed what was possible when all parts of the sector cooperated, and it was now possible to capitalise on the work that was done. This would have real benefits in the areas where services were under huge pressure
- 8.1.3 The Interim Executive Director for Adult Social Services commented that this approach was a step change; the focus and effort of collaboratives was to think about outcomes and experiences for people using the service and focussing on coming together around people who use the services. The paper set out that there were two collaboratives running in parallel. The Mental Health collaborative for adults was earlier in development than that for children. The focus was around dementia, delirium and depression which impacted on all public health services.
- 8.1.4 The Executive Director for Children's Services commented that this was an opportunity to recognise the formal commitment being made by the Integrated Care Board and Norfolk County Council with key provider services in the health system to develop more effective services. It was important to think about if there were operational ways to come together in the future either structurally or through sharing budgets. Policy reforms could be built on, setting out a multi-disciplinary future for the council's work with children
- 8.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care commented that this was a welcome development and was well received at the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Board meetings. Mental health and tackling it was everyone's business and touched all families in Norfolk. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care looked forward to developing a stronger collaboration.
- 8.3 The Cabinet Member for Finance endorsed the declaration of intent to work practically with the Integrated Care Board and bring together partners. He noted the clear move towards operational collaboration in the report which was

important as there was a demographic “time bomb” to address. The key priorities of the care strategy prioritised prevention as well as addressing inequality.

- 8.4 The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services endorsed the approach and looked forward to working with colleagues
- 8.5 The Chair noted that Covid-19 had changed a lot of things and brought mental health to the forefront, so working in collaboration was a good thing. This was positive and welcome news.
- 8.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree that Norfolk County Council actively participates in system-wide collaboratives to improve mental health for adults, and for children and young people

8.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

8.8 **Alternative Options for Both Proposals**

No alternative options are being suggested, other than to continue working as we are.

9. Transport for Norwich – Update on Progress

- 9.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the recent delivery of the Transport for Norwich programme along with related sustainable transport initiatives that are underway and highlights the success the County Council has in securing funding and delivering on the ground.
- 9.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This was an update on the progress in delivering the Transport for Norwich Programme. Norwich was one of the fastest growing cities in the UK and one of the largest centres of employment in greater south-east England, contributing more than £3 billion per year to the national economy
 - To support this the Council had a transport strategy for Norwich and a Climate Strategy putting carbon reduction and air quality at the heart of supporting a growing economy, strengthening communities and reducing the impact on the environment.
 - Over the past 5 years the council had been successful in bidding for and being awarded funding from the Government and the private sector which had reinforced the reputation of the Council as a local authority which delivered at pace through strong collaborative relationships with transport providers and a wide range of stakeholders.
 - Norwich was one of only 12 cities awarded Transforming Cities Funding and one of the first to deliver a project with this funding.
 - The council was delivering 70 new zero emissions buses in Norwich and Norwich would have one of the largest, full-electric bus depots in England.
 - £50m of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding was awarded in November 2022, which was one of the highest allocations in the country.

Strong progress had already been made delivering early elements of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and bus patronage was increasing

- Investment in walking and cycling continued through the Active Travel Fund and the council was rated by Active Norfolk as having strong local leadership, with an emerging walking and cycling network
- The delivery of electric vehicle charging points in Norwich and Norfolk was gathering pace. The council was in a place to deliver climate change mitigation measures in a way which reflected the unique characteristics of the County and the steps set out in the report would reduce carbon by 80,000 tonnes.
- The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport thanked officers, councillors and Cllr Martin Wilby, stakeholders and partners who helped to deliver projects and shape transport to meet the characteristics and requirements of Norfolk.
- The report stated that “the transport strategy for Norwich is one where Norwich and the strategic growth areas around it will become a place to thrive because affordable, shared, clean, active and accessible travel are the first choice for journeys. Sitting alongside the countywide Local Transport Plan and Climate Change Strategy, this puts carbon reduction and better air quality at the heart of supporting a growing economy, strengthening communities and reducing our impact on the environment.”

- 9.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that the strategy demonstrated the integrated approach to addressing all issues. £14.7m funding for electric buses and £20m funding from First Buses was a boost for the Council’s ambition for a zero carbon transport system in Norfolk, which would improve health and the county’s carbon footprint. The report demonstrated that policies were linked together in many aspects
- 9.3 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport echoed The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport’s sentiments, thanking the team for their work; she noted that the move to sustainable transport was based on choice.
- 9.4 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing noted the bus service improvement plan and the £31m capital and £18m revenue which would deliver opportunities for the county at a time when budgets were tight.
- 9.5 The Chair acknowledged that the Government had put a lot of money into Norwich showing they recognised how important the city was, and links into the suburbs. Pedestrian access to the city had also been improved. Delivery of these programme could be difficult however the results were positive. The Chair acknowledged the work of Cllr Martin Wilby on the Transport for Norwich Advisory Committee.
- 9.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the success of the County Council in bidding into various pots to deliver the Transport for Norwich strategy; and agrees to continue to press Government for funding to deliver infrastructure improvements both in Norwich and across the wider County.
- 9.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

This report provides an update on the recent delivery of the TfN programme.

No decisions are required.

9.8 **Alternative Options**

Norfolk County Council has committed to achieve 'net zero' carbon emissions on its estates by 2030, but within its wider area, to work with partners towards 'carbon neutrality'. Options to achieve this will be considered whenever opportunities are presented to secure funding.

10. **Norwich Western Link Update**

- 10.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the Norwich Western Link project and setting out a sensible approach to the next steps for the project which will mean the Council will be well-placed to finalise the planning application documents as and when approval is received from central government.
- 10.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:
- The Norwich Western Link was an important part of Norfolk County Council's commitment to support its communities, businesses and to allow the economy to thrive while making sure it had the resources it needed.
 - Traffic was struggling each day on small roads and the economy was being held back by travel delays and congestion. The council was responsible for ensuring that Norfolk had the infrastructure it needed to grow and was working hard to develop proposals for the Norwich Western Link and good progress had been made. In recent months, there had been focus on developing proposal for the planning application.
 - Approval was being awaited from central Government on the projects outline business case that would give a funding commitment to submit the planning application. The strong business case showed that this project would provide high value for money.
 - Cabinet Members, MPs and partners continued to push for a decision on the business case. In the meantime, the report recommended a reasonable approach on the next steps in the project to put the council in a good position to finalise the planning application when approval was received from Government.
 - The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport was doing all he could to provide Norfolk with the infrastructure it needed, and the Norwich Western Link was at the centre of this commitment.
 - The report gave detail as to where the project was up to and why it was being carried out. It was an important scheme which would complete the Norwich Distributor Road and create a circulate link around Norwich, easing pressure around Norwich and in areas with high volumes of traffic. This would make it easier for people to walk and cycle by taking traffic out of villages.
- 10.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing represented 19 villages to the North and West of Norwich who suffered from traffic on rural lanes which were unsuitable for the volumes of traffic they received. The main industrial areas to the North of Norwich didn't have a route to the city and so much of this traffic went through the west of the city, reducing air quality and increasing congestion. Evidence showed that the Norwich Western Link would reduce

carbon emissions caused by traffic using small roads and improve air quality in these areas and would improve response times for emergency vehicles. The road would support the county for economic, environmental and social reasons.

- 10.3 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance discussed that most of the proposed Norwich Western Link would run through his division; villages in his division were affected by traffic using them as a rat run. He felt that if this project failed it would be a failure for Norfolk, noting the impact of traffic on small rural roads caused by emissions and large vehicles. He would continue to promote the benefits of the project to MPs.
- 10.4 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that it was important to prepare for the planning application while waiting for the business case to be approved.
- 10.5 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care hoped that the Government would come to a speedy decision on the business case. She noted that it had taken a long time to gain agreement on the Long Stratton Bypass project, but it was hoped that this project would progress in spring 2024 which would improve air quality and safety in this area.
- 10.6 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships supported the comments of other Cabinet Members and discussed the high levels of congestion seen at peaks times in Easton.
- 10.7 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted the key benefits of the road which were: boost Norfolk's economy and support its businesses by reducing transport costs; open up new markets and increase productivity; increase access to job growth sites such as Norwich Airport, Food Enterprise Park and Norwich Research Park; improve road safety with around 500 fewer accidents involving a motor vehicle over 60 years; take traffic off unsuitable local roads, with reduction of approximately 80% traffic through Weston Longville leading to improved air quality and encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport; reducing journey times to the west of Norwich, halving some journeys and improving emergency vehicle response times; create habitats across the west of Norwich including green bridges. These benefits would outweigh the negatives that had been raised by opposers of the project.
- 10.8 The Chair believed the Government knew that Norfolk could deliver the project; this was an ideal piece of work to relieve villages to the West of Norwich and Norwich would be left behind if this was not completed. The Long Stratton Bypass was being waited for and would benefit residents as when air quality testing was done, this was the area with the worst air quality in South Norfolk due to congestion. The Ringland Hills had been damaged by large vehicles travelling on small roads. This was a sensitive area to build a road, but the council could build it in an environmentally sensitive way. The Chair challenged opposers to put forward a way to address the issues in a way other than building this road. The council would continue to lobby Government for an outcome.
- 10.9 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. Note the outcomes from the pre-application consultation and the changes to the project that have resulted from the consideration of the responses received to this consultation.

2. Note the design development of the NWL scheme that has allowed planning application documents to reach an advanced stage of preparation, but the application documents cannot be finalised until a date for submission of the application has been agreed.
3. To agree that a decision to submit a planning application and to make and submit statutory Orders to the Secretary of State for confirmation (where confirmation is required), should not be made until OBC approval has been announced by Government.
4. Note that whilst awaiting a decision in relation to the OBC the project will reduce levels of activity (for a period of approximately 3 months), following which a further report will be brought to Cabinet.
5. Agree that as soon as OBC approval is received, a further report will be presented to Cabinet to seek approval to submit a planning application and to make, publish and submit the associated statutory Orders to the Secretary of State for confirmation (where confirmation is required).

10.10 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report.

10.11 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 5 of the report.

11. **Risk Management Quarterly Report**

- 11.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the latest corporate risks for Cabinet to consider and agree following officer review of the Council's corporate risk level risks.
- 11.1.2 The Director of Strategic Finance introduced the report to Cabinet:
 - This was a quarterly update report with key changes shown in paragraph 2.1 and 2.2 of the report. The report showed that the Council continued to manage risks in an effective manner. Two of the risk changes were related to Children's Services and ICT.
- 11.2 The Chair noted that alternatives to how this report was presented were being looked at.
- 11.3 The Vice-Chairman highlighted the reduction in risk 31, "NCC Funded Children's Services Overspend", as a result of increased funding to Children's Services, although it still remained as a red rated risk. This was indicative of how the council was planning to deal with more difficult areas of its responsibilities.
- 11.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree:
 1. The key messages detailing key proposed changes to corporate risks since the last report to April 2023 Cabinet (paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 and Appendix A of the report)
 2. The corporate risks as at July 2023 (Appendices B and C of the report)
- 11.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Not applicable as no decision is being made.

11.6 **Alternative Options**

There are no alternatives identified.

12 **Risk Management Annual Report 2022/23**

- 12.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the key messages for risk management from the last financial year and also looks at this current financial year for the Risk Management Function.
- 12.1.2 The Director of Strategic Finance outlined that this report looked back at the previous year; the key aspect of the report was that the council had appropriate risk management arrangements in place
- 12.2 The Chair noted that it was positive to have evidence that the Council was doing what it should and thanked officers for their work in ensuring that the council was a safe and improving council.
- 12.3 The Vice-Chairman endorsed these comments and noted that it was encouraging that this “healthcheck” had been passed. He thanked officers for their work.
- 12.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree these key messages from the Annual Risk Management 2022/23 Report (Appendix A of the report):
 - 1. The overall opinion on the effectiveness of Risk Management for 2022/23 is ‘Acceptable’ and therefore considered ‘Sound’ (part 3 of Appendix A of the report)
 - 2. The Risk Management Function complies with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended in 2020) and recognised Public Sector Internal Audit standards.
 - 3. The Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 will refer to this report and will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee for its approval.

12.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Whilst there is no decision to make, evidence to support the Risk Management Function’s work over the last annual year is presented at Appendix A of the report. The key messages are reported in the Executive Summary above.

12.6 **Alternative Options**

As there is no decision to take from this report, there are no alternative options to put forward.

13 **Corporately Significant Vital Signs**

- 13.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the Council’s performance against its Corporately Significant Vital Signs.
- 13.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The purpose of this report was to provide an update on performance against the vital signs, review and understand context, trends and performance risks, and allow for early interventions and opportunities for improvements.
- Vital signs were made from an array of performance measures, some based on workload or output measures and some on timelines for productivity. Where possible, focus was on outcomes but sometimes things were affected by things outside of the Council's control.
- It was important to understand the challenges impacting service delivery and key strategic outcomes while monitoring trends and demand.
- The council continued to operate in a period of challenge. The number of measures rated green had increased by 5, and the number of measures rated red had reduced by 9.
- The areas of underperformance had narratives with actions to improve performance and the expected return to the target which would be discussed at executive leadership level.

13.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care acknowledged that the Council was a way from having 75% care homes rated at good and outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. There was a description in the report discussing the challenges around this, which included that the Care Quality Commission would not be able to re-inspect care homes at the pace required. Page A8 of the report showed the actions of the team to address this, including audits and work with providers showing quality concerns, training and development and international recruitment. Some care homes may have improved practice but not yet be re-inspected, impacting on the measure.

13.3 The Vice-Chairman noted that it was important that this report was closely linked to Better Together for Norfolk and thanked officers for their work in updating this to bring clarity to the issues.

13.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Review and comment on the end of quarter 4 performance data.
2. Review the considerations and next steps.
3. Agree the 26 highlighted actions as set out.

13.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

13.6 **Alternative Options**

Information Report.

14 **Adult Learning – Community Delivery**

14.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out progress of the Adult Learning service to expand services into Communities across Norfolk and enable easier access, and to withdraw from Wensum Lodge.

14.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Adult Learning Services welcomed over 8000 people each year across Norfolk and was working hard to make it easier for more people to access opportunities. Over a third of courses were available to access online making them accessible to a wider range of people.
- The service was working on delivery of courses in more communities, as many people preferred to access courses closer to home so they could travel less and spend less on petrol. This was successful so far, with 65 courses being delivered in communities and more were planned including two new construction training hubs in Hellesdon and Kings Lynn and work with Borough Council Partners to invest in multi-user hubs in King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth.
- Because of the plans to increase community-based delivery, Wensum Lodge no longer fit the vision for the future; it had limited parking, no access by bus and the road had tailbacks at peak times. Courses were already delivered at the Norman Centre, Millennium Library and the construction training hub in Hellesdon, with more places being sought in the City.
- Wensum Lodge was the largest and most appropriate location when it was set up in the 1960s but it no longer provided what the adult learning service needed and it was time to move out; the service had done what it could to make the site suitable for providing courses but continuing to do so would disrespect the heritage of the site.

- 14.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing had received emails from public who believed that adult education was being ceased with the withdrawal from Wensum Lodge. He clarified that this was not the case; adult education was being invested in to help more people benefit from it than before. The building was not fit for purpose and would be declared surplus to requirements as the services were being delivered elsewhere in a fairer way in a more geographically spread way and online. A new use would be found for the building.
- 14.3 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation added that Wensum Lodge was not kind to residents with accessibility challenges; relocating services would mean that people with blue badges or reliant on public transport would be able to access adult education services.
- 14.4 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport shared that she had attended a course at Wensum Lodge; due to the layout of the building she had to be escorted from the gate to the room as she could not access the building independently showing that the building was not fit for purpose for disabled people.
- 14.5 The Chairman had attended a course at Wensum Lodge and recognised the issues with accessibility in the building were an issue. Wensum Lodge was a fabulous building and could be put to a good use in the future, but it was no longer suitable for use by adult education.
- 14.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to continue to progress opportunities to increase community based delivery across Norfolk, and to withdraw from the Wensum Lodge location as it no longer supports our ambition for community service delivery

14.6 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

This proposal builds on the existing approach to increase education and learning opportunities for all Norfolk residents through community based delivery.

The volume of courses delivered from the Wensum Lodge location is reducing. As a result, the Wensum Lodge site is significantly under-utilised and increasingly cost inefficient

14.7 Alternative Options

Wensum Lodge could continue to deliver Adult Learning courses. However, the site is already inefficient as it is under-utilised (with utilisation of available space consistently below 30%). In addition, the site is generally in need of repair and the cost of making this complex site more environmentally friendly would be significant.

15 Disposal, acquisition and exploitation of property

- 15.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out proposals aimed at supporting Norfolk County Council priorities by exploiting properties surplus to operational requirements, pro-actively releasing property assets with latent value where the operational needs can be met from elsewhere and strategically acquiring property to drive economic growth and wellbeing in the County.
- 15.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:
- The report set out 7 buildings identified as surplus to council requirements and one lease acquisition.
 - The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation discussed the lease acquisition; she had visited the Palmers Building in Great Yarmouth where the new library and adult education provision would be built. She was keen to see adult education being provided where learners needed it and this was an exciting opportunity to address this.
- 15.2 The Vice-Chairman noted that Cabinet had agreed to the well evidenced proposal to deliver adult education services to residents more effectively across the County; it was therefore clear that Wensum Lodge should be disposed of so someone could make use of the building. He was already aware of one proposal for use of the building being worked on which would provide a cultural benefit for residents and visitors.
- 15.3 The Chair noted that it was important to provide the best possible services which were as accessible as possible; sometimes this meant disposing of buildings so that other services could be invested in. The Palmers Building in Great Yarmouth was a good example of this; it would be a great facility in the centre of Yarmouth providing adult education and a library, with discussions being held about a possible dentistry school in the building.
- 15.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**
1. To formally declare Cobholm Field, Great Yarmouth (6009/012) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property on the best terms possible either through freehold or leasehold

disposal. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.

2. To approve to the acquisition of a lease from Great Yarmouth Borough Council for parts of the lower ground (basement) and ground floors shown edged purple on plan at 37-39 Market Place, Great Yarmouth NR30 1LX on the terms agreed.
3. To formally declare Land at Meadow Way, Hellesdon (5032/011) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
4. To formally declare Wensum Lodge Complex, 169 King Street NR1 1QW (4109/041) (excluding the adjacent site comprising the Sports Hall and Squash Court) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
5. To formally declare Land at Edge Bank, Outwell (2107/101) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
6. To formally declare Land at Parkfield Farm, Downham Road, Outwell (2107/103) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
7. To formally declare Land at Broomhill Lane, Reepham surplus to Council requirements and:
 - (i) Instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property to the developer of the adjacent field, or
 - (ii) In the event of no satisfactory agreement instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property on the open market.

In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.

8. To formally declare Nelson Road Field, Sheringham (1087/011) surplus to Council requirements and:
 - (i) Instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property to a Registered Housing provider, or
 - (ii) In the event of no satisfactory agreement instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property on the open market.

In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet

Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.

15.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Declaring the sites and land holdings surplus to County Council use means that the Corporate Property Team can consider options for the disposal and exploitation of these sites.

Leasing the site at 37-39 Market Place, Great Yarmouth is a key aspect of the joint project.

15.6 **Alternative Options**

Declaring sites and land holdings surplus is a result of the sites no longer being required for service delivery. The alternative would be to retain resulting in incurring holding costs for an asset that is not contributing to service delivery.

There is no viable alternative option to leasing the site at 37-39 Market Place, Great Yarmouth.

16 **Health, Safety and Well-being Annual Report 2022-23**

- 16.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing data and analysis on the Health, Safety and Well-being mid-year performance of NCC as an employer so that members have the information necessary to satisfy themselves of the effectiveness of the NCC health and safety management system, or where necessary to identify actions for Executive Directors and others to improve the performance against the 3 key outcome goals set out in the report.
- 16.1.2 The Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy introduced the report to Cabinet:
- Health and Wellbeing was related to the Council's legal obligations and wellbeing was related to how the council managed culture.
 - This was an annual report covering training, compliance, incidents and how people responded to them, as well as proactive intervention work.
 - The report was published publicly via this meeting and circulated internally
- 16.2 The Chair noted that health, safety and wellbeing of staff was even more important than ever as staff found themselves isolated during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was important to ensure staff who worked from home for extended periods of time had their wellbeing considered.
- 16.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. Consider and comment on the performance report
 2. Champion employee and Member health, safety and wellbeing through demonstrable leadership and advocacy of the guidance and services available
 3. Endorse and support the ongoing focus to improve health, safety and wellbeing management through Executive Director and management leadership and delivery of health, safety and wellbeing services.
- 16.4 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

16.5 **Alternative Options**

N/A

17 **Finance Monitoring Report 2023-24 P2: May 2023**

17.1.1 Cabinet received the report giving a summary of the forecast financial position for the 2023-24 Revenue and Capital Budgets, General Balances, and the Council's Reserves at 31 March 2024, together with related financial information.

17.1.2 The Vice-Chairman introduced the report to Cabinet:

- At this stage of the financial year a balanced revenue budget outturn was being forecast. Cost pressures around cost of care by adult social services were being mitigated by the department.
- Although there were higher utility inflation costs built into projections these had to be uplifted further due to sustained increases in electricity and gas. This forecast overspend related to utilities was offset by higher than expected interest receivable on cash balances.
- Pressures for Children's Services were listed in paragraph 2.6 of the report
- Adult Social Services had reduced the backlogs which built up in the pandemic and there had been a reduction in the forecast in the year end reserves for schools MLS balances.
- Reserves were used to mitigate risks through the year. Treasury cash balances remained strong. If the council borrowed the full £65m as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy the closing balances would be £256m. Borrowing no money in the current year would reduce the balances to £191m at year end.
- The decision on the level of borrowing would depend on fluctuations in the public loan board rates.
- When delivering the budget, rising interest rates demand a different strategy when spending to strengthen infrastructure than when rates were below 2%. The Director of Strategic Finance had been asked to develop a review of capital spend and his preliminary findings had been produced. This review included £142.5m being reprofiled from 2023-24 into future years from slippage in capital schemes from 2022-23. The council continued to review the forecast for capital schemes and would extend the review into 2024-25 to improve the accuracy of phasing capital projects
- The council borrowed £377m over the past 5 years at an average rate of 2%. This was fixed for up to 50 years and was the correct approach as it allowed the council to invest while rates were low. The cost of borrowing was allowed for on a continuing basis and stayed steady at a percent of around 6-7% of net revenue expenditure during this period.
- Planning for capital expenditure was based on an era of low interest rates and it was important to respond to the new situation, including stopping adding significantly to new debt, deferring expenditure to when rates are forecast to fall and removing schemes where appropriate
- The Vice-Chairman expected to see a reduction in the capital programme following the next capital review board

- £50m of additional borrowing would cost 1% additional council tax and was therefore a reasonable limit to additional capital spending for the life of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, or unless rates fall again significantly.

17.2 The Chair thanked the Vice-Chairman for keeping an eye on the finances, recognising that things were difficult related to interest rates.

17.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the addition of **£0.535m** 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 1.4 of the report as follows:
 - Increase Children's Services funding from S106 contributions of £0.461m
 - £0.074m increase in Libraries funding from S106 contributions
2. To recommend to Council the addition of **£26.895m** to the capital programme for the following new scheme as set out in Capital Appendix 3, paragraph 4.2-4.3 of the report as follows:
 - Approval of £26.895m King's Lynn Sustainable Transport and Regeneration Scheme (STARS) supported by £24.7m external funding and £2.025m NCC Borrowing as set out in Appendix 3 note 4.3
 - And, to note the inclusion of the £16.7m Corporate Property Retrofitting Plan approved at the 5th June 2023 Cabinet meeting, subject to Council approval.
3. Subject to Cabinet approval of recommendation 1 and Council approval of recommendation 2 to delegate:
 - 2.1) 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.
 - 2.2) 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;
 - 2.3) 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 recognise the period 2 general fund forecast revenue **of a balanced position**, noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to reduce or eliminate potential overspends where these occur within services;
5. To recognise the period 2 forecast of 100% savings delivery in 2023-24, noting also that Executive Directors will continue to take measures to mitigate potential savings shortfalls through alternative savings or underspends;
6. To note the forecast General Balances at 31 March 2024 of **£25.410m**.
7. To note the expenditure and funding of the revised current and future 2023-28 capital programmes including the significant reprofiling of £142.507m since April 2023 and the reduction in the capital programmes of £20.137m.

17.4 **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:

- Current and future capital programmes
- Capital programme funding
- Income from property sales and other capital receipts.

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

17.5 **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.

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

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

The Chair invited Cabinet Members to attend Adult Social Services’ co-production week being held in the foyer.

The meeting ended at 11:20

Chair of Cabinet

Cabinet
3 July 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from Elisabeth Traverse The Council is having to destroy at least 3,000 trees on our roads because of ash die back and other diseases. What is the council doing about replacing these trees with more suitable ones?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Where necessary we make safe or, regrettably, have to fell trees along the highway to keep property and people safe. The vast majority (82%) of these felled trees are located on land not owned by the County Council, and as part of our work we establish with our own Highways/Property Services and other landowners whether they can be replaced. Where tree replacement is not possible, we are working through the Forestry Commission funding stream, Local Authority Treescapes, to secure ways to increase tree numbers in other more appropriate locations. This includes planting tree species resistant to disease and resilient to climate change. This tree planting is additional to our 1 million trees pledge.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Elisabeth Traverse Is the Council setting up a tree replacement fund?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste There is no tree replacement fund as such. However, we have applied for Local Authority Treescapes funding last year and this year. This money, with some match funding from the Council and other partners, seeks to address the net loss of trees from ash die back and other diseases.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Richard Adcock With the increase & push towards Electric Vehicles, have the fire service been overlooked for their personal safety/ training & equipment to cope with any situation they may be confronted with & to protect the public?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships Thankfully, incidents involving electric vehicles are rare. These vehicles have lots of internal safety measures to try and prevent issues occurring, however they can still happen. We continue to work closely with the National Fire Chief's Council to make sure that we are ready to deal with this type of incident. Current firefighting techniques would protect fire fighters and members of the public and we have suitable training and PPE in place but the current approaches may result in more defensive firefighting tactics in certain situations.</p> <p>Things we are doing in Norfolk include proper questioning at the time of call so we can adequately resource an incident quickly. We have an increased "pre-determined attendance" (how many resources we send) from a confirmed EV car fire and this includes an additional appliance, level2 officer and HAZMAT officer, for specific advice, as well as consideration for our environmental protection unit.</p> <p>Our teams have a good operational understanding about what specific hazards are involved. In addition, our new risk and policy group manager will be reviewing our overall response to this type of incident.</p> <p>Our Fire safety teams work with local planners to make sure that firefighting</p>

	<p>arrangements are considered when charge points are being put into new builds. But current legislation needs to be updated around this fast paced technology, which we have raised with some local MPs.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Prof. David Evans The recent acceptance of Norfolk County Council's Climate Strategy by Cabinet is welcome. Its implementation within an urgent timeframe is required. Following the analysis and knowledge learned to produce the Strategy, is it not now timely for Norfolk County Council to recognise and declare a Climate Emergency?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Thank you for welcoming the new strategy, which has achieved widespread support.</p> <p>In April 2019, the Council unanimously adopted a declaration that "Norfolk County Council recognises the serious impact of climate change globally and the need for urgent action".</p> <p>The council committed to supporting the delivery of the Government's 25 year plan to improve the environment, welcomed the introduction of the Environment Act and committed to reducing unnecessary use of resources, minimising waste, reducing our impact on the world, and shaping a more efficient, sustainable and competitive economy.</p> <p>The Council agreed to lead by example and demonstrate our actions and responsibilities in tackling climate change and recognised that taking action now can help to achieve long-term sustainable economic growth from low carbon and green industries in Norfolk.</p> <p>Making a further declaration four years on would not serve any useful purpose. Our emphasis must be on continuing to take action to mitigate emissions and adapt to changing weather patterns.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Prof. David Evans At Cabinet it has been said that the Council "walks the walk, not talks the talk". How will Councillors on the Cabinet evidence the success of their "walk" and that it is not just "talk"?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste It is imperative that the Council translates its Climate Strategy into practical actions with the means in place for councillor and public accountability over its delivery.</p> <p>At present, a dashboard for reporting our estate emissions that count towards our 2030 net zero estate target is available on the Council's climate change webpage. The dashboard shows the Council's annual estate emissions broken down across key categories such as those from fossil fuel heating, building electricity, streetlight electricity, and vehicle fleet emissions.</p> <p>Updates have also been given to Cabinet on progress towards the Council's Environmental Policy (which includes the Council's existing commitments around climate change). The last of these was the Net Zero and Natural Norfolk Progress Update delivered to Cabinet in April 2022.</p>

	<p>Looking ahead, an annual report will be prepared for the relevant select committee to review delivery progress towards the new Climate Strategy as a whole. While many of the Council's activities relevant to the strategy will be brought to members separately through the relevant committees, the role of this item will be to consider the range of initiatives related to the Climate Strategy all together. This will enable members to assess progress, identify gaps to delivery and introduce any changes needed going forward.</p>
6.4	<p>Question from Tessa Gee How will Norfolk County Council influence others, for example schools, to ensure buildings and operations are zero-carbon?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste In terms of school construction, we are in the process of letting a new framework for contracting school builds over the next four years. The design specification of schools built under this framework will go beyond building regulations in terms of energy performance, the installation of low carbon heating systems and on-site renewables - aspiring towards net zero in operation. Furthermore, contractors who join that framework will need to have a carbon reduction plan in place for their business operations that aligns with the UK's net zero 2050 commitment.</p> <p>There are around 200 schools in Norfolk where we still have a role in long-term maintenance through a funding arrangement with the Department for Education (known as 'maintained' schools). Where schools have become academies, formal leasing arrangements are in place for the land and buildings to the academy trust who are fully responsible for operating and maintaining the schools. Large Academy Trusts are within scope of regulations requiring disclosure of energy and carbon information with their directors' (trustees') report with narrative of measures to improve energy efficiency.</p> <p>Decarbonising the Council's maintained school building stock is a significant challenge. As a recent National Audit Office report highlighted, there has been limited funding available to local authorities from central government for the refurbishment and maintenance of school buildings. Furthermore, covid restrictions and infection control has been the overriding recent priority for schools .</p> <p>The Council is also deploying some of the maintenance funding it receives to commission surveys of school buildings to understand the works required to improve energy efficiency and cut carbon emissions. These can support bids to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to secure external finance towards carbon reduction works. A programme of wider engagement with schools is also in planning, with Cabinet in May resolving that the Council will undertake workshops with schools specifically with the purpose of re-engaging on the theme of how to progress with carbon reduction.</p> <p>Our priorities and focus on the wider built environment where we have less direct influence is outlined in the Climate Strategy on pages 69 to 75.</p>
6.5	<p>Question from Mary Curzon</p>

	<p>Norfolk County Council plans to plant one million trees by 2025. It appears that this number also will include hedge plants. So far, 276,293 trees and hedge plants have been planted, of which 112,064 are on Norfolk County Council owned land. How many of these newly planted trees and hedge plants are still alive?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Of the 276,293 trees, some 180,000 have just been planted and therefore it is not yet possible to know the survival rate. But we will be monitoring these closely this current growing season. The survival rate for previous years has been high and where we have seen losses, we ensure that these trees are replaced as agreed from the outset when we fund the work.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Mary Curzon What processes do Norfolk County Council have in place to ensure that the trees are maintained and survive?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Where trees are planted on County Farms, agreement is reached with the tenants to maintain these trees. In other locations, working with communities and partners, we evaluate all proposals in the round, including agreeing the establishment and the long-term future maintenance of the trees. Our decision to proceed with planting is conditional on agreeing with communities and partners how they will ensure that the trees are cared for in the future. This includes replanting, if necessary.</p>
6.6	<p>Question from Sarah Eglington Many Norfolk residents were forced to choose between heating and eating as a result of skyrocketing gas prices last winter. At the same time, we watch as the climate crisis escalates. All the while, Norfolk CC continues to back the culprits responsible by investing pensions in fossil fuels. Climate breakdown and energy insecurity are both symptoms of an unstable and unjust energy system, founded on fossil fuels. The crisis will only intensify if we don't divest from fossil fuels. There is no mention of divestment in Norfolk CC's Climate Strategy. What steps are being taken by Norfolk CC to divest all their investments in fossil fuels?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste The Norfolk Pension Fund is independent of Norfolk County Council and believes in voting and engagement with investee companies to improve their performance and requires its fund managers to holistically embed Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations in their investment approaches. It does not adopt a policy of exclusion for any mainstream industrial sector. This approach is fully documented on its website www.norfolkpensionfund.org. The Fund takes a holistic approach to considering carbon emissions across its portfolio. Third party benchmarking is published every six months. This shows that the carbon emissions and climate risk metrics are materially better than benchmark global indices. In addition, the Fund invests in renewable and energy transition assets through its real asset portfolios as part of its diversified investment portfolio securing the pensions of around one hundred thousand current and former local government employees.</p>

	<p>Supplementary question from Sarah Eglington What is Norfolk CC's target date for full divestment from fossil fuel investments?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste As stated previously the Fund does not have a policy of exclusion for any industrial sector.</p>
6.7	<p>Question from Graeme Gee Can Norfolk County Council directly, or by influence, ensure that artificial grass is not used in schools, play areas, and anywhere on their own estate?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Outside of the school estates the Council does not use artificial grass on properties where it is the freeholder and occupier.</p> <p>The Council would be able to use its influence to discourage the use of artificial grass on the schools' estate. However, it cannot enforce this position even on sites where the Council is still the Responsible Body. Local Authority Maintained schools' governing boards run their own sites and have responsibility to ensure it supports learning. Schools frequently install artificial grass to ensure there is suitable access for children to outside curriculum especially for early years and foundation stage. Usually, it is in areas where real grass is difficult to maintain and all year round access is often compromised.</p> <p>Larger 3G pitches are almost exclusively only on high school sites. All but one of these in Norfolk are part of an academy trust, and the remaining one is a foundation school where the governing board is the freeholder. The standard academy lease terms do not allow the Council to add any conditions of this nature. There are other bodies such as Sport England, which encourages the provision of sporting pitches on school sites.</p>
6.8	<p>Question from Verna Salter Norfolk CC's Climate Strategy recognises the importance of decarbonisation of the transport sector and as the Local Highways Authority NCC has an important role in supporting the decarbonisation of the transport sector through the provision of sustainable infrastructure. How is that consistent with the construction of the unnecessary, and environmentally destructive, Norwich Western Link Road?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Reducing our impact on the environment and climate is a priority for the Council, and it is a key consideration in what we do. But there are other things we need to consider to do the best we can for Norfolk and its residents and businesses. These include ensuring our county can cope with population and housing growth, supporting the local economy and acting on existing transport problems by making sure Norfolk has the infrastructure it needs.</p> <p>Improvements to our transport infrastructure support all kinds of journeys, including walking and cycling, public transport, emergency services and deliveries of goods and services. Removing traffic congestion from local roads and communities</p>

makes these safer and more pleasant places to live, walk and cycle, and improves air quality close to people's homes.

Supplementary question from Verna Salter

Other than EV charging points, what sustainable infrastructure will be provided?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The report presented to Cabinet today on the Transport for Norwich update sets out the broad range of projects and improvements that have been delivered across the Norwich area. The Council has been highly successful in bidding for external funding through the Transport for Norwich strategy. Over the last five years, the authority has secured more than £150m for sustainable transport improvements in and around the city, which have cut bus journey times, increased active travel, improved air quality and reduced carbon emissions.

6.9

Question from Charlotte Chamberlain

Warm words don't make warm homes.

We've had small helpings of alphabet soup – promised warmth of a HUG here, chance to catch a BUS there, be a LAD and SHDF for those in social housing: each promised little and delivered less.

The East of England had 30% of all retrofit measures installed under HUG1. 773 measures out of a national total of 2611. That's measures, NOT individual homes. At this rate how will the 432,500 homes in Norfolk be upgraded by 2050?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste

Domestic homes account for around 20% of Norfolk's emissions and you rightly point out that accelerating retrofitting is a significant challenge for moving to a low carbon future. Domestic energy performance certificates show that 62% of dwellings across Norfolk have an energy rating of D or less (Energy Performance of Building Certificates in England and Wales: July to September 2022) As a local authority we will seek the right funding opportunities to support our partners in the retrofit agenda. We do not directly own domestic housing stock so our influencing power to decarbonise domestic buildings across Norfolk is significantly limited but support for residents can be secured through the [Norfolk Warm Homes](#) website.

Supplementary Question from Charlotte Chamberlain

What local level of funding and skills provision does this Council believe would enable Norfolk to meet the government's 2050 Net Zero Carbon Strategy target on retrofitting homes?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste

The Council is currently carrying out a comprehensive workforce analysis of the Retrofit sector, assessing the skills and training requirements of sector to meet Net-Zero objectives. This work programme includes clarity on the current deployment rate of retrofit measures across County and District areas (Air/Ground source heat pumps, heat insulation included), Annual installations required in

	<p>domestic/non-domestic properties to meet Net-Zero objectives, in addition to workforce, skills and qualification demands in the sector.</p> <p>In addition to the current Council investment in the skills infrastructure, we continue to work closely with Norfolk further education (FE) and private training providers, establishing the training provision to meet current and projected workforce requirements. We aim to maximise funding opportunities for the county through national programmes, securing ongoing resources for retrofit training, most recently exhibited through the securing retrofit funding through the Department of Education Skills Bootcamp and Local Skills Improvement Partnership programmes – currently being delivered across the County.</p>
6.10	<p>Question from Sarah Burston</p> <p>It is recognised that extreme weather events, that will occur more often due to climate change, have a more significant effect on vulnerable people. What tangible plans do Norfolk County Council have in place to protect and support this community?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste</p> <p>This risk is considered by the Norfolk Resilience Forum and by key services such as Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service as part of their overall planning process. An example of the approach being taken by the Council is detailed by the response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care</p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>We receive notification of extreme weather alerts from the Met office which is shared across the health and social care system. Our older people, physical disability and learning disability services are integrated with community NHS services and our mental health service is co-located with NHS mental health provision and we work in cooperation with the NHS and other partners such as District Councils on adverse events, such as periods of extreme weather. There are also robust resilience and emergency plans in place to support our vulnerable people and communities as a wider NCC offer. The plans are constantly under review and updated regularly. Examples of the support NCC have provided and have plans to support in future occurrences include:</p> <p>Flood risk – working with Norfolk Police, other agencies, and families to safeguard vulnerable local people at home including staffing rescue centres, assisting relocation of Care Home residents, visiting, and assessing people at home who may be unable to keep themselves safe or assess the risk, arranging additional support and services or transport to safe spaces. NCC officers from North and East locality have been involved in this activity on several occasions.</p> <p>Extreme heat/field fire – in West Norfolk in 2022 supporting vulnerable people whose properties were affected by fire from a field blaze due to extreme heat. NCC officer support with assistance to link with agencies around temporary housing and emotional and practical support provided.</p>

	<p>Power Outage – identifying vulnerable people and working with community health providers to ensure timely responses are planned and support available should people need to live without power for any period of time to reduce the risk to their vulnerability and safety.</p>
6.11	<p>Question from Jonathan Smith Did the research underpinning the Council's Climate Strategy include an analysis of the benefits of CO₂?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste No, as a local authority, we do not hold our own evidence base relating to climate change. However, as a guide to the evidence we have drawn on, I would refer you to the publications of the UK's independent, Statutory Climate Change Committee.</p>
6.12	<p>Question from Tina Johnson Despite South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils declaring their participation in "No Mow May", Norfolk County Council proceeded with a cutting regime of verges and other areas. This destroyed pollinator plants and decimated habitats at a critical time of year. The cutting was in breach of your policy that "We only cut grass verges for safety reasons, not appearance". Norfolk CC states "Roadside verges are cut for road safety purposes to maintain visibility at junctions and to provide room for people to walk on the pavement", in the recent regime this did not apply at a multitude of places. Why does Norfolk CC act in breach of these conditions?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure & Transport The Council did not participate in "No Mow May" as the timing for grass cuts to the highway verges varies each year. This timing is dependent on growing conditions and ensures that highway safety is maintained.</p> <p>A report, titled "Greenways to Greenspaces - Green Travel and Green Networks along our Highways Corridors" was discussed at the Infrastructure and Development Committee on 18th January 2023. This outlines previous commitments, as well as progress updates. Part of the commitments outlined include developing a new Roadside Verge Management Policy and the cutting policy is being reviewed as part of this work.</p> <p>A change was made to the second rural cut (usually carried out in August/September) to cut only junctions and visibility splays for C & U class roads, while A and B roads are cut as usual. This not only provided a financial saving, but helps support our pollinator ambitions.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Tina Johnson How does this recent excessive and unnecessary verge cutting comply with Norfolk County Council's Biodiversity and Climate Strategy policies?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure & Transport There is a fine balance between ensuring highway safety and supporting the environment. Each year the growing season is subtly different. The weather this</p>

	<p>year caused significant early year growth of the roadside verges, which is why the cutting could not be delayed further.</p> <p>However, our grass cutting operations are only one aspect of the Council's work in this area. Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) are cut later in the year to allow the rare species to both flower and seed for the next season. The Council's Pollinator Action Plan was reviewed at the Infrastructure and Development Committee on 14th July 2021. As part of this, a commitment has been made to increase the number of Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) across the county to 300 sites with the purpose of improving the environment for pollinators.</p> <p>In addition to the above which contributes towards the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Strategy policies, the Greenways to Greenspaces - Green Travel and Green Networks along our Highways Corridors report outlines previous commitments, as well as progress updates and how grass cutting is a key component of the delivery of this strategy.</p>
6.13	<p>Question from Daniel Douglas First Bus is withdrawing a council tendered service 37B on the 23 July 2023 which serves Lakenham and Mulbarton on Evening and Sundays. Will this be replaced with a similar level of service from the 24th of July?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure & Transport The service 37B is a commercial service, not a council tendered service, although the Council does provide some financial support in terms of a de minimis payment. First have submitted 2 registrations – one to cancel the 37B but then also another one that re-registers it within the core 37 service, therefore there will be no change to service they are just tidying up the paperwork.</p>
6.14	<p>Question from Willem Buttinger How are Norfolk County Council maintaining council-owned land and road verges to increase biodiversity?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) are cut later in the year to allow the rare species to both flower and seed for the next season. The Council's Pollinator Action Plan was reviewed at the Infrastructure and Development Committee on 14th July 2021 and as part of this, a commitment was made to increase the number of Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) across the county to 300 sites with the purpose of improving the environment for pollinators. Combined with a reduction in the frequency of grass cutting over the past decade, these measures help increase biodiversity across the county.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Willem Buttinger Has Norfolk County Council stopped the use of glyphosate on its estate and road verges?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste The Council is committed to minimising the use of herbicides, including those containing glyphosate, to control weeds or other undesirable plant species on its</p>

	<p>managed land, whilst still maintaining safe and healthy spaces fit for purpose and appropriate use by its communities.</p> <p>A new glyphosate policy and Integrated Weed Management Plan (IWMP) has been put in place for this year which has seen a significant reduction in the amount of Glyphosate being used. The Council continues to use glyphosate for treating of kerb lines and footways, in order to keep the highway safe, for example to reduce the risk to the public of trips and falls. Glyphosate is not used on roadside verges. Glyphosate usage will be closely monitored over the course of the summer in line with the policy. Any new developments in alternative products this area will also be explored.</p>
6.15	<p>Question from Frances Martin The proposal does not address the issue of art courses where both equipment and technical support are needed - please can the cabinet reconsider this wholesale sell off and look again at how a creative hub can be established to continue the courses at Wensum Lodge?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building has become unviable.</p> <p>We remain committed to delivering a range of learning opportunities and courses will continue. We know that some courses need specialist equipment and our work to secure suitable locations for future courses is well progressed and, should Cabinet agree the recommendation in the report, we will confirm new locations to learners as soon as possible. In the meantime, courses will continue to be delivered from Wensum Lodge until the end of this calendar year.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Frances Martin The issue of how to continue to employ tutors in the arts area is not explained, with reference to above, how can these popular courses still run?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships We remain committed to delivering a range of learning opportunities and courses will continue. Our work to secure suitable locations for future courses is well progressed and, should Cabinet agree the recommendation in the report, we will confirm new locations to learners as soon as possible. In the meantime, courses will continue to be delivered from Wensum Lodge until the end of this calendar year.</p>
6.16	<p>Question from Kate Vogler The proposal to declare Wensum Lodge Complex, 169 King Street NR1 1QW (4109/041) surplus to Council requirements is short sighted.</p> <p>The workshops there are already equipped with specialist tools; they offer access to skills which are not available elsewhere , nor are they easily transferrable to another local venue. They would be lost to the county and its residents.</p>

Has the council fully explored how investment and correct management of Wensum Lodge could be hugely beneficial for Norfolk residents financially, creatively and in mental well being?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships

The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building became unviable.

We have invested in two new specialist construction training centres, where there is a high need for specialist tools and equipment. Our new Hellesdon centre opened earlier this year and is successfully running courses, and our King's Lynn centre opens later this year.

We remain committed to delivering a range of learning opportunities and courses will continue. We know that some courses need specialist equipment and our work to secure suitable locations for future courses is well progressed and, should Cabinet agree the recommendation in the report, we will confirm new locations to learners as soon as possible. In the meantime, courses will continue to be delivered from Wensum Lodge until the end of this calendar year.

Supplementary Question from Kate Vogler

This site has a high resale value.

Is the council's proposal to sell this beautiful riverside building driven by monetary gain rather than recognition of the educational value to both city and county?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Growth

The decision to cease services at Wensum Lodge is set out in the paper presented by Cllr Dewsbury. It notes the decrease in the number of learners at the site, as the Council delivers Adult Education in more accessible locations within communities across the County.

6.17

Question from Kay Pringle

To ask Norfolk County Council why they are choosing to fail and abandon, without democratic public consultation, their 2019 commitment to sustain, as per their duty, the historic long-standing public amenity building of Wensum House, King Street by pursuing their pre-agreed viable creative hub business model and reinvigorating this valued creative and learning asset within the city centre, and which Norwich citizens were expecting through that promise?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Growth

The previous proposal for the Wensum Lodge did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building has become unviable.

	<p>Supplementary Question from Kay Pringle Does the council accept their proposed about-turn will significantly harm local citizens' creative and learning needs, especially those with special needs - note the site has the only adapted river mooring for wheelchair enabled boats for disabled people to access the Wensum</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships The Wensum Lodge site is not accessible or suitable for many of our learners. Delivery of Norwich based courses from locations other than Wensum Lodge will enable us to secure space with greater physical accessibility, easier access to parking (including for blue badge holders) and closer access to public transport. We want all our learners to be able to access suitable learning space that can meet their needs. This is not possible at Wensum Lodge.</p>
6.18	<p>Question from Stephanie Northern Why is the council considering adding to King Street's woes by handing yet another precious asset - Wensum Lodge with the historic Music House - to the private sector? King St is already blighted with three large sites that have been supposedly under development for years. One - St Anne's Wharf phase 2 - is stalled, its fate unknown. Two - the Ferry Boat Inn - is proceeding at the pace of a very slow snail. Three - Bennetts Building next to Dragon Hall - has yet to apply for planning permission. Rather than becoming another decaying building site, Wensum Lodge should become the cultural jewel in the crown that the city and county were promised.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships The decision to cease services at Wensum Lodge is set out in the paper presented to Cabinet today. It notes the decrease in the number of learners at the site, as the Council delivers Adult Education in more accessible locations within communities across the County.</p> <p>The previous proposal for the Wensum Lodge did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Furthermore, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building has become unviable.</p>
6.19	<p>Question from Helen Davis how are you planning to improve rural bus services in Norfolk in order to encourage more people to utilise them? Thank you</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Since receiving nearly £50m in funding for our Bus Service Improvement Plan in November 2022, we have already improved and added services from and within rural areas. For example, new Sunday and evening services have been added between Swanton Morley and villages into Norwich, Sunday services have been introduced in Grimston, Gayton and West Winch into King's Lynn, and services have been increased in frequency in several other locations.</p>

Any service improvements require funding and we were fortunate to be awarded the £50m for our Bus Service Improvement Plan, unlike many other local authorities. We are continuing to develop further plans for improved services, ensuring that this short-term funding is directed to the right locations where services have a high chance of being commercially sustainable in the long-term.

**Cabinet
3 July 2023
Local Member Questions**

	Member Question Time
7.1	<p data-bbox="272 477 767 512">Question from Cllr David Sayers</p> <p data-bbox="272 512 1417 658">What is the estimated expenditure on education provision for permanently excluded children, considering the need for specialist tuition or specialist places. What measures or efforts are implemented to facilitate the successful reintegration of these pupils back into mainstream education?</p> <p data-bbox="272 696 1185 732">Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p data-bbox="272 732 1442 1321">Funding related to the education of children who have been permanently excluded is provided or within the High Needs Block budget, within the overall Dedicated School Grant. There are two main elements of our expenditure. One of these relates to the commissioning of specialist provision within the 'Short Stay School for Norfolk' who provide education across their 4 bases within total annual funding of £7.8 million for up to 350 full time equivalent places each year. In addition Children's Services provides further support, through tuition and e-learning, to help ensure needs are met, with an annual cost of approximately £1.1m. Our approach to reintegration is facilitated through the Norfolk Fair Access panels. All secondary schools are active members of these panels and primary schools are included as necessary. Successful reintegration is based upon effective partnership working between the receiving school, the Short Stay School for Norfolk and Children's Services. Existing arrangements on reintegration are being reviewed as part of our Local First Inclusion programme and importantly strengthening our partnership approach to support children and young people earlier to reduce exclusion happening in the first place.</p> <p data-bbox="272 1359 1005 1395">Supplementary question from Cllr David Sayers</p> <p data-bbox="272 1395 1442 1579">What measures will Norfolk County Council take to address the significant exodus of under 40s from the teaching profession, as revealed by recent Department for Education statistics, and how will the council ensure that children in Norfolk receive a high quality education despite the shortage of qualified teachers, especially in critical subjects like maths and physics?</p> <p data-bbox="272 1617 1185 1653">Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p data-bbox="272 1653 1436 1800">All schools in Norfolk are either Local Authority Maintained (community, voluntary aided or voluntary controlled) or part of an Academy Trust as an academy (a school that has converted or been sponsored by an academy trust) or free school (a new academy school).</p> <p data-bbox="272 1839 1410 1948">Governing bodies and academy trust boards are responsible for the recruitment and retention of staff. The local authority can take an advisory role and has a legal entitlement to do so in some cases.</p> <p data-bbox="272 1986 1420 2089">For community, voluntary controlled and maintained nursery schools the Local Authority is the employer of staff and has a legal entitlement to provide advice to schools in relation to the appointment of teachers at the school.</p>

	<p>For foundation and voluntary aided schools, the foundation trust (usually one of the three dioceses in Norfolk) is the employer. The dioceses do not have the same legal advisory rights as the local authority, but in most cases an agreement will be in place.</p> <p>For academies and free schools, the academy trust is the employer. Academy trusts can choose to control recruitment centrally or delegate this to individual academies.</p> <p>NCC work closely with the local Teaching School Hubs, The Julian Teaching School Hub and the Inspiration Trust Teaching School Hub to support the promotion and signposting of key professional development, such as the opportunities provided by Angles Maths Hub and the Cambridge Maths Hub (which serves Kings Lynn & the West of Norfolk)</p> <p>In response to the significant challenges in recruitment and retention facing Norfolk schools, NCC allocated capacity during this year to map out the current position and challenges with regards to the school workforce, with an initial focus on LA maintained schools. This was with a view to better understanding the local challenges</p> <p>Working inside the parameters of factors within NCC's realm of influence the priorities identified include:; the creation of teacher talent pools (including a recruitment focus on attracting teachers into the county); Early Career Teachers; developing & promoting the benefits of flexible working, better enabling access to relevant professional development; and the development of coaching programmes and improved Headteacher induction to support recruitment and retention of leadership.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention of capacity have been recognised as key priorities for the system in the framework published recently by NCC for a new Learning Strategy for Norfolk. Through that strategy we will deliver sustained action alongside education leaders over the coming years.</p>
7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell What action is this council taking over the concerns at Heacham beach being designated 'poor' and the 'no bathing advisory' notice, with citizen science results showing very high levels of E coli?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste This is not a County Council responsibility.</p>
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Lucy Shires Last month, there was a national outage that restricted people from making emergency calls. This council tweeted that residents should report in-person to a fire station to report an emergency. Will this council review its contingency plans and community resilience in case such an outage occurs again?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has internally reviewed the actions it took following the unexpected 999 outage on 26/06/23. We are also feeding our learning into the multi-agency reviews facilitated by the Norfolk resilience forum</p>

	<p>and nationally by BT. We have developed an initial action plan should a 999 outage occur again at short notice. This will be further supplemented by learning from our partner agency reviews. Our external public messaging process is included within the action plan to provide alternative contact number arrangements and to reassure the communities of Norfolk should the 999 facility fail again.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins</p> <p>A report to Cabinet this morning recommends that no further work on the Norwich Western Link should be carried out for three months, in order to reduce the costs of the project. With increasing doubts about whether the funding from the DfT will ever be forthcoming, shouldn't the Council use this period of time to 'bite the bullet', and start considering alternative measures for tackling traffic and congestion problems on the western side of the city?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The report does not recommend that no further work should be carried out on the Norwich Western Link (NWL) for three months, but rather that activity on the project be reduced while we await a decision on the Outline Business Case.</p> <p>The report also sets out that we're aware that other local authorities are in a similar position to us in awaiting funding commitments for their infrastructure projects and that we have a strong business case that demonstrates the NWL will provide high value for money, according to Department for Transport criteria. So I disagree that there are increasing doubts that this commitment will be made, and it's important that we are well-placed to respond and to finalise the planning application documents when a decision is made.</p> <p>Assessments carried out by the project team have shown that a new road link between the A47 and Broadland Northway is the most effective way of tackling the transport issues to the west of Norwich, and meeting the project objectives which were agreed with input from local communities. I am committed to doing everything I can to get this important project for Norfolk delivered.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Brian Watkins</p> <p>The public of Norfolk will no doubt welcome new Government legislation to remove charges for DIY household waste at recycling centres. However, this will undoubtedly come at a cost to the Council with the county's council taxpayers likely to bear the brunt. Does the Cabinet member for the Environment agree with me that this is yet another example of the Conservative Government giving with the one hand and taking away with the other?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>We await further clarification on this matter from Government so that we can make a detailed assessment on the future requirement and associated costs. However, in the meantime it is useful to clarify that the recent proposal presented by Government is not to remove charges for DIY waste, but is instead to require a weekly free allowance of up to two 50 litre rubble bags or one item a week such as a bathtub or shower screen, at a frequency of four visits over a four-week period.</p>

7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Dan Roper Members have recently been receiving complaints concerning the frequency of overgrown verges. As much as we support pollinators, has this council stretched things too far to achieve savings?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport There is a fine balance between ensuring highway safety and supporting the environment. In addition, each year the growing season is subtly different. The weather this year caused significant early growth of the roadside verges and we are aware this led to a number of complaints. However, to ensure highway safety the rural grass cut started in mid-May and is now largely complete. The timing of the next cut will be dependent on weather conditions and growing condition, but this usually will start in August.</p> <p>This strategy balances highway safety with promoting biodiversity along our environmentally important highway corridors.</p>
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Tim Adams Has this council met its pothole repair targets for 2022/23?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport For 2022/23, the authority's target to repair 96% of priority A defects with 2 hours (Transport Asset Management Plan policy) was achieved with a figure of 99.4%. The performance figures for the other category of repairs (PB, PC & PD) were also all above their target levels</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett Will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport use the time between now and October to produce the much-needed sustainable Plan B to tackle rat running in communities west of Norwich and a costed and impact assessed risk route to manage the potential £40m or more revenue effect when the Norwich western link scheme is abandoned? With increasing, delays, costs and prospects of the scheme not going ahead residents in the area need reassuring they are not going to be victims of the NWL failing.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The approach that has been recommended over the next three months is a sensible one, enabling us to reduce spending while meaning we will still be well-placed to finalise the planning application documents when we do receive approval from central government.</p> <p>It is the Norwich Western Link that is much needed and, with our strong business case, there is no reason to think we won't receive a funding commitment from central government. We are in regular contact with representatives of the communities worst affected by traffic congestion to the west of Norwich and they remain keen for us to get the Norwich Western Link delivered as soon as possible – and that's what we're focused on doing.</p>

	<p>Supplementary Question from Cllr Emma Corlett</p> <p>It has been a year since the last update of the overall scheme costs for the NWL were published. In the light of delays and raging inflation in the construction sector will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport spell out how much of the contingency built into that last estimate that has been committed, for what purposes, and what proportion remains available, or explain why he is not releasing that information?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>We have stated in the July Cabinet report that an updated financial position, which will include any re-assessment of risk ('contingency'), will be presented to Cabinet following receipt of the Outline Business Case (OBC) decision or, if this is not received in the next three months, in the next report to Cabinet.</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham</p> <p>The administration insisted they needed to spend £2m on consultants to find £17m in saving from duplication and additional layers of management. As Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance, can the Leader confirm how you will find the additional £10m now you have dispensed with their services?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p> <p>Organisations use consultants for a number of reasons - sometimes to enhance expertise, sometimes to provide capacity that isn't available and sometimes for their third party perspective. It was a combination of those reasons why we used consultants in this case. As we plan for future efficiencies we are in a different position - as a result of last year's activity we have improved our own internal capability and identified opportunities that we would work through in subsequent years alongside the Budget Challenge process.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham</p> <p>Does the Leader agree that future procurement of consultants on contracts that cost more than £50k should in future be subject to specific decisions by Cabinet or decisions made under delegated powers by Cabinet members or senior officers and published so they can be publicly scrutinised?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p> <p>The Council rarely makes use of management consultants – most consultancy is technical in nature. Decisions to use consultants are already taken either by Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members [where they are key decisions] or by senior officers under delegated powers. The Council publishes contract awards for consultancy as for other forms of contract on the Contracts Finder website, as required by law.</p>
7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Mike Sands</p>

	<p>Complaints about the condition of roads, verges, roundabouts and street trees continues in Norwich since the county council unilaterally ended the long-term successful Highways Agency Agreement in 2020 with Norwich City Council. Will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport set out exactly what responsibilities the county now has that were once carried out by Norwich City Council under that agreement and the changes in the budget and service standards that have been made compared to those applied before the change?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>One of the main drivers for terminating the historic agency agreement was to bring consistency of approach to the county. The following work types are carried out by the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bridge Maintenance, - Traffic signals maintenance and repair - Main road Streetlights - Highway Maintenance – including routine works, pothole repairs, surface dressing and resurfacing schemes - Highway Improvements - Streetworks / Permitting - Winter service delivery <p>In terms of the budget changes, the Council always used to set the city budget for delegated activities and funded the works. These budgets have changed marginally since 2020, in line with the rest of the county maintenance budgets. The city agency fee that the Council used to pay was a significant saving which have been delivered. In terms of the standards, these are now consistent with the rest of the county in order to provide consistency in approach to highway maintenance.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton</p> <p>Social supermarkets serve only a small proportion of those communities in need and food banks are struggling with demands they can't meet. Summer holiday provision is not accessible to all families that might benefit and families include affordability barriers including transport to the provision. The rate of food inflation has dropped marginally but cheaper ranges price increases are out stripping average increases. In short, a lot of families are going to be struggling this summer and the agencies that try to help them are struggling to meet demand. What more will the administration do to help?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>We are playing our part to provide support to those people most in need. Last year (2022/23) we supported over 83,000 households, and our support continues this year, funded by the Household Support Scheme. In the last year alone we have provided food vouchers to around 30,000 school children throughout the year, including during the summer and Christmas period. Working with the VCSE sector, 17 new food hubs have been opened, supporting 18,000 people. We have directly supported over 19,000 families struggling with unexpected and day-to-day costs through our Norfolk Assistance Scheme and issued over 15,000 grab and go bags containing essential supplies through our 47 libraries. All of this support is available throughout the year, including the summer period.</p>

7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby Published plans and a report agreed by the Communities Committee offered an exciting vision for the future of Wensum Lodge as an economic drive for the county based around a cultural and community hub. Since then, the case has been strengthened by the emergence of the East Norwich regeneration scheme.</p> <p>The report to Cabinet fails to mention the potential of Wensum Lodge to celebrate our history in a way that contributes to our success in the future. Will the Leader pull the report to give us the chance to discuss opportunities for the site and reflect on the wisdom of disposing of such an historic asset?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building became unviable.</p>
7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb Last week I attended the SEND Reform protest outside Parliament, with over 1000 other parents of disabled children.</p> <p>This week, the Children's Commissioner expressed concerns that "it's becoming ever harder for children to get the help they deserve", that "It is essential that we get the right support in place for children with SEND" and that "The SEND system should be set up to help these children achieve their dreams".</p> <p>Is the Cabinet Member for Children's Services confident that Norfolk's Local First Inclusion plan will give Norfolk's children with SEND the help and support they deserve and enable them to achieve their dreams?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We are confident that our Local First Inclusion programme will lead to real change for children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities, and for their families, due to it's equal focus on improving local mainstream inclusion alongside the development of more specialist provision. Our confidence is based on the fact that our Local First Inclusion programme is the result of a detailed negotiation with the DfE which led to Secretary of State approval for a joint DfE and NCC investment of £100million over a six year period. In agreeing our local plan it was clear that the DfE recognised it's alignment to the government's SEND & Alternative Improvement Plan. However, in Norfolk we are also ensuring that in addition to the Local First Inclusion programme we continue to develop our Area SEND & AP Strategy, using feedback from young people, families and the professionals who support them, to ensure that we are</p>

	<p>continually adapting to changing need. We also have the recognition from Ofsted/CQC within last years Area SEND Inspection Re-visit that we have improved services and we are confident that when we are inspected within the new Ofsted/CQC framework that we can demonstrate further improvements in outcomes for children. We will never be complacent and acknowledge the challenges that still exist nationally and locally. We must all continue to have SEND improvements as a priority, however, it is of equal importance that we all celebrate the wonderful support that does exist across our county and I was particularly pleased to hear of the great success, evidenced by the parental feedback received, of the recent SENDfest event held at Easton College and created by all of the partners working to improve SEND day in day out.</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Brenda Jones Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care confirm the current number of vacancies across the social care system that Norfolk County Council is involved in, e.g. social workers, assistant practioners, practice consultants, occupational therapists and care workers in social care settings.?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social care Thank you for your question</p> <p>We currently have a 3% vacancy rate in the Assistant Practitioner role (10.77FTE.); a 20% Social Worker vacancy rate (41.35 FTE.); a 12% practice consultant vacancy rate (4FTE); a 4% Team manager vacancy rate (2 FTE) and a 15% Occupational Therapist rate (6.87%). Our total vacancy rate for front line roles is 10%. We have seen a significant improvement in our recruitment position over the past 6 months due to our new data led and targeted recruitment approach. The impact of this will continue to be seen in coming months. Of the 41 social worker vacancies, we have successfully recruited to 19 of these vacancies. There is a long lead in time for recruits, particularly for international recruits, which can take up to 6 months to onboard.</p> <p>In terms of the external care sector, Skills for Care collect and publish vacancy rates through their annual return – to which there is a proportionately high response from Norfolk care providers. We estimate that there are 23,850 social care jobs in the Norfolk care market and based on the Autumn 2022 Skills for Care report there was an 8.7% vacancy rate in 2021/22 and turnover of 33.6%. This is below the national vacancy rate for the same period, which was 10.7%. Regionally the current vacancy rate is 10.9% and nationally 9.7%. The highest point nationally was a vacancy rate of 11.2% in October 2022. Registered managers and registered nurses continue to be the posts that are the hardest to fill, followed by care workers. There are less vacancies for senior care workers. A survey undertaken in April 2023, showed that recruitment numbers were 62% higher than leavers across respondents, suggesting an improving position.</p> <p>The Council continues to offer a range of support to promote recruitment and retention in the sector including our Norfolk recruitment campaign. Recently, Norfolk has also led the approved application for £2.4m from the Department of</p>

	<p>Health and Social Care International Recruitment Fund on behalf of the Eastern Region, to establish a Centre of Excellence to provide support to the care market with safe and successful international recruitment.</p>
7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</p> <p>The Conservatives proposed in February to cut £46.2m from the 2024/25 budget, which will directly affect demand-led services of Adult and Children's Services at a time when demand is increasing, provision costs are increasing leading to the perfect storm. At this month's Scrutiny Committee it has been announced that more 'adjustments' are needed to the MTFS to cover a further £18.7m gap. The Cabinet Member for Finance has repeatedly told me that he has lobbied his government for better funding and a clear MTFS plan. Does he now accept despite his valiant efforts that his government is not competent to manage our country's finances?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Thank you for your question. There are however a number of misconceptions within it, which I would like to address.</p> <p>The MTFS in February did not propose £46.2m of "cuts" for 2024-25. Rather, Full Council in February agreed the 2023-24 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which set out the forecast gap in budgets up to 2026-27, including a forecast gap of £46.2m for 2024-25 in the context of the net budget required being forecast to increase to £567.337m. It is the need to protect service delivery which means we are seeking to find service improvements and efficiencies to live within our forecast council tax net budget of £521.121m for 2024-25. It is therefore premature to assume that the entirety of this £46.2m gap will be closed through budget "cuts", as an element may be found (for example) through additional income, or transformation. The budget gap position itself is kept under close review throughout the annual budget setting process, which is now underway.</p> <p>You are correct to note that budget changes for 2024-25 will impact on Adults and Children's Services, and indeed Cabinet in June has agreed the target savings to be sought from each area of the Council's budget. It is of course inevitable that the largest departmental budgets will have to contribute to closing the budget gap given their size in relation to the overall budget – but the detail of where and how any specific new savings will be delivered remains to be considered and agreed as part of the 2024-25 Budget process. Clearly a key focus for budget setting remains to maximise efficiency savings and transformation in order to minimise the impact of savings on service delivery and service users. Furthermore, budget savings are only one element of the budget setting process and any savings therefore should not be viewed in isolation from the budget growth pressures which will be provided for as part of developing a robust, balanced and deliverable Budget position for next year.</p> <p>I would emphasise that the additional £18.7m gap you mention has been added to our financial planning as part of Cabinet's consideration of the update to the MTFS in June 2023, and relates to the 2027-28 financial year. This future year gap is in line with the gap set out in the long term financial forecast budget position as part of the MTFS considered by Full Council in February 2023. The</p>

extension of the MTFs by a year is a normal part of the budget setting process at this stage, and reflects a prudent financial management approach.

Finally, in terms of lobbying, the Council continues to engage with Government around our key financial priorities:

- A long term financial settlement for local government.
- An increase in the quantum of funding available to the sector.
- Delivery of fair funding reform, recognising the costs of rural service delivery.
- A fully-funded solution to the funding challenges facing social care.

Although [Ministers have indicated that they have heard local government's calls for long-term funding](#), I have previously expressed my disappointment at the delays to some of these vital reforms. However, I would also note that as a sector we have successfully lobbied Government for additional funding, for example in the inflationary uplift to Rural Services Delivery Grant achieved for 2023-24, and the substantial additional funding provided for social care pressures over recent years. We have also received indications of the funding settlement basis for 2024-25 in the Government's [Policy Statement](#). This represents a step in the right direction, even if it is not the full multi-year settlement we would hope for.

You can be assured that I will continue to argue the Council's case for additional funding, and a long term settlement at every opportunity.

Second Question from Cllr Paul Neale

The NWL OBC is as far from being agreed as it has ever been and work has been paused for at least three months, while inflation pushes the costs up with every passing day. Will the cabinet member undertake a review of the costs of delivering the NWL and provide up-to-date figures, as it has been two years since the last costs were produced, before any work on the project is restarted?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Work on the project has not been paused, but rather officers are recommending that activity on the project be reduced while we await a decision on the Outline Business Case. It also has not been two years since the project budget was reviewed – this is reviewed regularly by the project team. The last time the budget was updated was a year ago, when the revised budget of £251 million was agreed by Cabinet in July 2022. As stated in the current Cabinet report, that budget is unchanged. If it were to change, this would be reported to Cabinet.

7.15

Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn

Residents have frequently requested signage or other measures to discourage motorbikes and mopeds speeding over St Miles Bridge in Mancroft, which is a frequently-used pedestrian route, including by children going to school. Despite several years of discussions with the county council, those measures have not materialised. Will the Cabinet Member help me to get these simple measures in place to protect pedestrians from speeding motor vehicles?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

This administration has increased the local members highways budget to £11k and it is the responsibility of the local member to prioritise their residents' requests.

St Miles Bridge is a footbridge and use by motorised vehicles is illegal. There are already several bollards in place to discourage and make it clear to the public that car and motorcycle use is not permitted. Any additional physical restrictions such as barriers could impact on accessibility, including people using wheelchairs or with sight impairments for example. A legal process has to be followed to implement a formal restriction before any additional signs can be erected, Officers will contact the local member to discuss whether any of their local highway member budget could be allocated to these proposals.

Second Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn

Last year saw record-breaking wildfires in Norfolk, driven by climate change. Fire scientists are predicting even worse wildfires in the UK this year, and warning that fire services are underprepared. What is the county council's emergency plan ahead of what is now, due to climate change, becoming wildfire season in Norfolk?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service commissioned a full review of last summer's heat emergency and has driven forward with improvements should we face the same challenges again. We have developed an action plan to track progress and have secured funding to be more resilient responding to wildfires. The improvements in our wildfire response have been significant, NFRS senior leaders are available to discuss our future plans and response activities.

7.16

Question from Cllr Ben Price

In 2019, this council unveiled proposals to transform Wensum Lodge into a creative hub. Plans were made for upgraded rooms for adult education, along with rental space for start-up creative and arts organisations to bring in money to help pay the centre's running costs. This proposal would have helped safeguard a historic site in the heart of the cultural quarter for generations to come and is supported by the local community. The public outcry against the proposed rationalisation of the site is unparalleled. Will the leader of the council please reject today's recommendation and instead ask officers to look for new funding streams to deliver the creative hub proposal?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships

The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building became unviable.

Second question from Cllr Ben Price

	<p>Thorpe Hamlet residents are pleased to see the new 35 bus route introduced. The service is funded by money secured from the DfT to improve bus services across the county and crucially runs hourly throughout the day. Residents in the Quebec road area would like to see more buses operate on the 32 and 132 bus routes. Will the cabinet member work with me to seek ways to secure funding to improve this service?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>All service enhancements using Bus Service Improvement Plan funding need to have a high chance of being commercially sustainable once this short-term funding runs out otherwise the service improvement would have to be withdrawn at the end of the funding period. We are therefore carefully evaluating all requests such as this before agreeing to them, or otherwise. Officers will work with the bus operators and look into your request for the Quebec Road area.</p>
7.17	<p>Question from Cllr Colleen Walker</p> <p>Cllr Plant's comments about parking outside schools made the EDP front page.</p> <p>Will he clarify his attitude towards the settled policy of the council for speed restrictions, parking restriction and school streets, as any lack of clarity could encourage drivers to believe they need not follow rules intended to keep children safe, together with an explanation of why he allowed discussion of this item in a body that has no decision making role in parking outside schools?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>We have already have clear guidance in our new Norfolk Speed Management Strategy, recently approved by this Cabinet earlier this year. This Strategy explains the criteria for setting and implementing 20mph speed limits and how these are enforced. The Strategy also covers the policy around schools and we are continuing with the School Streets trial to see how we can improve safety and encourage more walking and cycling on the journey to and from school</p>
7.18	<p>Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone</p> <p>Families across Norfolk are still facing delays of months if not years for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments for their children. Other than resourcing to clear the backlog of cases, what alternatives have been considered to increase the chances of young people getting the support they need in education? For example: amending aspects of EHCPs pending assessment where a setting and the parents or guardians agree that additional support is urgently needed?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>EHCPs are produced based on specific advice and information from a range of professionals including the child's school / educational setting, an Educational Psychologist and medical professionals who are involved with the child. Reports from professionals detailing that advice and information are appended to the EHCP as a formal Section (Section K) of the plan.</p> <p>A diagnosis does not describe the individual needs of a child nor how they are best individually supported, and so an EHCP is not dependent nor predicated</p>

upon medical diagnosis such as ASD. An EHCP can be amended following an Annual Review based on the recommendations of relevant professionals supporting and working with the child, which is considered as part of an Annual Review meeting which is usually led by the child's school or setting. Amendments to an EHCP would need to be based on evidence that the child's needs have changed and different provision is required to meet those needs. Special educational provision within educational settings in Norfolk, including resources, support and funding can all be accessed without reliance upon an EHCP.

Second question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone

For the current proposed new Household Waste Recycling Centre, on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Sheringham, what do Norfolk County Council estimate to be the ongoing annual costs for the site, including specifically the ground rent? And what are the total estimated decommissioning costs for the current site?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

A Cabinet Report on 31 January 2022 clearly set out details of the lease terms for the proposed replacement Sheringham Recycling Centre, which included clarification that the annual rent of £20,000 (which would be index linked and subject to reviews with an annual cap and collar between 2% and 4%) was subject to acquiring planning permission and an environmental permit for the new site.

That Cabinet report also clarified that if the replacement recycling centre went ahead then the existing site would be sold by open market sale through auction or by tender, meaning that beyond caring for the site any decommissioning costs are expected to only relate to any requirements of the Environment Agency as part of the process to surrender the site permit for the existing site, requirements which due to the nature of operations and the site are not expected to be significant if any.