

Cabinet
Minutes of the Meeting held on 03 June 2024
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 10am

Present:

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| 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 James Bensley | Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste |
| Cllr Bill Borrett | Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing |
| Cllr Fabian Eagle | Cabinet Member for Economic Growth |
| 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 |

Deputy Cabinet Members Present

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| Cllr Shelagh Gurney | Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care |
| Cllr Greg Peck | Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance |
| Cllr Karen Vincent | Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services |

Executive Directors and Directors Present:

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| Hollie Adams | Committee Officer |
| Harvey Bullen | Director of Strategic Finance |
| Paul Cracknell | Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation |
| Kat Hulatt | Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer |
| Tom McCabe | Chief Executive |
| Chris Starkie | Director of Growth and Investment |
| Sara Tough | Executive Director of Children's Services |

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships.

2 Minutes from the meeting held on 08 May 2024

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 08 April 2024 as an accurate record.

3 Declaration of Interests

- 3.1 the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation declared a non-pecuniary interest related to item 11, "Planning Obligation Standards 2024" as a County Council appointed director of Repton Property Developments.

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 The Chair gave an update:

- As Leader of the Council, the Chair of Cabinet had delegated authority to appoint to internal and external bodies that were not appointments reserved to full Council.
- These appointments had been made for the municipal year and the Chair was consulting with group leaders on who they had nominated to sit on these bodies. Once finalised, the updated appointments would be published on the Council's website and organisations would be advised where appropriate.
- With County Council elections in May 2025, this would be an appropriate time to carry out a review of all internal and external bodies; the Chair had asked officers to carry this out in the coming months.
- The Chair had been reviewing the role of Member Champions and would ask the Scrutiny and Governance Working group for their feedback on the appropriateness of these positions; this would be fed into the review of internal and external bodies.

6. Public Question Time

6.1 The questions received from members of the public and responses to them are published in appendix A of these minutes.

7 Local Member Questions/Issues

7.1 The questions received from Members and responses to them are published in appendix B of these minutes.

7.2.1 Cllr Dan Roper asked a supplementary question:

- The recycling centre at North Norwich was important for providing employment but traffic problems here were foreseen when the Mayton Wood centre was closed. Cllr Roper queried whether a booking system would help manage traffic problems. He noted that a booking system would have to be restrictive so queried whether other alternatives had been considered.

7.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport replied that only highways elements had been looked at so far. A booking system would restrict how many people could turn up within each 15-minute period and help mitigate traffic issues, but a decision had not been made on this.

7.2.3 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care added that the greeting system at this recycling centre had been improved which had helped speed up throughput.

8. Annual Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023-24

8.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out details of the 2023-24 treasury activities and highlights compliance with policy and strategy previously approved by Members in relation to treasury management.

- 8.1.2 The Vice-Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This report gave an overview of treasury activity over the previous financial year, 2023-24, and showed that Norfolk County Council had complied with legislative and regulatory requirements and complied with policies and strategies.
 - Key actual prudential and treasury indicators were summarised on page 35 of the report.
 - Gross external debt on 31 March 2024 was £860m, which was lower than in 2023 and the forecast level, including debt for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and leasing. The level of actual debt borrowed was £819m. Norfolk County Council was committed to pay unitary charges to Private Finance Initiative (PFI) providers and lease payments to the leasing company and so gross debt was higher than actual debt.
 - The Council undertook no new borrowing in 2023-24 despite capital expenditure of £244.865m. Of this expenditure, £192.7m was sourced externally such as from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Education (DfE) while £52.15m was funded through internal borrowing. This meant that the under borrowed position had been maintained and the capital borrowing need was not fully funded with loan debt as cash balances were used as an interim measure.
 - Capital projects would be subject to scrutiny by the Capital Review Board, with spending departments submitting bids to a central pool of capital.
 - Appendix B of the report showed that £18.9m Public Works Loan Board funding had been repaid. Financing costs stood at £7.96% of net revenue including Minimum Revenue Provision.
 - On 18 sept 2023 Norfolk County Council repaid £11.25m debt with Commerce Bank which would have incurred a 6.31% interest charge by using investment balances
 - This report had also been taken to the treasury management panel.

8.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing noted the low external borrowing compared to the size of the capital programme.

8.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To approve the actual 2023-24 prudential and treasury indicators in the report as set out in Annex 1 of the report
2. To endorse and recommend to County Council the Annual Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023-24 as set out in Annex 1 of the report

8.4 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The annex attached to this report sets out details of treasury management activities and outcomes for 2023-24, including:

- Investment activities
- Borrowing strategy and outcomes
- Non-treasury investments
- Prudential indicators.

The Council's Treasury Management Panel has discussed and endorsed the recommendations in this report.

8.5 **Alternative Options**

In order to achieve treasury management in accordance with the Council's treasury management strategy, no viable alternative options have been identified to the recommendation in this report.

9. Finance Monitoring Report 2023-24 Outturn

9.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out summary of the outturn 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.

9.1.2 The Vice-Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Despite the £60m savings required and overspend of £35m in Adult Social Services and Children's Services, Norfolk County Council had delivered a balanced budget.
- Norfolk County Council had been invited to enter a Safety Valve agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) to return the dedicated schools grant to an in-year balanced position and repay the deficit. 38 Local Authorities were on this programme and Norfolk County Council Children's Services were delivering it under "Local First Inclusion". In October 2023, Children's Services entered enhanced monitoring and support with the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver the plan in the same way as other local authorities on the programme. Activity across the Local First Inclusion programme would be reviewed and refreshed to support Department for Education (DfE) and the Council.
- Total capital expenditure in 2023-24 was £245m, of which £200m was externally sourced with the balance coming from cash balances and no new borrowing in-year. This allowed the Council to build a platform for economic growth, provide for its most vulnerable citizen and develop cultural and environmental heritage.
- The Third River Crossing and O&M Campus in Great Yarmouth had been developed, the Long Stratton Bypass had been announced, and work continued on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities programme, housing with care programme and Norwich Castle Keep project.
- The spike in the 2024-25 budgets would be addressed by reprofiling into future years to bring the capital programme to a sustainable run rate of £260m per year.
- General reserves had been increased to £25.486m; contributions were made to reserves whenever possible while also ensuring that taxpayers contributions were not held unnecessarily. An additional £122m growth had been built into the 2024-25 budget to ensure a good service and Medium-Term Financial Strategy could be delivered to residents.
- The Vice-Chair responded to comments raised about reserves by an opposition Councillor and did not agree that Covid-19 funds had been used for purposes other than those intended. Norfolk County Council had applied for Covid-19 funding in line with requirements and reported its use to Cabinet and Government.
- Reserves were earmarked for a range of purposes and reserves were used to ensure services were maintained as shown in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This was part of the budget planning process and monitored carefully monthly.
- Council approved the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which showed a planned reduction in non-school balances and reserves.

- The move in local Government funding towards devolution would give an opportunity for some councils to move towards a more long-term strategic view of funding.

9.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care acknowledged that there was a modest underspend in the budget at that time and discussed the amount of work being carried out by frontline services to reduce overspends.

9.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance and officers for their work bringing the budget in on balance. He noted that the population was growing in Norfolk and as people were living longer, they required more help from Council services.

9.4 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted the work of officers and Members to bring in external funding from such as from the Department for Transport (DfT) to allow the council to develop much needed infrastructure for growth.

9.5 The Chair thanked officers for their work in ensuring a balanced budget; the Council was prudent and careful with taxpayers' money with a good track record of delivering infrastructure projects.

9.6 **Cabinet RESOLVED**

1. To recognise that the revenue outturn for 2023-24 is a balanced budget after transferring £1.076m to the general fund;
2. To recognise the saving shortfall of £1.845m; being 97% savings delivery in 2023-24, as described in Appendix 1 paragraph 6 of the report, which has been offset by other savings;
3. To recommend to Full Council that the General Balances at 31 March 2024 be increased to £25.486m after a transfer of £1.076m from a contribution to General Balances and underspends in Finance General.
4. To note the £244.864m capital expenditure and funding for 2023-24 and the revised current and future 2024-29 capital programmes, including the reprofiling of £43.027m from 2023-24 into 2024-25 and the addition of £23.635m to the capital programme to address the capital funding requirements from various external and internal sources as set out in summary

9.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report.

9.8 **Alternative Options**

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

10. Company Director Appointments

10.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out changes to director appointments on County Council owned Limited Companies.

- 10.1.2 The Chair introduced the report to Cabinet. Cllr Elmer had stood down from his position as Director for Hethel Innovation as he had been elected as Leader of South Norfolk District Council.
- 10.2 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services stated that NCC Owned Companies Governance Panel had reviewed the changes set out in this report at a recent meeting.
- 10.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to
1. Note the resignations of directors listed in table 1 (section 2) of the report;
 2. Approve the company director appointments set out in table 1 (section 2) of the report

10.3 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

As set out in the report.

10.4 **Alternative Options**

Cabinet could propose alternative Director appointments, however it was recommended that the individuals listed in table 1 of the report should be appointed as a result of the roles they undertake within the respective companies.

11. **Planning Obligation Standards 2024**

- 11.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out proposed amendments to the Planning Obligation Standards, which were first introduced in 2000 and been updated on an annual basis thereafter.
- 11.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:
- The Planning Obligation Standards set out what the council could seek from developers to mitigate the impact of new housing developments specifically for education, libraries, green infrastructure and fire hydrants.
 - Each planning application was assessed on a site-by-site basis and only required mitigations were sought.
 - Planning obligations were secured through section 106 agreements for education mitigation for all school sectors for improvement or expansion for new schools, library mitigation for expansion of book-stock or new library expansion, green infrastructure of improvements to public rights of way and fees to fund monitoring of signed agreements.
 - The Planning Obligation Standards had supported Norfolk County Council to secure over £189m in contributions to fund education, library and green infrastructure. £89m of this had been paid.
 - The 2024 review of Planning Obligation Standards had taken an evidence-based approach to review costs sought; education and library costs were lower than the amount needed to deliver infrastructure and so it was proposed to increase them in line with national Government guidance and neighbouring County Council costs.
 - Key updates were to secure a new obligation for home-to-school transport for a contribution towards transporting pupils to school where there was

an evidenced need, an increased cost per place for education at a 12-29% increase, an increased education multiplier for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities places from one to six pupils generated per 100 dwellings, an increased amount sought for libraries based on Arts Council England guidance and an increased amount sought for monitoring fee to change to a per trigger amount.

11.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care was pleased by the proposal for introducing a planning obligation for home to school transport. She queried the multiplier for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities places which was not listed on page 125 of the report. The Director of Growth and Investment confirmed this was included in the obligations.

11.3 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services also welcomed the report and new obligations set out in the report

11.4 The Chair noted the increased costs seen in home to school transport and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities education and so welcomed these proposals.

11.5 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve the 2024 Planning Obligation Standards.

11.6 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The new home to school transport obligation and the increased monitoring fee obligation, are deemed to be fair and reasonable, and align with government guidance and costs sought by County Councils from across the region. The increased library obligations are in line with guidance, supported by government.

11.7 **Alternative Options**

The alternative option would be to continue with the County Council's existing Planning Obligations Standards (2023) however if the evidence-based costs for education and libraries are not increased there is a risk that the required infrastructure in Norfolk may not be able to be delivered.

12. **Norfolk's Devolution – Local Assurance Framework**

12.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the development of a Local Assurance Framework, required by Government as a condition for the Investment Fund and other devolved funds. Cabinet may then decide whether to allow submission to central government of the draft Local Assurance Framework.

12.1.2 The Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Council was due to make the final decision on devolution in July 2024. If agreed, it would be important to have the correct processes in place to advise the Directly Elected Leader on how the investment fund could be spent.
- It would be important to comply with the Local Government Accountability Framework and English Devolution Accountability Framework; this report set out how the Local Assurance Framework would sit within the Norfolk County Council governance structure, constitution, cabinet system and scrutiny function.

- Work would continue to look into how critical partners could be involved in the Devolution Deal including other Local Authorities, district councils, businesses and education partners. The report set out how stakeholders would be engaged with and how existing structures would be adapted:
 - An investment Board would be set up from the existing Norfolk Local Authority Leaders Group to help all district council leaders and Norfolk County Council shape investments through the Norfolk Investment Fund.
 - A Business Board would be set up as part of integration of the Local Enterprise Partnership functions into the Council.
 - An Employment and Skills Board would be set up to deploy the Adult Education Budget and shape adult education in Norfolk in a way which was tailored towards and help improve the skills of Norfolk Residents.
- The Local Assurance Framework set out how the Council would manage the investment fund and the approach to be taken to ensure value for money and alignment with the Council's Economic Strategy, the process for submitting bids and the decision making process.

12.2 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth noted that the business board and skills board would be a collaboration between Norfolk County Council and district councils to involve business leaders and education leaders in doing the best for the county's economy.

12.3 The Vice Chair added that the Local Assurance Framework should change where needed rather than creating new structures; existing ways of doing business would be used to reduce costs.

12.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to

1. Approve the draft Local Assurance Framework, (including the Boards information) as part of a devolution deal from government and agree to submit to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities on behalf of Norfolk County Council for a full and formal review.
2. Delegate authority to the Director for Growth & Investment to make minor amends, following feedback from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and agree that any material changes should be brought back to Cabinet.

12.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 3 of the report.

12.6 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 5 of the report.

13. **Norfolk's Devolution – Strategic Skills Plan and Readiness Conditions for the Adult Education Budget (now known as Adult Skills Funding)**

13.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the Adult Skills Funding element of the deal and our progress towards meeting the government's readiness conditions, which include the development of a Strategic Skills Plan, to

enable cabinet to decide for officers to submit this information to central government on behalf of Norfolk County Council.

- 13.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth introduced the report to Cabinet:
- Control of the adult education budget would enhance and support what the council could do with funds from Devolution. If the Devolution deal was agreed, the council would have control of a £12.85m budget currently controlled by Westminster and distributed between 170 organisations some of whom had little or no connection to Norfolk. Under Devolution, Norfolk County Council would be able to control and direct skills and training to where it is needed across the whole of the county including rural areas.
 - In other areas in the country where this funding has been devolved a 10% increase in residents entering adult education had been seen, which in Norfolk would mean an additional 1400 qualifications per year.
 - the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth highlighted paragraph 4.2 on page A8 of the report which said: "Control of the funding for Adult Skills enables Norfolk to make decisions about courses and training to better benefit Norfolk residents and businesses by developing and delivering targeted programmes to address the unique and very different challenges across such a large and devolved county."
- 13.2 The Chair noted that upskilling residents would help them to gain better paid jobs and attract new industries into Norfolk.
- 13.3 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that this report tied in with the delivery of the new O & M campus in Great Yarmouth.
- 13.4 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport discussed the new college being built in Gt Yarmouth; the skills gap in the county had been recognised and this change in funding would help people in the county.
- 13.5 The Chair noted that some people had to go out of county to gain skills needed for employment and some did not return. Providing these skills in Norfolk would therefore be beneficial for residents and for Norfolk's economy.
- 13.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to
1. Agree to accept Adult Skills Funding from central government, c£12m from August 2025, under a devolution deal from government.
 2. Support the collaborative and evidenced based approach undertaken across Norfolk to build and develop our Strategic Skills Plan.
 3. Approve the Strategic Skills Plan for submission to government on behalf of Norfolk County Council.
 4. Approve the Adult Skills readiness conditions' preparation for submission to government on behalf of Norfolk County Council.
 5. Delegate authority to the Director for Growth & Investment to make decisions for Adult Skills in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and in line with Norfolk County Council's constitutional scheme of delegation.

13.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 3 of the report.

13.8 **Alternative Options**

The Deal for Norfolk was contingent upon a County Council resolution to change the current leader and cabinet executive governance model to a 'directly elected leader and cabinet' governance model in December 2023.

If Council do not agree to change the model of governance, then the Adult Education Budget funding will not be received.

14. **Decisions made since last meeting**

- 14.1.1 Cabinet noted the delegated decisions which had been taken, as set out in the agenda

15 **Norfolk's Devolution - Norfolk Brownfield Housing Fund**

- 15.1 The Chair noted that appendix D of this report contained exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Cabinet agreed that the information in Appendix D should remain exempt, however concluded that they could make their decision on this report without discussing the contents of Appendix D.
- 15.2 Cabinet received the report setting out details of the Brownfield Housing Fund was set up by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to support the national housing agenda and the £7m funding offered via this as part of Norfolk's devolution deal to deliver 455-583 new homes.
- 15.3 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport welcomed the funding noting that if brownfield sites could be developed, green field sites would not have to be developed on.
- 15.4 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:
- this fund was designed to bring back neglected areas, support regeneration projects and boost local economies. The fund would unlock barriers to affordable housing generation and housing growth.
 - Brownfield sites were usually derelict sites and disused land which did not enhance communities and were often seen as blights which residents wanted dealt with.
 - This report had been presented to Infrastructure and Development Select Committee who recognised the benefits of the work.
 - The report showed the benefits that the County Deal could deliver when working together with district councils to benefit local residents.
- 15.5 The Vice-Chair agreed with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation that this would support working with district councils to increase funding from Government.
- 15.6 The Chair noted that this was the last year in the spending round but hoped that in the next spending review there would be more money for brownfield funding.
- 15.7 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Agree to accept Brownfield funding from central government, which is £6.98m over two years, to be spend on relevant projects from this longlist, subject to detailed assessment of applications, under a devolution deal from government.
2. Support the collaborative approach undertaken across Norfolk's councils to develop a draft pipeline of Brownfield projects.
3. Agree the submission of the draft Brownfield pipeline (longlist) to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on behalf of Norfolk County Council.
4. Delegate authority to the Director of Property to agree the final projects with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Innovation and in line with Norfolk County Council's constitutional scheme of delegation

15.8 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

Please see section 3 of the report.

15.9 Alternative Options

The Brownfield Housing Fund, as part of a Level 3 deal, was contingent upon a County Council resolution to change the current leader and cabinet executive governance model to a 'directly elected leader and cabinet' governance model on 23 July 2024.

If Council does not agree to change the model of governance, then the Council will not be able to proceed with a Level 3 agreement. In that case, the Brownfield Housing Fund would not be available to Norfolk.

16 Exclusion of the Public

- 16.1 Cabinet agreed not to exclude the public on the basis that they were able to proceed with the decisions in item 15 without discussing the contents of the exempt appendix.

17 Devolution - Norfolk Brownfield Housing Fund. Exempt appendix D

- 17.1 Cabinet noted the exempt appendix.

The meeting ended at 10:56

Chair of Cabinet

Cabinet
3 June 2024
Public & Local Member Questions

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| | Public Question Time |
| 6.1 | <p>Question from John Martin</p> <p>By what amounts, respectively, do the sums of (a) £46.118m (b) £50.156m and (c) £68.991m set out at paragraph 6.10.2 of the officers' report to the Cabinet meeting on 4 December 2023 in relation to the Norwich Western Link project require to be adjusted to take into account the relevant early termination payments due to Ferrovial Construction (UK) Ltd under the building contract dated 12 July 2021? (I am mindful that when the Saddlebow waste incinerator project was scrapped, the Council faced termination costs of over £33m.)</p> |
| | <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Cabinet and Full Council agreed to award the contract for the Norwich Western Link project in June 2021. In that report it was highlighted that:</p> <p>“It should be noted that by entering into the contract, NCC is not obliged to continue to the next stages of the contract, and during Stage One would only be paying the project development fees incurred by the contractor.”</p> <p>This has not changed, and there are no penalties for not progressing to stage 2 (construction) of the contract with Ferrovial Construction Ltd.</p> |
| | <p>Supplementary question from John Martin</p> <p>Eight months ago, the DfT confirmed a grant of £213m on the basis of the OBC and subject to conditions. Since then the Cabinet has stated several times that this figure may be greatly increased, even to the extent of covering the whole of the final cost of the project. (The present estimated cost is £274m.) Does the Cabinet still believe this and, if so, what is the basis for that belief?</p> |
| | <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The Outline Business Case approval letter provided by DfT in October 2023 set out that:</p> <p>“The Prime Minister’s announcement of Network North on 4th October included provision for increased funding for most existing Major Road Network and Large Local Major road schemes. These schemes, subject to successful business case approval, could benefit from an uplift in government contribution of their costs based on the Outline Business Case stage. We are currently considering the details of how this will apply to schemes and I will write to you again with further information on this, and details of any increase in the Department’s contribution, once the position is clear.”</p> |

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| | <p>Public Question Time</p> |
| | <p>This provides a clear indication that funding from Department for Transport (DfT) could be increased to reflect the full Outline Business Case value, which at that stage was £251m. This has not changed, however the guidance from DfT regarding Network North funding is still awaited.</p> <p>This was set out in the report to Cabinet in December 2023:</p> <p>“DfT have agreed to grant funding of £24.815 million in the current financial year (2023/24) following the OBC decision. In addition, it has also indicated that funding of up to 100% of the NWL (based on the OBC submission of £251.1m) is possible. This is subject to further guidance and agreement with DfT, which is yet to be provided.”</p> |
| 6.2 | <p>Question from Alex Catt</p> <p>With the increasing threat of the climate crisis, many people are looking for those ways in which they can make a personal difference, but we know that the best way to reduce emissions is system-wide change. Many people find it difficult to make the switch an electric vehicle because there is no cheap and easy option for EV charging for those without off-road parking. Plans to install public charging stations is a small step in the right direction but this is still inconvenient and costly, making this switch prohibitive. Will the cabinet explore accessible solutions for at-home EV charging, looking at schemes such as Kurbo Charge or Gul-e?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>Norfolk County Council adopted an Electric Vehicle strategy in 2021 which recognises that electric vehicles will play an important part in achieving our ambitious target for carbon neutrality. In this strategy we recognised that a key barrier to the uptake of electric vehicles is a lack of suitable charging infrastructure. To address this, we are working with the private sector who wish to deliver publicly available charging infrastructure in residential areas which focuses on providing the right solution in the right location.</p> <p>We have considered emerging technical solutions for home charging cables such as those you mention as part of this. However, once installed ongoing maintenance and inspection by the County Council would be required and should the homeowner sell or move then liability for removal and reinstatement of the footway would fall to the Highway Authority. Therefore, these are not options which we are currently considering.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Alex Catt</p> <p>The current policy on licences for at-home EV charging is still preventing many from making the switch to an electric vehicle as public charging points can be expensive and inconvenient, especially for specific groups in society, with some residents having licence applications rejected despite efforts to find solutions for at-home parking which does not involve any safety risks to those using the highway. Will the cabinet look again at this policy?</p> |

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| | Public Question Time |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste <p>The County Council has developed a fair but robust Electric Vehicle Charging Cable licencing process. This includes comprehensive assessment criteria as we were clear from the start that a proliferation of charging cables and differing standards of protection would not be welcome by residents and other highway users including those who use mobility aids to travel. We have struck a balanced approach that addresses the needs of residents alongside the roll out of public residential charge points. Where public charge points are installed or are going to be installed, we feel it right to limit the licencing of charging cables in that area but will always consider each case on its merits. We have worked with the providers of public charge points to ensure that they are accessible to all user groups.</p> <p>Where cable licences are granted, we require cable protection to be provided when they are in use and removed when not. This is a cost-effective solution for residents that does not require a permanent installation and has minimal impact on other highway users.</p> |

Cabinet
3 June 2024
Public & Local Member Questions

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| | Local Member Question Time |
| 7.1 | Question from Cllr Brian Watkins |
| | The latest announcement from the Conservative Government to reintroduce National Service would see £1.5bn diverted away from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2028. This announcement is concerning, comes without consultation and will surely be a detriment to the country's, and Norfolk's, long-term levelling-up ambitions. Can the leader reassure residents that this policy will not be to the detriment of the levelling-up of Norfolk, and what repercussions could the ending of this fund have for our long-term plans? |
| | Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance |
| | The levelling up of Norfolk is being pursued under a devolution deal, which is a bespoke arrangement with Government and will bring in £600m for the County to target Norfolk's own priorities, including investing in the skills we need and attracting and retaining key businesses. We remain positive that the next Government will want to honour this additional commitment to Norfolk, its residents and businesses. |
| | Second question from Cllr Brian Watkins |
| It is welcome to see this council looking at ways to maximise its income to offset potential cuts to services, the move by some of our district councils to introduce a windfall tax on second homes obviously has financial benefits for our own coffers. However, there are obstacles to this, can the Cabinet Member identify why some districts are against introducing this windfall tax? | |
| Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance | |
| I do not believe that it is appropriate for me to respond on behalf of the District Councils on this matter. | |
| 7.2 | Question from Cllr Dan Roper |
| | The Cabinet Members for Environment & Waste and Highways Infrastructure & Transport recently received an email from St Faiths Parish Council highlighting concerns about peak time queues, traffic management and inconvenience for residents at the North Norwich recycling centre. Indeed, on occasions it is reported that the traffic queue has impacted on traffic using the A140 roundabout for the Broadland Northway. Could the Cabinet Members please outline what action will be taken to address these concerns. |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport |
| | An email has been received from Horsham & Newton St. Faiths Parish Council which has highlighted concerns relating to traffic congestion in the vicinity of the North Norwich recycling centre. I can confirm that this matter is being reviewed by both highways and waste officers to establish whether there are reasonable measures that can be put in place to mitigate the concerns raised, in the interim, until a booking |

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| | Local Member Question Time |
| | system is introduced later this year. In addition, our site operators have already provided extra staff and signage to improve traffic flow and reduce queuing times. |
| 7.3 | Question from Cllr Rob Colwell |
| | Since this council changed the policy of weed spraying of verges in 2023 to once a year, as part of a cost cutting exercise, many residents have expressed concern about the scruffy nature of their street or estate. Residents once again are feeling that they are paying more council tax for less services, will the council consider individual requests for a second spray if any initial spray does not suffice? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste |
| | The weed spraying policy was changed last year with cross party support. The change in policy reduced the amount of weedkiller used on highway by the Council by around 50%, which benefits the environment. The application of weed killer is most effective when there are weeds to spray. As such, the planned annual countywide application will start in June. If, after this treatment has been applied and given time to become effective, weeds are still present, these can be reported to the Council in the usual way. An assessment can then be made to determine whether further remedial action is required. |
| | Second question from Cllr Rob Colwell |
| | The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has stopped free parking for staff. Local residents have expressed concerns about increased parking in residential areas nearby. Please can the requests of local residents for a consultation on expanding the parking permit area of Springwood be undertaken as soon as possible? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport |
| | As a Member of the County Council this is a matter which should be raised with your Highways Engineer in the first instance. |
| 7.4 | Question from Cllr David Sayers |
| | Given the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, which establishes that a failure to address climate change adequately violates Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, how does this Cabinet intend to incorporate this legal precedent into NCC's climate action plans and policies and what specific steps will be taken to ensure NCC fulfils its climate obligations while upholding human rights standards? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste |
| | The court found that the Swiss Government had failed to implement a carbon budget towards limiting its greenhouse gas emissions. As you will know the UK has implemented such a budget as part of its legal commitment to reach net zero by 2050, and the council's policy is to use its powers, influence and partnerships towards supporting the county's low carbon development in line with the UK-wide target and trajectory. |
| | Second question from Cllr David Sayers |

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| | I have received numerous concerns from residents concerning rat running along Lynnsport Way, Winter Nellis Way and Marsh Lane. This practice disrupts the community and endangers residents and cyclists. Notably, a young girl was previously knocked over and seriously injured by a vehicle. Given these serious concerns, could you advise on measures the council can take to address this issue and ensure safety? Specifically, what immediate actions can be taken to mitigate these dangers? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport |
| | As a Member of the County Council this is a matter which should be raised with your Highways Engineer in the first instance to see if any appropriate measures can be funded through your Local Member Fund. |
| 7.5 | Question from Cllr John Crofts |
| | Residents of Pott Row along with my fellow Councillor, Rob Colwell, have been monitoring E. coli levels in water pouring out of manholes in the area since January last year. Locals have recently reported that themselves, family members, and their pets are falling ill, citing E. coli poisoning. Just what does this council intend to do in order to protect the health and wellbeing of Norfolk's residents from serious waterborne illnesses both from an infrastructure and health perspective? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste |
| | Thank you for highlighting this issue and sorry to hear of the local issues. This is a matter for Environmental Health in the first instance so I would suggest you request that Cllr Colwell raise this issue with your District Council. |
| 7.6 | Question from Cllr Mike Sands |
| | The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport has now taken to himself all of the decision making powers over roads, since when the number of delays, amounts of disruption and complaints from residents have increased considerably with responses from him that are regarded as complacent and tin eared. Does the Cabinet Member intend to continue to defend everything he does or will he accept his views of his performance are significantly different from many others in the county and take action to improve? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport |
| | The Constitution of Norfolk County Council is quite clear that Cabinet Member has always had the authority to make these decisions. There is always the opportunity for Members to be involved in the consultation process, bearing in mind that the Cabinet Member must still make decisions in a timely manner to ensure scheme delivery. In terms of Norwich specifically, Norwich City Council is represented on the Transport for Norwich steering group, along with other relevant groups, which ensures its voice and views are heard. |
| | Supplementary question from Cllr Mike Sands |
| | The Transport for Norwich schemes paid for by the Transforming Cities fund that helped create the recent deluge of disruption roadworks in Norwich has brought |

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| | <p>some improvements. Transforming Cities funding was intended to be Transformational. How has the Cabinet Member transformed transport in Norwich rather than just made a few expensive changes?</p> |
| | <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The Transforming Cities fund has been transformational by making significant improvements across Norwich.</p> <p>Highlights include the recently completed Heartsease Roundabout scheme that has transformed that area of the city for people who walk and cycle by making it safer and much easier to navigate, something that has been needed for many, many years.</p> <p>The introduction of the very successful and popular Beryl Bike scheme and the trial of e-scooters has given people more choice of sustainable transport options.</p> <p>The transformation of St Stephens Street with the introduction of sawtooth bus stops has enabled passengers to experience a better waiting environment and has reduced delays to buses.</p> <p>Tombland has been reinvigorated with outdoor seating areas and a reduction of the dominance of vehicular traffic.</p> <p>The bus journey time savings from Transforming Cities schemes has levered in additional investment from both bus operators and the government, which has resulted in the 70 new zero emission electric buses in and around Norwich.</p> <p>These are just some examples with more to come, and when looked at in conjunction with the Bus Service Improvement Plan, the people of Norwich now have more choice of safe and reliable transport options.</p> |
| 7.7 | <p>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare</p> |
| | <p>Can the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing confirm what data does Norfolk Public Health have on children who present in primary care settings like GP surgeries with symptoms of malnutrition?</p> |
| | <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>Thank you for your question. As you will know from the Public Health Strategy, Norfolk County Council is working with the NHS to access data in this and other areas to help support the Health Inequality work, which the whole Integrated Care System want to see happen in Norfolk and Waveney. The most recent local child measurement data (2022-23) which is commissioned by Norfolk Public Health and measures heights and weights of ALL children in state schools at Reception and Year 6 shows that 0.8% of Reception children and 1% of Year 6 children are in the category of 'underweight'. This is significantly lower than national averages for both year groups.</p> <p>There are very few NHS admissions for Children and Young People in Norfolk (around 10 per year) recorded with malnutrition. Sadly the causes are largely</p> |

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| | associated with long term conditions, which include childhood cancers, congenital heart disease, cystic fibrosis and cerebral palsy. |
| 7.8 | Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton |
| | Has a condition survey been carried out on the Music House and site of the Jurnet's Bar and what work at what cost will need to be completed before the administration's policy of terminating the repairing lease on those properties can be achieved? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation |
| | Norfolk County Council has terminated the lease and returned the property to the freeholder (Norwich City Council). Discussions are ongoing regarding any dilapidations payable. |
| 7.9 | Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby |
| | Norwich remains an economic powerhouse for the East. Will the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth ensure its potential and status are recognised and retained in the emerging new economic strategy? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth |
| | Thank you for your question. Our new economic strategy is an exciting plan for growth to ensure that all parts of Norfolk – urban and rural – can reach their potential. We have been working with hundreds of stakeholders to develop the strategy which will help businesses from sole traders to multinational businesses. This has included two workshops in every district including Norwich, with businesses, education, the voluntary sector and other stakeholders. The strategy will outline steps to boost skills and bring investment into the county as well as measures to help our existing businesses grow. Norwich as our only city and the capital of Norfolk is of course important to the strategy and myself and the Economic team at the county council will continue to promote and support all the areas of the Norwich economy from the shops and market traders to the new economy areas such as gaming and finance support, but so are Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Thetford, as well as our market towns, our villages and rural areas. Norwich and Norfolk deserve recognition for the financial contribution they make to UK PLC and I hope you will join me in promoting this fact and Norfolk business. |
| 7.10 | Question from Cllr Colleen Walker |
| | Despite the Leader's stated intention to get improvements and one off sweeteners to the County Deal for Norfolk, the calling of the General Election and departure of Michael Gove mean there have been no improvements or changes achieved by the Leader. Can she explain why she has been so unsuccessful? |
| | Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance |

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| | <p>Improvements to the Devolution Deal already achieved include: a revised election date so we can align with the county council elections in May 2025, extra upfront funding for projects such as the QE Hospital in Kings Lynn, Norwich Western Link funding and the O&M Campus in Great Yarmouth. We have been negotiating several other projects across Norfolk, but no further announcements can be made with the General Election in progress.</p> <p>We remain positive that the next Government will want to honour this additional commitment to Norfolk, its residents and businesses.</p> |
| 7.11 | <p>Question from Cllr Steve Morphew</p> |
| | <p>It is now clear COVID-19 recovery funds put into business risk reserves are actually being spent on day to day services which was not why government gave the council the money. Can the Cabinet Member for Finance confirm what other earmarked reserves intended for specific projects have been diverted to fill day to day spending gaps?</p> |
| | <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</p> |
| | <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>I do not agree with the assertion that COVID-19 recovery funds have been used for purposes other than they were intended. The Council has applied COVID-19 funding in line with requirements, and the use of this funding has been reported in previous financial years both in the financial monitoring to Cabinet, and in returns to Government.</p> <p>More broadly, the County Council holds earmarked reserves for a range of purposes as detailed within the budget reports to Full Council (see page 225). As part of the annual budget planning process, and ongoing financial monitoring during the year, a detailed review of each of the years within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), and planned use of reserves is considered. As I have frequently been on record as stating, despite agreeing a robust and balanced budget for the forthcoming year, reserves are being utilised to ensure that services are maintained. The planned use of reserves is detailed within the Budget papers and in the MTFS approved by Full Council, which shows a planned reduction in non-school general balances and earmarked reserves of 36.72%, from £175.232m in March 2023 to a forecast £110.880m in March 2028. In respect of the 2024-25 Budget, the earmarked reserves and provisions are considered by the Director of Strategic Finance to be adequate and appropriate to reflect the risks they are intended to cover.</p> <p>As part of prudent financial planning, the Council seeks to make contributions to reserves wherever possible as part of the year-end accounts closure process. As reported in the 2023-24 outturn report to Cabinet (page 68), service reserves and provisions (excluding the Dedicated Schools Grant reserve) are £172.636m, subject to any final year end audit adjustments. The additional use of reserves and provisions during 2023-24 to support a balanced outturn position is detailed within the outturn report (see Table 1 on page 74) and amounts to £8.706m. When considering reserves, there is a balance to be struck between ensuring that the Council's reserves and provisions are adequate, while also ensuring that council taxpayers'</p> |

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| | contributions are not held unnecessarily. In this context, it is considered that the Council has adequate financial reserves to manage the delivery of services and the proposed savings in the financial years covered by the approved MTFS. |
| | Supplementary question from Cllr Steve Morpew |
| | Neither the Cabinet Member or Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance attended Scrutiny to allow detailed examination of the budget position for next year despite the date being known well in advance and on the budget timetable approved by Cabinet. That's really not good enough, is it? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance |
| | Cllr James attended as a representative of the administration as both myself and Cllr Peck had existing commitments, made before this Scrutiny meeting. |
| 7.12 | Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp |
| | Access to doctors surgeries in Lynn's deprived town communities, is critical. When St James' Surgery announced plans, in 2015, to move out to affluent South Wootton, the case was established for a replacement town GP surgery. The new Nar Ouse Surgery Hub is being built. It will house physio and maternity outpatients. But the NHS says there will be no doctors. South, West and Town Centre patients now have to travel the tortuous journey across Lynn to Wootton, after St James moved in March. Does Cabinet agree doctors in the hub are essential to tackle Lynn's health inequalities? |
| | Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing |
| | Thank you for your question. As you know Norfolk County Council does not have responsibility for NHS primary care services. The provision of this service is the responsibility of the Norfolk and Waveney NHS who I understand have received approval for the business case from NHS England. Of course I fully support easy access to local health services for all of Norfolk's residents. You will see that Norfolk County Council has provided a new bus service that will cover the Primary Care Hub on Nar Ouse Way and the new St James Medical Practice in South Wootton. |