

Cabinet
10 May 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

Public Question Time	
6.1	<p>Question from Dale Rea What plans do you have to introduce LTN's (Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) into Norfolk's Towns and Cities, where and when?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The Transport for Norwich Strategy sets out that the County Council will work with local communities, elected members and stakeholders to reduce the impact of unnecessary traffic in neighbourhoods and provide connections that meet local needs and support active travel. This will involve the investigation of different measures based around the principle of Healthy Streets, that could include Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, School Streets and lower speed limits. This work is at a very early stage and there are no firm plans at the current time.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Dale Rea Will we be duly consulted and will we be given all the relevant facts?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The development of any scheme such as a Low Traffic Neighbourhood, in the future, anywhere in Norfolk, would need to be in consultation with local elected representatives, the local community and other local stakeholders.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Anna Sanfield I am pleased that the council has had and continues to have such tremendous success with Better Broadband for Norfolk, particularly within the city itself. This rollout is not only safe and fast but also allows for residents to enjoy connections which are well within capacity for both working from home and enjoying leisure time. However, I am very concerned about the increasing numbers of planning applications for ugly, disquieting and over-dominant telecommunications monopoles, which further blight our beautiful, heritage county. For example, how is the council going to protect the stunning view from Mousehold Heath from so many masts that are at the very minimum, at least 13m high?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Firstly, please can I thank you for your positive feedback on the incredibly hard work carried out by the better broadband for Norfolk team to ensure that Norfolk has the communication network it needs for the 21st century. With regards to the concerns going forward, I think the masts you are referring to are those being installed by telecoms companies largely driven by the expansion of the 5g network. These are matters for the relevant district council as local planning authority rather than the County Council.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Judith Lubbock Have there been additional costs to the original £6.1m of digging up St Stephens again, the second time in 2 years, to install essential bus shelters and associated cabling to install 'real time information' to them? An explanation is needed to bus passengers, businesses, pedestrians, cyclists and taxis who have all been very badly affected by both sets of works.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The costs of installing the bus shelters and electronic information screens in St Stephens Street is covered within the original £6.1m budget allocated to the scheme. The paving</p>

where the shelters are being installed was laid in such a way to minimise the extent of works needed to install the shelters at this later date. I would like to thank the bus passengers, businesses, pedestrians, cyclists and taxis for their patience as we complete this project.

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Local Member Questions

	Member Question Time
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Saul Penfold We're still feeling the effects of covid on the education of children nationally across the country and in this county. Figures from the 2021/22 academic year portrayed a worrying situation where one in 50 pupils across Norfolk's schools are absent for more than half of their school time. What work is being undertaken to identify these 'lost children' and to ensure they receive the education they deserve?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services In response to learning from the Covid-19 Pandemic, Norfolk Children's Services began work to review its response to school attendance in 2021. School attendance is a key priority for us locally as well as nationally and we have benefitted from engaging with the Department for Education and other LAs to develop a strategic approach to tackling poor school attendance.</p> <p>The Attendance Strategy which was formally launched in March this year and has been developed to help the Local Authority, schools, settings and other services understand what we need to do to work in a more coherent way, making the best use of resources available, in order to ensure that all children and young people can make the most of the opportunities provided by attending school. This strategy is a vital contribution to our aim of supporting young people to flourish in Norfolk and will impact almost every team working with or supporting children and young people in Norfolk.</p> <p>The strategy includes 4 key priorities in order to make the required improvements.</p> <p>Priority 1: Relationships & Communication Priority 2: Effective Intervention Priority 3: Systems & Data Priority 4: Workforce development</p> <p>An Action Plan was developed in July 2022 to address the priorities identified within the Strategy. Work started in September 2022 within 4 workstreams aligned to the strategic priorities. These workstreams are made up of professionals from across Children's Services and as well as other agencies and meet regularly to deliver the priorities. A School Attendance Strategic Board has been established which meets monthly to monitor the progress of the Strategy and Action Plan; Membership includes representation from across Children's Services.</p> <p>We are working with colleagues from a wide variety of services in Norfolk including the voluntary and community sector to deliver this strategy in a comprehensive and effective manner. The critical importance of school attendance is something that we want all practitioners and teams to prioritise in their work with families. Some key achievements to date have been:</p>

- Awareness raising activities across the Partnership including a formal launch of the Strategy endorsed by the Executive Director for Children’s Services and the Chair of the NSCP.
- In order to support practitioners with this area of work, the Attendance Team now run weekly attendance surgeries that provide anyone working with a child where school attendance is of concern can receive support and advice; further information about the surgeries can be accessed [here](#).
- Support for schools through the development of a self-evaluation framework, whole school training and attendance networks.
- Work with school leaders to develop a system for gathering live attendance data and nationally as a critical partner to the work the DfE is doing nationally regarding attendance data.

7.2 Question from Cllr Sharon Blundell

In June this year, the Director of Adult Social Care will take up a year-long seconded post at the CQC. At a time where adult social care is facing substantial financial and capacity pressures, can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care ensure me that arrangements have been made to ensure the directorate will continue to function and the priorities of the directorate will not be affected by this change?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Thank you for your question.

I can confirm that Tom McCabe, our Head of Paid Service, has put in motion arrangements to ensure that Norfolk’s DASS role is appropriately covered with an interim appointment, and members will receive further information in due course. I certainly recognise the need for clear leadership and would say the Adult Social Care Department has a strong leadership team to ensure the services continues to function well.

7.3 Question from Cllr Brian Watkins

Your election as Leader of the County Council will undoubtedly create great interest about how the new Administration might differ from the one which went before. What are the first things that you will be looking to change as Leader?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance

Thank you for the question. I was very proud to be chosen to lead the conservative Group and therefore become leader of this Council. I will continue to deliver the strong track record of this Administration and tackle the issues facing the council over the next two years. I look forward to working in a collaborative way with all Members in this chamber and partner organisations across the County.

7.4 Question from Cllr David Sayers

How does the cabinet member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention respond to the hundreds of West Norfolk residents who queued from as early as 5am in Kings Lynn, hoping to register with an NHS dentist. Does he agree with the comments of Shawn Charlwood, British Dental Association who said, “they remind me of images you used to see in the Soviet Bloc when people used to queue up for food”?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Thank you for your question. As you are already aware Norfolk County Council does not have responsibility for the provision of dental health services in Norfolk. Dentistry is an important part of Norfolk's Health provision, and I personally would like to see better access for residents.

7.5 **Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone**
A consultation paper was published by the council recently which suggests a reduction in spending for SEN Independent Schools from just over £42m a year to less than £4m a year by 2029. Many children rely on these schools to give them the best opportunity in life and education. What impact assessment has been done on the students currently enrolled in these schools, given that many SEND children will suffer disproportionately from disruption caused by changing schools?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The reduction in funding for the independent specialist school sector for Norfolk children and young people, with Education Health and Care Plans, is part of our Local First Inclusion programme. This is the ambitious plan that has been negotiated with the DfE to secure £70million revenue funding from DfE alongside £35million from NCC to address the historic underfunding and resulting cumulative deficit to the 'High Needs Block' budget. This major revenue investment is complemented by additional capital funding from both DfE and NCC to continue our expansion of specialist SEN provision, literally building on the recent success of opening 3 new special schools in Norfolk since 2021. The Local First Inclusion programme sets out, over a six year period, an ambition to achieve greater local mainstream inclusion for children with special educational needs and disabilities whilst expanding state-funded specialist resource bases and special schools; in excess of 1000 specialist places will be achieved when all current expansion and new provision is completed. This enables us to reduce our reliance on the independent sector. Historically we have had an over-reliance on the independent sector and, in the main, these schools do not compare favourably to the state-funded sector in Norfolk when taking into account funding levels and outcomes as judged by Ofsted. Norfolk state-funded schools are almost exclusively judged Good and Outstanding and are, on average, half the cost per pupil in comparison. However, we have stated that the majority of children currently placed within the independent sector schools will continue within their placements. It will be new placements that will be prioritised within the new state-funded specialist provision. We are working closely with the independent sector schools and are grateful to those we have had initial discussions with for their approach which has been typified by a spirit of joint working to navigate this transition.

Second question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone

What impact assessment on health and wellbeing the County Council carried out as part of its statutory response to the application for the offshore wind development consent order by Orstead?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Thank you for your question.

As part of the County Council's statutory response to the submitted Development Consent Order (DCO) in 2018, all the relevant services and teams within the County Council were consulted on the applicant's Environmental Statement, including Public Health. No health-related matters were raised by the County Council at that time, and it

	<p>was accepted that more detailed issues were the responsibility of other statutory bodies such as District Councils who have responsibility for environmental health.</p>
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell The Norfolk hospitality, care and healthcare, plus farming industries continue to face a recruitment and staffing crisis following Brexit. What efforts will this new administration make to lobby the government for further relaxation of rules to allow vital EU workers to return and grow the Norfolk economy?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth We continue to develop the skills of our Norfolk workers to meet the present and future needs of industry. We are working with providers to ensure that the needs of business are met in the design and delivery of the training that they provide. The County Deal offers Norfolk the opportunity for greater responsibility for the Adult Education Budget which would enable us to further focus the needs of Norfolk businesses on skills and training provision</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Lucy Shires Years of Government neglect has caused a GP shortage crisis leaving people unable to see a local doctor when they need to. Do you agree with the Liberal Democrats that people should have a guaranteed right to a GP appointment within one week?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing Thank you for your question. As you already know Norfolk County Council does not have responsibility for NHS primary care services. As Cabinet Member for Public Health I fully support easy access to local general practice services for all of Norfolk's residents</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr David Sayers Do you believe that free school meals should be a basic right for all children who need them, and if so, do you support the expansion of free school meals provision to every child whose family is in receipt of Universal Credit or with a low-income?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services I welcome that nationally there continues to be research and policy considerations to help meet the needs of children and families who need it, particularly at a time when cost of living is affecting many children and families. Based on current free school meal criteria the Council seeks to encourage every family who is currently entitled to free school meals to access this support and indeed 91% of eligible families do so. Norfolk County Council has supported the provision of cost of living support to families eligible for free school meals over the last 3 years, initially during the pandemic and now as part of wider cost of living support. Children in reception, year 1 or year 2 are already entitled to free school meals regardless of household income. As a council we support nearly 30,000 children across our primary and secondary schools who are eligible for means tested free school meals, at a weekly cost of approximately £450,000. We believe that all households in the County should be able to access hardship support, in a variety of ways, should they need it. This is why we have developed a hardship programme that has helped over 31,000 households the last 6 months alone and which will continue for a further 12 months. In addition, there are now 17 community supermarkets rising to 25 by the end of the Summer, providing affordable and low cost food for families to purchase.</p>

7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb</p> <p>The “Better Together, For Norfolk” strategy commits to “improve the real-life experiences of people in Norfolk” by “empowering” people and communities and of being “collaborative” with individuals and willing partners.</p> <p>The Local First Inclusion Update leaves out any mention of how parent carers and families will be involved as the programme is implemented.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services confirm what plans does the Council have to enable the families of children and young people with SEND to give input directly to the Council’s new teams that are being appointed, about their experiences and whether meaningful improvements are being felt</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services</p> <p>The Local First Inclusion programme sets out, over a six year period, an ambition to achieve greater local mainstream inclusion for children with special educational needs and disabilities whilst expanding state-funded specialist resource bases and special schools; these core elements of the programme have been informed by the co-production carried out with parents/carers, young people and the professionals who support them as part of our Area SEND Strategy. It is true that due to the nature of the negotiations with the DfE, as part of their ‘safety valve’ process, NCC were not able to co-produce the detail of the Local First Inclusion programme with parents/carers, young people or school leaders. We have acknowledged this previously and, now that the Secretary of State decision is in the public domain, now will be implementing the programme in a way that ensures engagement with parents/carers and professionals in the way we do across all of our SEND improvement work. We have recently carried out high level briefings to Family Voice Norfolk and to the multi-agency professional group who oversee the Area SEND Strategy. We have provided a commitment to work together on the next stages of Local First Inclusion and will do this through existing mechanisms, for example the ‘Making Sense of SEND’ events held regularly around the county, and assisted through the dedicated participation resource that we are planning to enable us to enhance our co-production with children and families during implementation and delivery.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby</p> <p>Will the Leader confirm that the Council continues to support the Nourishing Norfolk Network?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p> <p>Thank you for your question</p> <p>Norfolk County Council will continue to support the Community Foundation to deliver the Nourishing Norfolk Initiative across the County, having invested £500k last year to support the creation of 15 food hubs across the County. NCC’s arms reach company, Norse, will continue to provide warehousing and logistics for a centralised deliver hub.</p> <p>Over the next 12 months the county council has committed £800k of funding, through the governments Household Support Fund, to provide emergency food support to households, via the community food hubs across the County.</p> <p>So as you can see from all I have outlined NCC is and will continue to support this initiative.</p>

