

Cabinet
Minutes of the Meeting held on 04 December 2023 2023
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 10:12am

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 Fabian Eagle	Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
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 Greg Peck	Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance
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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 meeting started late due to technical difficulties which also affected live-streaming at the start of the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

2 Minutes from the meeting held on 06 November 2023

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 06 November 2023 as an accurate record.

3 Declaration of Interests

- 3.1 No interests were 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

6.1.1 Richard Hawker asked a supplementary question:

- Mr Hawker noted that the response to his question stated that if the Norwich Western Link were built then were built that 40% of HGVs who still use the B1535 would continue to use it, which was 130 lorries continuing to use the B1535. Assuming this estimate was correct, which had been calculated with no surveys, Mr Hawker felt that the current properties on the B1535 would gain little benefit from the Norwich Western Link as Norfolk County Council would allow businesses in the area to expand and increase lorry movements. He therefore asked how the Norwich Western Link could be claimed to be taking HGVs off of unsuitable roads.

6.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport replied that the response to Mr Hawker's first question explained that there would be 330 HGVs using the road per day with 60% of these being re-routed to use the Norwich Western Link. Necessary deliveries and other journeys would continue to be required by the communities in this area and he understood that the remaining 40% were of this type. The mitigation in place set out in the report would include an HGV ban except for access on B1535 so that as much HGV traffic as possible would be re-routed.

7 Local Member Questions/Issues

7.1 None were received.

8. Consideration of a County Deal for Norfolk

8.1.1 Cabinet received the report summarising the key elements of the Deal (including further enhancements to the Deal negotiated during 2023) and setting out the options for taking forward the Deal for Norfolk.

8.1.2 The Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The previous Leader of the Council, Cllr Andrew Proctor, had signed an in-principal County Deal. This report set out four options for Cabinet to choose from to recommend to Council.
 - Option 1: would accept the in-principal deal which was signed by Cllr Proctor. This would lead to an election of the Directly Elected leader in 2024.
 - Option 2: would delay the election of a Directly Elected Leader to 2025 in line with the Norfolk County Council election.
 - Option 3: would ask Council to go back to Government and re-negotiate for a level 2 deal.
 - Option 4: that the Council did not want to engage with a County Deal at this time.
- Since her time in the role of Leader, the Chair had been engaging with the

Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to see if the deal could be strengthened. This had resulted in the addition of the option to delay the election to 2025, which would save the Council money by not putting on an extra election and provide extra time to inform the public of the changes the deal would bring.

- Some changes seen in the last seven months were funding for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, funding awarded for the Norwich Western Link and the development of the Operations & Maintenance Campus in Great Yarmouth.
- Michael Gove MP had committed that if Norfolk and Suffolk signed up to a level 3 deal they could move straight to a level 4 deal. This would give the Directly Elected Leader a "seat at the table" with the other 10 devolved areas such as Manchester, giving the County access to money which would make a difference for the people of Norfolk.
- The business community and residents were not worried about the prospect of a Directly Elected Leader; someone elected by the people of Norfolk would have the responsibility to put their mandate in place. The Council would be able to strengthen its constitution and governance to ensure the leader will do what they say they will and what the Council expects.
- The Directly Elected Leader would be responsible for Adult Social Services, Childrens Services as well as understanding the statutory duties of the County Council.
- The level 2 devolution deal would only offer additional money in the form of the adult education budget of £12m. This would ensure that the council had control of the budget to get skills in place for jobs needed by the County, but there was nothing else in the deal.
- The Mayoral deal needed all districts to sign up, however, not all districts in Norfolk were prepared to do so. Since declining the deal in 2016, Norfolk County Council had missed out on millions of pounds of funding.
- Some district councils had asked about a County Combined Authority. This type of deal required unitary and upper tier authorities to combine; since Norfolk County Council was the only upper tier authority in Norfolk this was not an option.
- Letters had been received from stakeholders including the University of East Anglia, Federation of Small Businesses, the Health Service and local Colleges voicing their support for the level 3 deal as they could see the benefits it would bring.

8.2.1 The Chair **proposed** that Cabinet agree **recommendation option 2** set out in the report. She felt that holding the election in 2025 would give time for further consultation, allow the Council to get its constitution right, allow time for further scrutiny, give time to communicate the change to the general public and time to look for brownfield sites to develop with the incoming money. The Chair felt the people of Norfolk would not forgive the Council if they didn't take the deal, and not taking it would put the Council at the back of the queue of influence in Westminster.

8.2.2 The Vice Chair **seconded** the Chair's proposal to agree **recommendation option 2**:

- The additional powers negotiated as part of recommendation option 2 were significant and it would be beneficial for the election to be in line with Norfolk County Council local elections.

- It would also be important to make people aware of the relevance of devolution to the county and to themselves. The election of the Directly Elected Leader would assist in this.
- Moving forward with recommendation option 2 would allow an immediate move to level 4 to allow the Council to deal with Government on the same terms as other devolved councils such as Manchester and Teeside. 95% of taxes were raised in Westminster; with all funding decisions held centrally it was difficult to deliver services without having to run a chain of prescribed funding bids and this would allow the council to move away from this.
- The County Deal would allow the Council to make decisions in the best interest of the people of Norfolk.

8.3 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted that recommendation option 2 would provide substantial powers for Norfolk, allow the council to meet the objectives of Better Together for Norfolk, bring more money into the county, and give direct access to ministers via the Directly Elected Leader. It was important to ensure Norfolk claimed its fair share of investment so it could invest in housing, transport and infrastructure. As one of the first rural devolution deals it also gave money for building on brownfield land, alongside funding for the Operations & Maintenance Campus in Great Yarmouth, the Nar Ouse regeneration project, building more affordable homes, devolution of the adult education budget, funding to plan roads, revenue funding to accelerate review of transport plans and quantify carbon reduction, among others. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport therefore felt this was a deal for the people of Norfolk.

8.4 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that the County Deal was about providing a better service for the residents of Norfolk and supported the Chair's proposal. The new investment fund would drive growth, and take forward priorities to give the opportunity to lever additional private funding. There would also be funding to build new homes on brownfield sites. There would be many benefits to communities in Norfolk.

8.5 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth supported the Chair's proposal; this would give Norfolk an opportunity to support levelling up. Norfolk was a gross contributor to the country's GDP and had a self-sustaining economy, for example, producing its own power, developing new technologies and growing its own food, and this gave the opportunity to support the development of all types of business in Norfolk.

8.6 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care welcomed the Chair's steer on the option which she felt was best; having an election in 2025, at the same time of Norfolk County Council election, would encourage people to think about what they want from a Directly Elected Leader as they also thought about what they want from their local councillor. She noted that senior officers took lots of time drawing up business cases to seek funding for projects; with the funding already available they could focus on providing services for residents.

8.7 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships agreed with the proposal for recommendation option 2; having both elections at the same time would be clearer for the public. It would also save on costs for the Council. Devolution of the adult education budget would be welcome to allow the Council

to plan ahead for the skills needed in Norfolk rather than going with the themes dictated by Government.

- 8.8 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention noted that Council had voted in favour of the principal of the County Deal. He supported the proposal for recommendation option 2 to line up the election for the Directly Elected Leader with 2025 elections. He believed there were risks involved, such as governance weaknesses in the format proposed by Government however the Head of Legal Services had said she did not feel this is the case and he was therefore happy to support the proposal.
- 8.9 The Chair felt it would be important to get the message out to the public to help them understand the role of the Leader of the Council in the run up to the elections. Business leaders were clear that they wanted the Council to do this and it was important to listen to them. The Chair stated that any government at Westminster must be careful to honour the agreement, or it would send the wrong message to residents.
- 8.10 The Cabinet, recognising that the change in governance would be a matter for the Full Council, **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** to Council:

Recommendation option 2

- a) recognise the work carried out during 2023 to consult with the public, inform Members and prepare plans in relation to the 'in-principle' County Deal brought to Council in January this year.
- b) commend the work undertaken by the Leader and Officers to secure additional benefits for the Norfolk County Deal and resolves that the Deal should be accepted.
- c) resolve that the election for the Directly Elected Leader should be held alongside the county council elections in May 2025 to enable the widest possible engagement with the electorate.
- d) agree that the resolution adopting the new governance arrangements must be passed by the Full Council Meeting on 23 July 2024 to facilitate that election date.
- e) agree on that same date to resolve to change the title by which the elected mayor of the authority is to be known to the alternative title of Elected Leader as the Council agrees that this better represents the role and expectations of an individual regarding the proper leadership of the County.

8.11 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

8.12 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 7 of the report

9. Norwich Western Link Update

- 9.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the Norwich Western Link project.

- 9.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:
- There had been good news since the last report on the Norwich Western Link, as the Department for Transport had confirmed their agreement of the outline business case.
 - Improving infrastructure was important to people in the county to improve traffic issues and help support housing growth.
 - The Council would have discussions with the Department for Transport in the coming weeks and months with a view for them to increase their funding contribution. The additional funding contribution would be welcomed as it would decrease the local funding requirement to get the road built.
 - The report set out the next steps in the project. Following an update on the business case officers were updating the planning documents ready for its submission in 2024.
 - The report set out the draft carbon emissions for the project; the project was now forecast to produce positive carbon emissions. This was due to revised Transport Analysis Guidance from the Department for Transport which would apply to all road projects. Work was underway to reduce carbon emissions with wider transport interventions such as by replacing diesel buses with electric ones and supporting people to change to sustainable transport where possible.
 - It was important to invest in infrastructure improvement for all journeys to tackle traffic problems and help communities cope with housing and job growth, reduce congestion, improve air quality and remove traffic from local road networks.
 - The Norwich Western Link was a priority infrastructure project for the county and along with help from the Government, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport was looking forward to moving the project forward to achieve benefits for the people of Norfolk.
 - The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport moved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 9.2 The Vice Chair was pleased with the Government's commitment to the project; the Department for Transport would grant £24.8m in the current financial year so that payments made so far by Norfolk County Council would be repaid. Indications were that the Department for Transport may fund up to 100%. In this case, the total contribution from the Council would be around £22.9m, which is less than originally planned. The length of time that the Department for Transport took to make its decision unfortunately caused the costs to increase however the Vice Chair was pleased that they had agreed to commit to the project.
- 9.3 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care welcomed the opportunity for Government to increase its funding commitment so that the people of Norfolk could receive the road and relieve residents of rat running with a reduced impact on taxpayers.
- 9.4 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste supported the report. There had been a 26% increase in sales of electric vehicles recently and he pointed out the importance of thinking of the impact of the road when the project became live in the future. Residents had said they were pleased that blue light services would have a quicker route.

- 9.5 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships felt this would be welcomed by the people in her division; people in Lower Easton and nearby areas suffered from long tailbacks in peak times and this would benefit them.
- 9.6 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted that the council had campaigned hard for this and other infrastructure schemes to be taken forward so it was important for the county to benefit from this investment from Government.
- 9.7 The Chair was aware of the environmental concerns but pointed out that the council had a robust climate strategy in place. Through this strategy many initiatives were being implemented to reduce the council's impact on the climate. However, roads still needed to be built for the county's future prosperity.
- 9.8 Cabinet **RESOLVED**:
1. To **approve** the continued delivery of the Norwich Western Link project.
 2. To delegate to the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services (CES), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, the authority to agree the finalised planning application and submit it to the Local Planning Authority.
 3. To recommend to Council, at its January 2024 meeting, an increased budget of £273.9m (compared with the £251.0m included in the OBC Addendum, that was reported to Cabinet on 4 July 2022), and an increase to the local contribution of £22.9m, as set out in Section 6 of the report.
 4. Following the resolution of recommendation 3 above to delegate to the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services (CES), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, the authority to approve the Statement of Reasons, which describes the purpose and effect of the Side Roads Order and Compulsory Purchase Order together with the justifications for making them.
 5. Following the resolution of recommendations 2, 3 and 4 above, authorise the making, publication and submission, for confirmation by the Secretary of State, of the necessary Side Roads Order required for the project.
 6. Following the resolution of recommendations 2, 3 and 4 above, authorise the making, publication and submission, for confirmation by the Secretary of State, of the necessary Compulsory Purchase Order required to acquire the land for the project.
 7. To delegate to the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services (CES), the authority to take all appropriate actions necessary to complete a Public Inquiry should this result from the planning application or the making of draft Orders.
- 9.9 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**
- Please see section 4 of the report.
- 9.10 **Alternative Options**
- Please see section 5 of the report.

10. West Winch Housing Access Road – Project update and funding

- 10.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing a project update, seeking approvals as set out in the report, giving an update on project funding and requesting temporary forward funding approval by Cabinet to progress the project through the planning process and procurement until the Outline Business Case approval in Spring 2024.
- 10.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This project was a significant project for King's Lynn and West Norfolk. It would improve the quality of life for people by reducing traffic in the village, improving bus services for local people, and making significant improvements to the A10 by improving reliability and journey times.
 - The Council was working on the project with the Borough Council for King's Lynn and West Norfolk.
 - The Outline Business Case was submitted to the Department for Transport in September 2023. If the Department for Transport approved this then most of the cost would be provided by them, with the local contribution future funded by Homes England from future housing developments.
 - This report sought to delegate funding to include sustainable design measures and allow the planning application to be submitted in the coming weeks.
 - The recommendations referred to the side road orders, procurement processes, land acquisition, and ongoing work with National Grid Gas and Homes England.
 - Residents wanted the road to be built as soon as possible.
 - The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport moved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 10.2 The Vice Chair was pleased to see this project coming forward. There were no financial implications for Norfolk County Council who did not have to commit funding to the project due to the work of Homes England. He thanked Homes England for working with Norfolk County Council to allow the scheme to be forward funded. There was a potential that Norfolk County Council would need to underwrite the project for the Borough Council; if so this would be repaid as the site was delivered. The Vice Chair noted that this was an example of a well thought out scheme being delivered in the County.
- 10.3 The Chair noted that this will help the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk to meet their housing requirement and reduce congestion on the A10 with the link road being built before the houses were built.
- 10.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED**:
1. To note the details presented in this report and approve the continued delivery of the West Winch Housing Access Road (WWHAR) project and confirm the financial update within the Capital Programme.
 2. To delegate to the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services (CES), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport, the authority to agree the finalised planning application and submit it to the Local Planning Authority.
 3. To delegate to the Interim Executive Director of Community and

Environmental Services (CES), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport, the authority to agree and enter advanced agreements with National Grid Gas to divert two major high pressure gas mains.

4. To delegate to the Director of Procurement & Sustainability authority to undertake the necessary procurement processes including the determination of the minimum standards and selection criteria; to shortlist bidders; to negotiate where the procurement procedure so permits; and to terminate award procedures if necessary. The Director of Procurement & Sustainability shall act in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Public Contract Regulations 2015 and in consultation, as appropriate, with the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services and the responsible Cabinet Member. Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet to seek delegated approval to award contracts.
5. To approve the £84.47m scheme cost within the capital programme and note the funding sources (see section 6.3 of the report for more details).
6. To agree to a further temporary increase of the Council's contribution by £2.75m until this is reimbursed when DfT (and Homes England) funding is approved. It will be utilised to incur costs associated to the gas main diversion and design work (as set out in section 6.4 of the report).
7. To agree to enter the Homes England funding agreement (providing £14.65m towards the WWHAR local contribution) and for finalisation of the details to be delegated to the Director of Strategic Finance and the Director of Property.
8. Agreement to underwrite Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) land purchase, as detailed in the confidential section and defer the County Council's capital receipt as part of the collaboration agreement (see section 2.10.6 of the report for more details).
9. To authorise the making of a Side Roads Order ("SRO") under sections 14 and 125 of and in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Highways Act 1980 to enable the improvement and stopping up of existing highways, to construct new highways and to stop up and provide replacement private means of access where necessary which are essential for the construction of the WWHAR.
10. To delegate authority to the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services to consider and make decisions on activities listed in section 2.4.5 of the report.
11. To authorise the Interim Executive Director of Communities and Environmental Services to use the Council's powers under Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to override any existing rights and covenants on land that would be infringed by or impede the construction, operation or maintenance of the WWHAR.
12. To authorise the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services to continue to take all appropriate actions necessary for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions for the acquisition by agreement of the land and new rights over land which are needed to allow the construction, operation and ongoing maintenance of the WWHAR.

10.5 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

Please see section 4 of the report.

10.6 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 5 of the report.

11. **NCC Apprenticeship Strategy 2023-2025**

11.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the Apprenticeship Strategy 2023-25 and the associated operational delivery plan which outlined how the council intended to meet our responsibilities to support the delivery of apprenticeships locally, both as an employer and as a strategic leader.

11.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth introduced the report to Cabinet:

- This strategy had been revised for 2023-25 and was a collaborative strategy across all departments.
- The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth thanked officers for their work.
- The strategy would support business and people in Norfolk to provide the county with a well educated and flexible workforce for all ages.
- Funding given to companies with a payroll over £3m who did not use it would be returned to the Government.
- An Apprenticeship Levy was available and used to help smaller businesses provide apprenticeships.
- The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth moved the recommendation as set out in the report

11.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport supported the updated strategy and noted the hard work of all the officers involved.

11.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention supported the strategy, noting the importance of apprenticeships. Information on why people did not complete their apprenticeships could help the department to identify ways to improve them and improve the completion rate.

11.4 The Chair agreed it was important to provide skills for young people in Norfolk and for businesses.

11.5 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to endorse the proposed Norfolk County Council (NCC) Apprenticeship Strategy (and Operational Delivery Plan) – updated for 2023-2025.

11.6 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The NCC Apprenticeship Strategy is an evidence-based strategy which will continue to create a positive and dynamic focus towards the growth of apprenticeships and therefore broader workforce skills in Norfolk. It takes reference from national, local and district level strategic priorities alongside a wide range of national local evidence, as detailed in the PESTLE analysis in the appendices of the report.

The three directorates have successfully worked together collaboratively to deliver against the previous 2020-2023 version of the strategy; realising a number of achievements (articulated in the paper) which has increased impact for individuals, businesses across Norfolk, and delivering strong return on investment for the local economy.

11.7 **Alternative Options**

Not applicable.

12. **Better Care Fund 2023/24**

12.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the Better Care Fund plan for 2023-24 and asking Cabinet to delegate completion and execution of the Better Care Fund (BCF) section 75 agreement (“the s75”) to the Interim Executive Director Adult Social Services.

12.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Norfolk had been successful in achieving funding from the Minister to use for easing winter pressures.
- The Better Care Fund was used for projects to allow people to live independently and was managed under the Health and Wellbeing Board who set the broad strategic themes with health partners, district councils and other Integrated Care Strategy partners.
- Norfolk was a good example of good practice and joint working between partners.
- The Better Care Fund £136,938,008 of funding for projects in Norfolk and had been taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board earlier in the year.
- The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

12.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care welcomed the report which showed how well Norfolk County Council worked in partnership with health partners. The Health and Wellbeing Board was a good place to see partnership working in action. The Better Care Fund was allocated from central government and it was important to show that the funding devolved to organisations achieved the required objectives. Schemes to support with discharge and to help people remain independent in their own homes. were in place through the Better Care Fund.

12.3 The Chair agreed that the district councils did a very good job in helping people to remain independent in their own homes via providing support and funding for equipment and supported the report.

12.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Endorse the BCF plan
2. Delegate the authority to complete and execute the Better Care Fund (BCF) section 75 (s75) agreement to the Interim Executive Director Adult Social Services

12.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The Health and Wellbeing Board has a responsibility to sign-off the Better Care Fund plans and this was completed at the last meeting on the 26th of September. We are not ready to complete the section 75 prior to the 31st of October and whilst the national team would not encourage a delay and are unlikely to escalate, it does mean that the funding arrangements are not fully

agreed until we have the section 75 in place.

12.6 **Alternative Options**

An alternative option would be to bring the draft BCF s75 to a later Cabinet meeting to be agreed. Delay will mean the funding arrangements with the NHS, are not fully agreed.

13. **Summary Annual Review of NCC Residential Children's Homes**

13.1.1 Cabinet received the report giving a summary review of the service's progress and performance for the year September 2022 to August 2023 and seeking annual approval of each Norfolk residential children's home's Statement of Purpose.

13.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Each residential children's home in Norfolk was required to have a statement of purpose, including detail on the aims and objective and how the standards would be met, which were set out on page A11 of the report.
- In Norfolk there were 5 children's homes, 1 home for children with disabilities, 3 residential short-breaks children's homes, 4 supported flats housing Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, 2 New Roads Hubs and 10 Supported Accommodation houses.
- The council recognised that needs were greater than before and had prepared business plans to strengthen its internal offer through applying to the Department for Education on behalf of the Eastern Region to be a national Regional Care Cooperative pathfinder; this would allow the service to find quality support and placements for children and reduce costs.
- The New Roads service had been running for 3 years, providing residential care and outreach for young people in care. This service had prevented 290 young people coming into care and saved £22m in avoided costs. Feedback from young people and their families was included on page 18 of the supplementary agenda. This feedback was powerful, and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services felt that staff should be proud of what had been achieved.
- A crisis response team had been set up to prevent breakdowns and reduce the amount of young people needing to come into care. They had worked with 420 young people in the last year.
- Accommodating children was always the last resort. Staff worked hard under challenging circumstances and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services thanked them for their dedication and support.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

13.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care acknowledged the work staff did to support the most vulnerable children, those on the edge of care and leaving care who needed help, guidance and a safe care to live. She thanked staff, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Executive Director of Children's Services for their work.

13.3 The Chair noted that this service needed to change to suit the needs of the children being looked after; it was important that residential care met the needs

of children and was modern and fit for purpose. She thanked the staff who worked in challenging circumstances in these homes.

13.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to recommend the approval of the Statements of Purpose for all the Local Authority children's homes to Full Council to comply with the Care Standards Act 2000.

13.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

13.5 **Alternative Options**

N/A

14 Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

14.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the Youth Justice Plan for 2023-24.

14.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The Council had a statutory duty to submit a Youth Justice Plan after consultation with partners. The plan had been signed off by the Youth Justice Board in June 2023.
- The Youth Justice Plan showed how behaviour should be preventable and how it could be reduced.
- This plan was a required component of the Norfolk County Council policy framework and would be heard at Scrutiny Committee on 13 December 2023 and Full Council on 30 January 2024.
- Norfolk was the fifth largest county in the country and had one of the largest youth justice services. The service had been critical in reducing youth custody.
- The Youth Justice Plan had been prepared by the service manager and chair of the Youth Justice Board.
- The introduction of the plan set out that the child is always first, the importance of not losing sight of children and the impact of offending on young people and families.
- The report had a section on education, which noted that Norfolk Youth Justice Service was awarded the Youth Justice Service Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Quality Mark for its work in securing better outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in the youth justice system.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services felt that the report was valuable and well-presented and asked that all County Councillors received a copy of it.
- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

14.2 The Chair thanked the staff in this service for the work they did and congratulated them on their achievement on their outstanding recognition.

14.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. Endorse the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 and recommend to Full Council for inclusion on the policy framework.

2. Approve a governance route for approval of the Norfolk Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

14.4 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

It is a statutory obligation for Norfolk Youth Justice Service to develop and submit a Youth Justice Plan. The priorities set out in the plan are drawn from emerging themes, feedback, and data. Priorities are agreed by our multi-agency Youth Justice Board.

14.5 Alternative Options

Should the Youth Justice Plan not be agreed our eligibility for the Youth Justice Grant would be at risk and service delivery impacted. See financial implications below. It would also significantly impair the ability of Children's Services and partner agencies to act effectively in the best interests of children in Norfolk.

15 CES (Community and Environmental Services) Compliance and Enforcement Policy – Annual Review

- 15.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the annual review of the Community and Environmental Services Compliance and Enforcement Policy, setting out a framework for a number of services within the Community and Environmental Services directorate to ensure that we work in an equitable, practical, and consistent manner when undertaking regulatory activities and law enforcement.
- 15.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships introduced the report to Cabinet:
 - This report set out regulatory guidance for many services in one policy which were required to be published.
 - Key steps for encouraging compliance were, “engage, explain and encourage and, when necessary, enforce”. The Policy had been updated to reflect recent changes in legislation.
 - The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships moved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 15.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted the regulations required to enforce were often changing. The Cabinet Member pointed out the information in the report which indicated the changes in the environmental protection act which made “it an offence for any person in the course of a business to sell, supply or offer for sale single-use plastic plates, bowls, trays, containers, cutlery, and balloon sticks.”
- 15.3 The Chair noted that this was valuable work, regulating laws in place and keeping people safe.
- 15.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**
 1. To approve the revised CES Compliance and Enforcement Policy at Appendix A of the report, including its annex documents.
 2. To agree to delegate the functions of the Executive for the purposes of the Environmental Protection (Plastic Plates etc. and Polystyrene Containers etc.) (England) Regulations 2023 to the Head of Trading Standards to be read in accordance with B (8) – specific delegations to the Executive Director

15.5 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

Please see section 4 of the report.

15.6 Alternative Options

A CES wide Compliance and Enforcement Policy is considered to be the most effective way to demonstrate how CES intends to fulfil its regulatory/legal responsibilities. An alternative option would be for each service area within CES to produce its own policy. However as described in section 4.1 of the report there is a need for consistency in overall approach. The format of the draft Policy provides for additional (detailed) protocols where necessary or appropriate.

16 Disposal, acquisition and exploitation of property

16.1.1 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.

16.1.2 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report to Cabinet:

- There were 4 items for disposal set out in the report:
 - **Parish Council Allotments, Ashill:** this site was owned by county farms and Ashill Parish Council wanted to acquire it. This had been agreed by the council
 - **Ipswich Road Centre, Norwich:** This site had been used by Independence Matters but was vacated in June 2023 due to a sinkhole. The service and service users had been relocated to another site and the site was proposed to be declared as surplus to requirements.
 - **Additional Land at St Peter's Farm, Marshland St James:** this site was on county farms land. It was of no use as farm land and was proposed to be declared as surplus to requirements as part of consolidation of the County Farms estate.
 - **The Marl Pit Land at Wells Road Fakenham, NR21 9HP (Former Fakenham High & Sixth Form Site):** This site was proposed to be sold to Fakenham cricket club. If developed in the future, the council would benefit from this.

16.2 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, as local member for Ashill, agreed the proposal for the sale of the allotments in Ashill to the Parish Council made sense.

16.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention felt it was important that the council was innovative with its use of land to deliver services in the best way possible.

16.4 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care confirmed that Independence Matters stopped using the site on Ipswich Road as it was not safe; they were now using

more appropriate facilities and the move was done in a sensitive way.

16.5 The Chair agreed with the disposals set out.

16.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. To formally declare Parish Council Allotments, Ashill (3001/100) surplus to Council requirements and:
 - (i) Instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property to the Parish Council, 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.
2. To formally declare land and buildings at Ipswich Road Centre, Norwich (4105/017) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property on the best terms possible through a freehold 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.
3. To formally declare Additional Land at St Peter's Farm, Marshland St James (2049/108) 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 approve the disposal of The Marl Pit Land at Wells Road Fakenham NR21 9HP (Former Fakenham High & Sixth Form Site) (1029/028A) (edged purple on plan) to Fakenham Sports Charity Ltd (company number 03151414 / charity number 1056908) and instruct the Director of Property to oversee the completion of the sale on the agreed terms.

16.7 **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.

16.8 **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.

17 **Business Rates Pool – Annual Report 2022-23 and Pooling Decision 2024-25**

17.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out an overview of the 2022-23 Pool including the amount of funding retained by each pool authority, as well as providing an update on the potential for a 2024-25 Pool.

- 17.1.2 The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This report set out an annual update on the business rates pool which the County Council took part in with all District Councils in Norfolk. The report gave details of the expected outcome of pooling in the current year 2023-24 and the intentions for 2024-25.
 - Business Rates Pooling allowed authorities to retain growth in business rates which would otherwise be paid to the Government. This had helped the Council and district councils to retain additional resources which would otherwise have been lost.
 - If the county deal didn't go ahead, without LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) funding this would be the only resource available to the council to develop economic growth in the county.
 - Under the terms of the pooling arrangements, in previous years, the fund retained had been allocated to projects delivering economic growth and development by the Norfolk Leaders Group via bids from local authorities. Since 2022-23, the arrangements for pooling had been updated to allow all districts to retain some of the pool funds so they could make allocations from their own budgets.
 - £1.5m had been allocated in the 2023-24 Norfolk County Council budget as part of its budget setting process to the Norfolk Investment Framework. The details of projects funded through this were detailed in the report.
 - Decisions about the use of the gain from 2023-24 pooling would be made as part of the setting of the 2024-25 budget.
 - The outturn for the 2022-23 pool showed an increase in the level of benefit with budget assumption. The total retained levy for 2022-23 was £8.572m. Of this, the County Council's share was £3.81m, an additional income of £1.210m. The proposed use of this additional amount is set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report.
 - There was an option to continue to pool in 2024-25. District council forecasts indicated this would be beneficial to the county and would be forecast to retain £7.211 in Norfolk. All partners have continued to pool on the same basis as previous years; all district and Norfolk County Council had indicated to Government their intention to continue to pool.
 - The Vice Chair moved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 17.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention highlighted the shared purpose across the county in agreeing to pool across and welcomed the report.
- 17.3 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth discussed the Go Digital campaign, funded by the Business Rates pool, which had been successful and won national awards. It was an oversubscribed scheme.
- 17.4 the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport highlighted the money being used for infrastructure framework projects shown on page 513 of the report including Seaweed in East Anglia, Net Zero East RENEW: a feasibility study into the re-diversion of rainwater, surface and drainage water and the Clean Hydrogen Strategy, among others.
- 17.4 The Chair was pleased that all district councils had agreed to join the pool and hoped this was a good basis on how all partners could work together under a county deal. She had visited London recently to talk with the Minister about

Hydrogen in Norfolk and how the Clean Hydrogen Strategy could be taken forward.

17.5 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note the performance of the Norfolk Business Rates Pool and endorse the decisions taken by the Pool in respect of the allocation of 2022-23 Pool resources (section 2 of the report);
2. Endorse the use of Norfolk County Council's share of the 2022-23 retained levy (as shown in Table 2 and section 3 of the report);
3. Approve the use of Norfolk County Council's share of one-off Business Rates Pool funds in excess of the level originally budgeted (currently forecast as £1.210m) to address current year overspend pressures and make a contribution to the Go Digital funding programme (section 3.3); and
4. Agree that the County Council participate in pooling for 2024-25 in line with the expression of interest submitted for the 2024-25 Norfolk Business Rates Pool (set out in section 4 of the report).

17.6 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Not included

17.7 **Alternative Options**

Not included

18 Mid-Year Treasury Management Monitoring Report 2023-24

18.1.1 Cabinet received the report giving details of the 2023-24 treasury activities and highlights compliance with policy and strategy previously approved in relation to treasury management.

18.1.2 The Vice Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The Treasury Management Panel accepted the mid-year report on the 2 November 2023, and it was now presented to Cabinet for ratification
- The aim of the report was to ensure the Council were on track to deliver what was set out to full council: that the council maintain cash, borrowing and investment according to prudential indicators as set out in the paper and to ensure treasury management had been carried out in line with the treasury management code and its principles of security, liquidity and yield.
- Over the first 6 months of the financial year, out of the £65m of new borrowing budgeted for in 2023-24 the Council had borrowed £0
- While maintaining a £65m borrowing forecast, delivery and funding sources of the capital programme were being closely monitored to minimise borrowing while interest rates were high.
- In accordance with fiscal policy, a watch had been maintained over the cash levels. As of September 2023, cash balances were at £269.78m. These cash balances had secured significant income in the form of interest receivable. The average interest generated by cash investments for 4.69%.
- If the council borrowed £65m then cash balances would be around £260m at the end of the financial year.

- At £872.397m the Council's total borrowing was £102.721m lower at mid-year than forecast in April 2023. There had been no additional borrowing and £23.055m had been repaid.
- The Council remained under prudential borrowing limits, and this was forecast to be the case at the end of the financial year.
- The Vice Chair moved the recommendations as set out in the report

18.2 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to endorse and recommend to County Council the Mid-Year Treasury Management Monitoring Report 2023-24.

18.3 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

One annex is attached to this report, giving details of treasury management activities and outcomes, including:

1. Investment activities
2. Borrowing strategy and outcomes
3. Capital Plan and non-treasury investments
4. Prudential indicators

18.4 **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.

19 **Finance Monitoring Report 2023-24 P7: October 2023**

19.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out 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.

19.1.2 The Vice Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The council had lobbied the government for additional funding and hoped for additional support when provisional settlement was announced in December 2023. A lack of further funding support would have a material impact for the current year and 2024-25 financial planning.
- Table 1 in the report summarised the 2023-24 financial position and showed why the forecast had worsened since period 6. Warnings of further cost pressures in home to school transport and child care placement cost forecasts meant that further overspending in Children's Services could not be ruled out. Adult Social Services was now coming under pressure, particularly in learning disabilities.
- Pressures would need to be covered by use of departmental reserves as they had in Adult Social Services and Children's Services, impacting on the 2024-25 budget and one-off savings would be needed to support the budget position.
- Recurring pressures emerging in 2023-24 would require additional budget growth to reduce the budget overspend.
- The funding announcement in the Autumn Statement did not show additional resources for local government in 2024-25 and the financial context continued to be challenging. Other measures were announced in the Autumn Statement such as an increase in the national living wage and an increased forecast for inflation. These would increase cost pressures

on the budget, impacting on the cost of commissioned services such as adults' and children's social services and the 2024-25 NJC pay award which would need to be set at a level above the April 2025 living wage pay award

- it was possible that funding for delivery of the household support fund may not be available from April next year.
- Assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Statement for 2024-25 would need to be reviewed; previous modelling showed close to a balanced position but recent announcements and wider government announcements had resulted in movement to the overall position. There was no certainty around increased funding from Government.
- Revenue annexe 1 in the report showed over and underspends. Interest received was £4m higher than forecast with interest paid £2.25m less than forecast.
- The Vice Chair moved the recommendations and gave detail on the information contained in them:
- The funding for the West Winch Housing Access Road had been covered in item 10 on the agenda; the council was not expected to cover the cost of this but would support the District Council if needed
- The cost to the council was forecast to be £22.882m but the council was committed to fund the scheme in full if required.
- Funding for the Long Stratton Bypass had been provisionally agreed by the Department for Transport
- The next tranche of funding had been received from the Department for Transport for the bus service improvement plan.
- £232m of the Capital programme was funded externally as shown in the report
- A £2m overspend was now being forecast in Adult Social Services and £9m overspend in Children's Services.
- The recommendations in the Norwich Western Link update report, at item 9 on the agenda, were due to be considered by Full Council in January 2024. The associated recommendation within recommendation 1 of this report would also need to be considered by Council in January 2024, however, this would be too late for the changes to be incorporated into the capital programme and budget setting for 2024-25.
- Therefore the Vice Chair **proposed** an additional recommendation, to allow for the changes to be incorporated into the capital programme and budget setting, 1a: For planning and monitoring purposes, to incorporate the changes under recommendation 1 into the 2023-24 monitoring position and proposed 2024-25 Capital Programme, subject to any changes as a result of any call-in and Council's ultimate decision making on 30 January 2024.

19.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care noted the key themes discussed at a recent conference about the pressure of home to school transport and social care, including pressure of private providers when re-commissioning care after providers withdraw from the market. The pressures experienced in Norfolk were also being experienced across the country.

19.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention noted that overspends in Adult Social Services were due to the increase in demand caused by demographic changes across the country such as people living longer. He felt that this position could be better understood.

- 19.4 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted that revenue from government was not increasing in line with the need being seen in the county and the country.
- 19.5 The Chair voiced her disappointment in the autumn statement regarding the settlement for local government. She hoped that there would be a settlement in the provisional funding statement. The council and Local Government Alliance would continue to lobby government on this matter. The budget of the Council was increased each year but did not keep up with the demand on services. The county deal funding would not be for this purpose as it was for investment. It was therefore important to press government for a fairer funding settlement.
- 19.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**
1. To recommend to the Council the increase of **£126.541m** to the capital programme to address capital funding requirements funded mostly from various external sources as set out in detail in capital Appendix 3 to the report, paragraph 1.4 as follows:
 - £73.300m increase to the West Winch Bypass project, mainly funded through a £74.202m increase in Department of Transport and Homes England funding reflecting the Outline Business Case submission and a £1.05m reduction in NCC Borrowing required to fund this project. The latest forecast is disclosed in a paper elsewhere on the agenda.
 - £22.882m increase in the Norwich Western Link project following the approval of the Outline Business Case and to reflect the latest forecast reported elsewhere on the agenda.
 - £11.646m increase in the Long Stratton Bypass project mainly funded through an increase in the Department of Transport grant of £17.717m and a £4.979m reduction in the GNGB supported borrowing required for the project as reported to Cabinet on 6th November.
 - £18.483m increase in Department for Transport funding for Countywide BSIP schemes
 - £0.155m increase in external contributions to various Children's Services schemes
 - £0.07m increase in NCC Borrowing to support the Planning and Advisory Scheme
 - £0.006m net increase in various other schemes
 - 1a. For planning and monitoring purposes, to incorporate the changes under recommendation 1 into the 2023-24 monitoring position and proposed 2024-25 Capital Programme, subject to any changes as a result of any call-in and Council's ultimate decision making on 30 January 2024.
 2. To note the revised current and future 2023-28 capital programme as set out in Appendix 3 of the report including the significant reprofiling undertaken to date.
 3. To delegate to the Director of Procurement and the Director of Property to undertake the necessary procurement and tender processes to deliver this revised capital programme in accordance with the delegated authority awarded on 6 March 2023 in the Authority to enact Capital Programme paper - [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com).
 4. To recognise the period 7 general fund revenue forecast of a **£3.052m overspend (0.62% of net budget)**, noting also that Executive Directors will

take measures to reduce or eliminate potential over-spends where these occur within services;

5. To recognise the period 7 forecast of 97% 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 approve the appointment of directors to Norfolk County Council owned companies and joint ventures as set out in section 2.2 of the report, as required by the Council's Financial Regulations.

19.7 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

Please see section 4 of the report

19.8 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.

20 Reports of the Cabinet Member and Executive Director Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting

- 20.1 These would be included in the next Cabinet agenda for noting.

21 Exclusion of the Public

- 21.1 Cabinet agreed to exclude the public for discussion of item 22.

22 West Winch Housing Access Road – Project update and funding: Exempt appendices A and B

- 22.1 Cabinet discussed and noted the exempt appendices.

The meeting ended at 12:15

Chair of Cabinet

Cabinet
4 December 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from John Martin Will the leader please specify exactly what sums the Council has incurred by way of legal expenses as a direct consequence of the court proceedings issued by Dr Andrew Boswell</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance Dr Boswell has challenged government on the Development Consent Order for National Highways' A47 schemes. These are not county council schemes. The county council has not incurred any legal costs as a consequence.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Rupert Read The Paris Agreement (2015), signed by the UK, commits to making all possible efforts to limiting the average global temperature to 1.5 degrees higher than pre-industrial levels. Just 8 years later, a majority of scientists think that this Paris 1.5 degrees target will soon be breached. How does the Leader reconcile building (construction emissions estimate: 130,000 tonnes of CO2) and operating (additional emissions each year from operation) an NWL with the UK's international obligations, and does she think our children and their children will look kindly on Norfolk County Council's seeming complete indifference to their fate?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance Meeting the national net zero targets will take co-ordinated action across the public and private sectors as we transition from our current ways of life to a way of life that is consistent with net zero.</p> <p>The County Council has taken important steps towards meeting the net zero challenge by adopting its Environmental Policy and by adopting Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and its Implementation Plan. LTP4 sets out how the council intends to continue to support the people of Norfolk in travelling to, from and around the County safely and efficiently for work, leisure and business whilst having regard to setting a trajectory of emissions that is consistent with achieving net zero targets. The unavoidable emissions arising from the Norwich Western Link scheme must be seen in this wider context of the other planned measures intended to support travel and reduce emissions in the County.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Rupert Read The Leader's division (in which I reside) includes a significant area of low-lying land to the south of the River Yare including the Coldham Hall pub which reports using canoes for deliveries due to worsening flooding (EDP last week). How will the Leader explain her cabinet's decision to increase climate-deadly carbon emissions with an NWL, risking global climate treaties, to the residents affected by flooding in her division?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance A Flood Risk Assessment will form part of the Environmental Statement for the Norwich Western Link scheme. The purpose of this is to assess the potential impacts of the scheme on flood risk and support and define the drainage design to mitigate the potential flood risk impacts of the scheme, including over a range of future climate change scenarios. The</p>

Flood Risk Assessment is expected to conclude, based on the assessment carried out to date as part of preparing it in draft, the following:

-That within the River Wensum floodplain there is likely to be little to no change to the flood extent in this area and the flood hazard for the area remains unchanged.

-A review of the flood risk receptors that could be impacted by the local increase in water levels confirms that, in all events up to the 1 in 100 year annual probability flood event plus 44% climate change allowance, only grazing farmland is affected.

-There is no anticipated increased risk to property or infrastructure.

-There is no anticipated change to flood risk downstream of the proposed scheme.

6.3 **Question from Iain Robinson**

The proposed Norwich Western Link road runs through the middle of multiple areas of woodland included in a proposed Special Site of Scientific Interest, currently in the pipelines with Natural England, which is aimed at designating the home woodlands of the nationally significant Barbastelle bat colonies in this area, and is based on survey evidence more thorough and detailed than the council's own. Why hasn't the project team put this project on hold until an evidence-based decision has been made by Natural England?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Norwich Western Link (NWL) scheme is a large-scale infrastructure project requiring years of continued planning, design, stakeholder engagement and surveys. The NWL project team has had consistent engagement with Natural England (and other key stakeholders) throughout the development of the project to ensure a clear understanding and awareness of Natural England's perspective of the information provided to them, as well as to gain visibility and to discuss how the NWL scheme relates to other significant projects, including the proposal for a SSSI.

Currently the timeframes associated with the designation of the area in question as an SSSI are not fixed, nor does the inclusion of the area on Natural England's designation programme indicate a commitment to designate. As such, it would not be possible, nor desirable to postpone progress of the NWL scheme pending a decision on the area designation. Equally, the Environmental Statement has valued Barbastelle Bats as being nationally important. This would remain unchanged regardless of the SSSI designation.

The effect of the NWL scheme upon local bat populations has been assessed and will be reported within the Environmental Statement and other key documents to be submitted as part of the formal planning application, in due course. The nature conservation value of the population has been evaluated on the basis of thorough baseline survey information in line with relevant national guidelines.

Regarding the surveys undertaken by both the NWL project team and others, the following wording is included in the cabinet report at section 9.2: 'As a result of data collected by the Wensum Valley Barbastelles Research Project (a research project collaboration between Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the University of East Anglia and Wild Wings Ecology) Norfolk Wildlife Trust have advised the project team of a possible bat maternity roost in the vicinity of the NWL scheme. Without access to the data used to support this advice the NWL project team

is unable to verify it. The project team has requested access to the data on a number of occasions but has not been able to obtain it to date. The NWL specialist bat experts have carried out their own extensive bat surveys over several years, which have provided a good understanding of the presence of protected bat species in the area around the proposed route. The project has taken account of this in its design and mitigation measures that have been developed for the planning application.'

Further, and as reflected in the cabinet report, the NWL project team has continued to pursue engagement with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, on their multi-year research project into the local Barbastelle colonies being undertaken by an independent ecologist who we understand is currently seconded to them. Multiple discussions have taken place to facilitate the sharing of this data however this has not yet been provided. Equally, the survey effort undertaken in support of the NWL scheme is commensurate to the scale of the scheme, and the survey data captured has, and will continue, to allow us to appropriately and considerately develop the necessary environmental information and assessment, inform the ecological and environmental mitigation associated with the scheme, and drive thorough due consideration of the ecological requirements within the design development.

Supplementary question from Iain Robinson

According to the Cabinet Papers, the Norwich Western Link will increase carbon emissions by 5475 tonnes (tCO₂e) a year for sixty years, as well as embody carbon emissions from the construction phase (130,000 tCO₂e). Please can the councillors explain how the building of this road can align with net zero targets?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Meeting the national net zero targets will take co-ordinated action across the public and private sectors as we transition from our current ways of life to a way of life that is consistent with net zero.

The County Council has taken important steps towards meeting the net zero challenge by adopting its Environmental Policy and by adopting Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and its Implementation Plan. LTP4 sets out how the council intends to continue to support the people of Norfolk in travelling to, from and around the County safely and efficiently for work, leisure and business whilst having regard to setting a trajectory of emissions that is consistent with achieving net zero targets. The unavoidable emissions arising from the Norwich Western Link scheme must be seen in this wider context of the other planned measures intended to support travel and reduce emissions in the County.

6.4 **Question from David Pett**

How can the council be confident that there will be no contamination of the local water supply because of pollutant run-off from the road, especially considering increased flood risk and the need for flood mitigation work within the Wensum SAC area?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The proposed Norwich Western Link (NWL) scheme includes a surface water drainage scheme and strategy which will capture run-off from the road and includes infiltration basins that will, after appropriate treatment, discharge this run-off to the ground safely. There will be no discharges into the River Wensum.

The Road Drainage and the Water Environment chapter of the Environmental Statement will assess the potential risk of pollutants migrating towards River Wensum and appropriate mitigation will be recommended.

A Flood Risk Assessment will form part of the Environmental Statement. The purpose of which is to assess the potential impacts of the scheme on flood risk, and support and define the road drainage design to mitigate the potential flood risk impacts of the NWL. The Flood Risk Assessment is expected to conclude, based on the assessment carried out to date as part of preparing it in draft, the following:

-That within the River Wensum floodplain there is likely to be little to no change to the flood extent in this area and the flood hazard for the area remains unchanged.

-A review of the flood risk receptors that could be impacted by the local increase in water levels confirms that, in all events up to the 1 in 100 year annual probability flood event plus 44% climate change allowance, only grazing farmland is affected.

-There is no anticipated increased risk to property or infrastructure.

-There is no anticipated change to flood risk downstream of the Proposed Scheme.

A Habitat Regulation Assessment will support the planning application to assess the impact of the proposed scheme on the Wensum SAC. The results of this assessment are expected to conclude there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of the Wensum SAC with mitigation in place.

6.5 **Question from Andrew Boswell**

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) 2023 Progress Report to parliament identified very serious shortfalls in delivery, economy wide, of the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (CBDP). For the Industry sector relating to construction of the scheme, CCC identified a 114 million tonnes emission reduction shortfall for the 5th carbon budget (including the planned final construction year 2028). In the Surface Transport sector relating to the operation of the scheme, CCC identified 228 million tonnes of emission reduction shortfall for the 6th carbon budget (years 5 to 9 of scheme operation). How does the Cabinet reconcile adding new, unbudgeted carbon emissions against these severe risks to delivery of national carbon budgets?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Meeting the national net zero targets will take co-ordinated action across the public and private sectors as we transition from our current ways of life to a way of life that is consistent with net zero.

The County Council has taken important steps towards meeting the net zero challenge by adopting its Environmental Policy and by adopting Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and its Implementation Plan. LTP4 sets out how the council intends to continue to support the people of Norfolk in travelling to, from and around the County safely and efficiently for work, leisure and business whilst having regard to setting a trajectory of emissions that is consistent with achieving net zero targets. The unavoidable emissions arising from the Norwich Western Link scheme must be seen in this wider context of the other planned measures intended to support travel and reduce emissions in the County.

It is accepted that to create a transport network fit for purpose, some new emissions will need to be emitted. The Norwich Western Link (NWL) is an important component of wider transport infrastructure that is being delivered as part of the Transport for Norwich (TfN) Strategy and wider Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). The Council will need to balance the impact of the NWL with the wider decarbonisation action plan, to achieve a sustainable transport network, aligned to carbon targets.

Supplementary question from Andrew Boswell

The EIA Scoping report does not refer to the Carbon Budget Order 2021, nor the Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (CBDP) which lays out how the Government intends to meet UK carbon budgets and international climate obligations until 2037. What assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions from the scheme will be made against the CBDP, the 4th, 5th and 6th carbon budgets, and the 2030 and 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris agreement?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Environmental Statement that will be submitted with the planning application for the Norwich Western Link (NWL) scheme will assess the carbon impact of the scheme against carbon targets and cumulative emissions up to 2050, in accordance with current national assessment guidance.

The Environment Statement will provide a breakdown of the carbon impact of the scheme against each carbon budget period, aligned to the Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement.

6.6 **Question from Dr Matt Tomlinson**

With reference to paragraph 3.12.6, please provide the Council's enumerations of the operational carbon emissions from the scheme in the Do-Something and Do-Minimum traffic model cases at the Opening Year (2029), Design Year (2044) and 60-year year (2088) including the data for both before and after applying the Common Analytical Scenario (CAS) forecast.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

At the moment there has only been a Core Scenario modelled for the Opening Year (2029) and Design Year (2044). These results are summarised on the following table, which highlights the operational carbon emissions from the scheme:

Scenario	2029 (operational year)	2044 (future year)	Average per year (2029-2088)	Total (2029-2088)
Baseline ('Do Minimum')	536,647	338,645	365,045	21,902,709
Do Something	543,634	343,241	369,961	22,197,631
Difference	6,987	4,597	4,915	294,922
% change	1.30%	1.40%	1.30%	1.30%

A sensitivity assessment is being undertaken assuming accelerated levels of electric vehicle uptake when compared against Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG). Relevant findings will be included in the Environmental Statement submitted with the planning application for the Norwich Western Link scheme.

Supplementary question from Dr Matt Tomlinson

With reference to paragraph 3.12.4, please provide the increase in operational carbon dioxide in the Opening Year (2029) and the Design Year (2044).

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Below is the Greenhouse Gas information for the Opening Year (2029) and the Design Year (2044) based on the current draft of the Environmental Statement. The finalised assessment will be published with the Environmental Statement accompanying the planning application for the Norwich Western Link scheme, once submitted.

Baseline Scenario

2029 (Operational Year) - 536,647

2044 (Future year) - 338,645

Do Something Scenario

2029 (Operational Year) - 543,634

2044 (Future year) - 343,241

6.7 **Question from Sondra Billings**

In the light of the vandalism of historic buildings in Norwich recently, how much does the council anticipate spending for security at the Wensum Lodge site when it is closed from 22/12/23 onwards?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation

The County Council has not undertaken any forecasting as to the cost of security at Wensum Lodge.

Supplementary question from Sondra Billings

Has a security contract been awarded and at what costing to whom?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation

Norse Group provide all security services for the County Council.

6.8 **Question from James Mendelssohn**

The Music House, a Grade I listed building, is currently leased from Norwich City Council on a full repairing lease but it is currently in a poor state of repair. How much has been set aside to renovate the building before handing it back to Norwich City Council and has a heritage building maintenance contract already been awarded?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation?

We do not consider the Music House to be in a poor state. The County Council has not yet started discussions with the City Council to yield up the lease. When the landlord conducts their condition and dilapidations surveys this will provide a baseline for any dilapidation costs.

6.9 **Question from Bryan Robinson**

the main implications of the proposed NWL as reported in the Addendum to the OBC have significantly changed in these cabinet papers. The costs have risen by £22m; the operational greenhouse gas emissions have changed from reducing to increasing; the

carbon emissions associated with the construction have increased and the value for money is now medium (optimistically) rather than high. Why were these dramatic changes not reported to the Department for Transport before its decision on the OBC rather than continue to mislead both it and the public with bad out-of-date information?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Council has progressed the Outline Business Case in full compliance with the Department for Transport's guidance. In relation to greenhouse gas emissions, the information provided to the Department for Transport complied with the guidance that prevailed at the time it was submitted. There have been changes to this guidance, the nature of which, and consequences of, are reported at section 3.12 of the Cabinet Report.

In relation to the estimate of the costs of the scheme, section 6 of the Cabinet Report outlines the reasons for the changes to the scheme's cost estimate. The delay to the OBC decision is a significant factor in the changes to the costs estimate for the scheme. In accordance with the established processes for the funding of large local major road scheme, the Department for Transport will have the opportunity to consider the Full Business Case for the scheme once submitted, which will not occur until planning permission has been granted for the scheme and the associated statutory orders have been confirmed.

Supplementary question from Bryan Robinson

Applications for planning permission must be valid and in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. What are the material considerations which will enable the Council to submit a valid planning application for the NWL to its own planning department?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Paragraph 44 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises planning authorities to publish on their website a list of their information requirements for valid applications for planning permission.

These lists were updated on 5 June 2023, for applications to be made under regulation 3 of the Town and Planning General Regulations 1992 (as would be the case for the Norwich Western Link).

The relevant list can be found here <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/rubbish-recycling-planning/planning/minerals-and-waste-regulations-3-local-list.pdf>

6.10 **Question from Richard Hawker**

The report states that "local communities . . . are suffering. . . from rat-running on small roads . . . not designed (for) volumes or size of vehicles now using them"
These unsuitable roads include the B1535 and its offshoots of Heath Road and Stone Road. How many HGVs movements on these roads could NOT transfer to NWL, e.g. farms and firms within the 'valley' area, and what percentage of total HGV traffic on the B1535 does this represent?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

There is no surveyed information of the specific numbers of HGV's accessing each and every individual farm and operating company within the "valley" area. In accordance with

industry guidance the transport modelling which informs the planning application has been derived from a variety of link counts and turning movements at key junctions, rather than at every access along each route.

The 2029 Do Minimum (DM) forecast modelling (i.e., the future opening year situation without the Norwich Western Link (NWL) scheme in place) is expected to show that there are predicted to be approximately 330 HGVs using the B1535 route per day, of which about 60% is expected to be re-routed to use the proposed Norwich Western Link route, therefore about 40% of HGVs would remain on their existing routes as they have local origins and destinations between A1067 and A47.

With the proposed traffic mitigation in place there is also proposed to be an HGV ban (except for access) on the B1535 Wood Lane, so that as much HGV traffic as possible is re-routed to use the new road.

6.11 **Question from Victoria Flute**

The Norwich Western Link is expected to improve the local economy. The NDR was expected to do the same, and a 'five-year-after' report was promised to show what effect the road had had on the economy, but it is not yet available. If the report is to have any value, it must be to give an indication as to the accuracy of forecasting the effect of a new road in this area. Why is the report not part of the application for the Norwich Western Link?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The NDR is part of the 2019 base year transport model and the forecast year transport models that have been used in the assessment of the Norwich Western Link (NWL). Within the Outline Business Case for the NWL an assessment of the wider economic benefits was undertaken which quantified, in monetary terms, the level of benefits that the NWL would be predicted to deliver. As five years have not elapsed the five-year after report is still under preparation and will be published in due course.

Supplementary question from Victoria Flute

How does the Norwich Western Link support Levelling Up? Specifically for those who are medically or financially unable to drive.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Cabinet Report sets out that a Sustainable Transport Strategy has been developed alongside the main Norwich Western Link (NWL) proposals which includes a complementary package of wider interventions to support walking, cycling and public transport use. There would also be reductions in traffic on existing roads, making them more suitable for walking and cycling as a result of traffic diverting to the NWL.

6.12 **Question from Julie Rolle**

Traffic: The time between closure of the Easton roundabout and opening of NWL may be 3 years, assuming no delays. The proposed alternative route for the 4500 vehicles per day using Lower Easton is the tiny Weston Road and Taverham Road. This will overwhelm those roads and area. Other routes would be through Weston Longville, Ringland or further afield. How does NCC propose to solve this problem; presumably this issue must be a known one, or is the plan that these areas just have to endure this for three years and if so, has this been made clear to those impacted and mitigation put in place?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The planning application will be accompanied by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) that will consider the appropriate means of managing and mitigating the adverse effect of construction traffic. It is anticipated that this would be developed in detail after the grant of planning permission, if planning permission is granted, to manage the traffic conditions that prevail during construction.

For example, if both the Norwich Western Link (NWL) and the A47 schemes are being constructed at the same time it is anticipated that the CTMP's for both projects would be coordinated as much as possible and network management plans adopted that aim to minimise any impacts on minor roads and focus traffic onto the more appropriate routes.

The NWL project team are also currently working with the local parishes to determine additional mitigation measures to support sustainable access during construction. A traffic monitoring scheme will also be in place during construction with advisory variable message signs (VMS) on the surrounding highway network to advise of any delays and appropriate route options.

Supplementary question from Julie Rolle

Safety: On p72 of the report, one advantage of the NWL is stated as 'reducing personal injury accidents'. Please can the council publish statistics of such accidents which have occurred on the roads from which NWL would take traffic (viz. Ringland Lane, Weston Longville, etc.) so that a proper assessment can be made.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Council holds statistics of fatal, serious and slight accidents which can be supplied for local roads. The Transport Assessment will include a review of Personal injury Accident data within a 5km radius of the proposed scheme route. There is signage in place on the A1067 between Attlebridge and Lenwade noting a high casualty route which includes the Marl Hill Road junction with A1067 and also B1535 Weston Hall Road junction with A1067 and Porter's Lane. Both of these junctions are expected to benefit from significantly reduced turning movements as a result of the proposed scheme. Hence there would be a reduced risk of collisions in these locations as a result of the scheme.

Together with the A47 dualling scheme, there would also be a much safer road layout at the A47 junctions with B1535 Wood Lane and at Taverham Road. The Easton Roundabout will be removed and the Honingham Roundabout at Norwich Road will be bypassed by the new A47. The A1074 would also have reduced flow in comparison with the Do Minimum situation, so the Longwater Interchange and Longwater Lane junctions with Dereham Road will also have reduced risk of accidents.

6.13 Question from Rob Bellman

As a landowner whos beautiful lush woodland, that supports both considerable flora and forna, will be destroyed to build a very short stretch of infrastructure, that doesn't make sense, by any metric, other than to support mass new house building, which is currently on hold due to current water pollution levels, I am seriously concerned that this project already has, and will continue to come up against legal challenges, while costs spiral beyond affordable levels.

Would the cabinet please explain why they are not looking at more viable, effective, lower-impact, sustainable and affordable transport solutions for Norfolk.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

No legal challenges have been brought against the Norwich Western Link to date, and the project is not required to directly enable any housing development, although as we have stated before, this council believes that continuing to invest in our infrastructure to help our transport networks cope with housing and employment growth is crucial, and the Norwich Western Link is expected to support this growth.

In developing the project to this point, the project team looked at a wide range of options - including non-road options - that would tackle the traffic issues being experienced to the west of Norwich, and that would meet the project objectives that were developed with representatives of local communities in the area. The Norwich Western Link was found to be the best solution, and this remains the case.

It's also important to remember that public transport requires good infrastructure just like any other mode of travel. Bus operators need to be able to run efficient, reliable services to attract and retain passengers and make routes commercially viable, and getting stuck in queuing and slow-moving traffic significantly hinders this.

We want to support people to shift their journeys from using a car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport where appropriate. This will generally be more achievable over relatively short distances and in and between larger centres of population, or where there is a concentration of public amenities or employment. Once constructed the Norwich Western Link will improve non-car sustainable transport options by reducing levels of inappropriate traffic on local roads, making them more attractive for walking and cycling. It will also be supported by a wider package of complementary sustainable transport measures to take advantage of these reduced levels of traffic.

We have been investing in improvements to facilities for public transport users and walkers and cyclists for several years now, particularly in our towns and larger villages and in and around Norwich through our multi-million Transport for Norwich project (www.norfolk.gov.uk/tfn). We have, among other things, improved pedestrian and cycle access to railway stations in Norwich and Great Yarmouth, there have been upgrades to bus facilities in Norwich, Thetford, North Walsham and Cringleford, and we've created an off-road pedestrian and cycle path linking Norwich to the fast-growing populations in Hethersett and Wymondham, and extended our very popular Beryl bike/e-bike/e-scooter hire scheme from Norwich into those areas.

So there isn't a 'one size fits all' approach to transport and we need to continue to invest in a wide range of transport infrastructure in Norfolk to support all kinds of journeys.

Cabinet
4 December 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

	Member Question Time
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price So far, the reported cost of the NWL has risen by nearly 80% since the strategic outline business case was first put forward. Further rises above the currently-predicted £273m can therefore be expected. With any further rise, the county council will have to foot the bill, in addition to paying for the current potential shortfall of £60m. Can the cabinet member please confirm whether an upper limit is being placed on the additional funding the council can commit to the NWL and what that limit is?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The Government's announcement about the potential to increase their contribution will hopefully mean the local contribution required for the Norwich Western Link will actually be slightly less than anticipated when we submitted the Outline Business Case. We're expecting more details on this from the Department for Transport in the coming weeks and we'll be making the case to bring even more national investment into Norfolk as part of the project.</p> <p>The revised budget for the project takes account of anticipated inflation costs over the life of the project and includes a budget for risk of more than £26m, which would help to deal with any additional costs.</p> <p>In the time we have been developing the project we have experienced a pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine which has affected global supply chains, both of which have affected costs for all major infrastructure projects worldwide. So, while further cost increases can never be ruled out, and it would be irresponsible to do so, we are confident that this is a considered and rigorously-set budget.</p> <p>In terms future decision-making on potential different scenarios, we will continue to be led by the evidence and the importance of continuing to invest in Norfolk's infrastructure. Key to this is that we know a lot of people and businesses in Norfolk are being badly affected by traffic congestion to the west of Norwich every day, and the Norwich Western Link remains the best solution to these problems. Furthermore, this project will bring in over £200m of national investment into Norfolk, that will benefit the local economy and help our transport networks to cope with projected housing and employment in and around Norwich.</p> <p>Question from Cllr Ben Price How can the Council ensure that there will be no contamination of the local water supply from potential run-off material such as hydrocarbons, fuel additives, metal, tyre wear, de-icer, and gritting, from the NWL, considering the significant increase in flood risk and the need for flood mitigation work in the area affected by the River Wensum SAC?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste The proposed Norwich Western Link (NWL) scheme includes a surface water drainage scheme and strategy which will capture run-off from the road and includes infiltration</p>

basins that will, after appropriate treatment, discharge this run-off to the ground safely. There will be no discharges into the River Wensum.

The Road Drainage and the Water Environment chapter of the Environmental Statement will assess the potential risk of pollutants migrating towards River Wensum and appropriate mitigation will be recommended.

A Flood Risk Assessment will form part of the Environmental Statement. The purpose of which is to assess the potential impacts of the scheme on flood risk, and support and define the road drainage design to mitigate the potential flood risk impacts of the NWL. The Flood Risk Assessment is expected to conclude, based on the assessment carried out to date as part of preparing it in draft, the following:

- That within the River Wensum floodplain there is likely to be little to no change to the flood extent in this area and the flood hazard for the area remains unchanged.
- A review of the flood risk receptors that could be impacted by the local increase in water levels confirms that, in all events up to the 1 in 100 year annual probability flood event plus 44% climate change allowance, only grazing farmland is affected.
- There is no anticipated increased risk to property or infrastructure.
- There is no anticipated change to flood risk downstream of the Proposed Scheme.

A Habitat Regulation Assessment will support the planning application to assess the impact of the proposed scheme on the Wensum SAC. The results of this assessment are expected to conclude there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of the Wensum SAC with mitigation in place.

7.2

Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn

According to the cabinet report, the Norwich Western Link will add about 5,500 tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere each year for its 60-year lifespan. Please can the cabinet member explain in detail what assessment of the carbon budget for transport in Norfolk has been done and what calculation has been done of whether the increased carbon from this project can be afforded?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Meeting the national net zero targets will take co-ordinated action across the public and private sectors as we transition from our current ways of life to a way of life that is consistent with net zero.

The County Council has taken important steps towards meeting the net zero challenge by adopting its Environmental Policy and by adopting Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and its Implementation Plan. LTP4 sets out how the council intends to continue to support the people of Norfolk in travelling to, from and around the County safely and efficiently for work, leisure and business whilst having regard to setting a trajectory of emissions that is consistent with achieving net zero targets. The unavoidable emissions arising from the Norwich Western Link scheme must be seen in this wider context of the other planned measures intended to support travel and reduce emissions in the County.

Supplementary question from Cllr Jamie Osborn

Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether he will recommend the Norwich Western Link should definitely go ahead if the Government provides £213m in funding and leaves the council to fund a minimum of £60m in the shortfall between Government funding and the currently-predicted cost of the road?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

We are very hopeful, based on announcements made by the government, and specific reference within the OBC acceptance letter from DfT that the scheme could benefit from an uplift in government contribution. In that case, the local contribution required for the Norwich Western Link would actually be less than anticipated when we submitted the Outline Business Case.

The significant traffic issues that are affecting people and businesses to the west of Norwich every day are projected to worsen if we don't take action, and the Norwich Western Link remains the best solution to these problems. A local contribution of £60m would bring £213m of national investment into Norfolk, and the benefits it would create for local residents and the economy would be significant. So, this would still be a good return on our investment but I don't anticipate that this will come to pass, and we hope to hear more from the Department for Transport in the near future on the suggestion that they will increase their funding contribution for major projects like the Norwich Western Link. The £213m of funding would go towards other schemes across the country and be lost to Norfolk should this scheme not go ahead.

7.3

Question from Cllr Paul Neale

Recently the cabinet member said that Park and Ride is an important part of our transport strategy and the renewal of the contract gives us an opportunity to take stock and find out what residents would like to see from the service in the future. Norfolk residents have suggested to me that the county-run Park and Ride sites would make an ideal place for informal car shares to take place for residents traveling into Norwich if parking at the site could be made free to them. Does the cabinet member agree that this is a good idea and will he work with partners such as Liftshare to facilitate its progression?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

As part of the re-procurement of the Park & Ride contract we will be exploring all options. However, we do need to make sure that there is enough revenue from the service to keep the services viable. Allowing people to park for free and not use the bus service means lost revenue if those spaces would have been taken up by a Park & Ride user.

Supplementary question from Cllr Paul Neale

The Chancellor's autumn budget makes clear that real term deep cuts will be made in public spending. Momentum is growing from more local authorities having to declare 114 notices unable to balance their books with year on year real term reductions in government funding settlements. As this council already plans over £26 million cuts to its own budget, will they now have to make even more savage cuts to balance their books?

Response from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Thank you for your question. Forecasts accompanying the Autumn Statement undoubtedly suggest a challenging financial landscape for public services in future years. I have previously commented to Council on the increased number of s114 notices, and I remain

very aware of the risks to the financial sustainability of all authorities at the present time. However, there were very few specific announcements within the Autumn Statement directly relating to local government. As such, the Council is considering the implications of the broader changes, such as the increase to the National Living Wage, as part of 2024-25 Budget setting in the context of previous Government announcements including the Policy Statement issued in December 2022. It was disappointing, although not unexpected, that the Government did not set out any additional funding for social care at the Autumn Statement. The Council therefore continues to await the Provisional Settlement later in December, which will be critical to provide more detail and to inform our planning position for 2024-25. At this stage, and as set out in the October report to Cabinet, the Council is continuing to work to identify further savings, including a third round of Budget Challenge in December, which will contribute to the setting of a balanced budget in February 2024. It remains the case that the Council faces significant budget pressures, a combination of inflation and increasing demand which is outpacing our ability to meet it. This growth will be provided for in our spending plans meaning that in overall terms, the Council will be spending more next year than it does currently. The Budget reports to Cabinet and Full Council next year will provide details of the full implications of Government funding announcements, as well as the forecast level of savings required to balance the Budget over the medium term financial strategy period. As always, the budget setting process and savings targets will be kept under review as budget planning progresses.

7.4

Question from Cllr Catherine Rowett

Can the Cabinet member explain what checks have been done and what legal advice has been obtained to secure confidence that the Environment statement, including impacts on biodiversity, relating to the NWL will be robust and comply with all necessary legislation.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

The Council has appointed WSP as the competent experts to prepare the Environmental Statement. The Council has also appointed specialist legal advisors to advise the Council on its proposed application for planning permission. A legal review of all the planning application documents is being carried out prior to finalisation and submission of the planning application.

Supplementary question from Cllr Catherine Rowett

What risk analysis has the Council carried out on the delivery of the policies and proposals in the council's Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), and especially the LTP4 carbon reduction targets, in cases of with and without the NWL scheme?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

County Council officers are monitoring delivery of the local transport plan and will take a report to Members at Select Committee in the spring. Specifically on the carbon target, work on carbon quantification is being put underway that will provide an evidence base and technical support that can be used to inform decision-making on the measures required for the carbon target. Members will know that we are waiting for further guidance on local transport plans, first trailed by government in 2022. We will take stock of the guidance as and when it is released by government in respect of this work and also consider implications of the guidance on any other aspects of LTP.

Question from Cllr Brian Watkins

7.5

Last year, the government opened a new immigration route by expanding the health worker visa scheme to include care workers. However, there are reports that restrictions could be put in place to reduce net migration to the UK. Professor Martin Green, CEO of Care England has said that some of the changes proposed could make it harder for providers to retain and recruit overseas staff and increase the risk of forcing some of them out of business altogether. Norfolk's care market is under huge strain and close to breaking point. How does the Cabinet member believe that residents and their loved ones will be impacted if the restrictions are implemented?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Thank you for your question.

The introduction of the health and social care visa helped the adult social care market to rapidly bolster vital workforce capacity, and has improved retention rates - enabling greater continuity of care. Furthermore International Recruits (IR) have enabled greater diversity within the workforce, beneficial for decision making, innovation and problem solving.

There are around 62 adult social care providers in Norfolk that currently hold a license to sponsor international workers, so recruitment from outside of the UK is a key feature of some, but not all workforce strategies. Developing sustainable approaches to increase domestic based recruitment remains a priority, as we rise to the challenge to resource ever growing demand.

Supplementary question from Cllr Brian Watkins

This Council faces a budget shortfall of £46 million for the forthcoming 2024/25 financial year. This is a staggeringly high amount and is by far the highest deficit faced by any other local authority in the East of England as 'Politics East' recently highlighted. You have repeated on several occasions that although worrying, Norfolk County Council is not standing on the edge of a financial precipice. Are you prepared to stake your administration's reputation that this remains the case and that the Council's financial future is safe in your hands?

Response from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Thank you for your question. I would note in this context that all local authorities are highly dependent on central government funding decisions and we continue to face significant uncertainty about funding levels for 2024-25 and beyond. This is why we continue to call on Government to provide us with funding certainty over the medium to longer term to enable sustainable and robust long-term financial planning. In terms of 2024-25 planning, you are correct that £46m is a significant budget gap, and I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge this represents. However, I would note that it is significantly less than the gap of £59.927m which we addressed in the 2023-24 budget, and is broadly in line with average level of savings that the Council has found each year since 2011-12 (£564.933m budgeted in total, representing an average of c£43m savings for each year). The size of the gap reflects the fact that this administration is being realistic during budget setting about the level of financial pressures we face each year. We will continue our approach of tackling this in a managed and robust way. This Council has a strong track record of balancing the budget each year.

Question from Cllr Rob Colwell

7.6 With 'efficiency saving' in the budget consultation significantly impacting children's services, what reassurances can you provide to Norfolk families who say their child's special educational needs are not currently being identified?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The support that is provided for children with special educational needs is a combination of support direct from early years settings, schools and colleges and that provided by Children's Services. In simple terms children at 'SEN Support' have their support provided by educational settings with funding delegated directly to them (£38million+ annually) and for those with 'Education, Health & Care Plans' provided by Children's Services. The majority of funding for SEN in this way is via the High Needs Block grant and the Local First Inclusion programme, which has been set out in detail at Cabinet and Committee throughout this year, is the joint DfE / NCC £100million investment to increase opportunities for mainstream inclusion alongside expanding our specialist provision over a six year period. A key focus of this new programme of work is identify needs earlier and putting in place effective support.

Second question from Cllr Rob Colwell

It is welcome to see £2m of levelling up funding for Hunstanton to build a new library and bus stop. However, many residents have raised concerns about the lack of facilities currently available in the area for disabled and less able people. Between now and September 2024, what is the plan to ensure that these people are provided with suitable facilities to meet their needs?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

These types of facility are the responsibility of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, however the County Council is refurbishing the library and creating a Travel and Community Hub in the heart of Hunstanton. This will enable residents, tourists, people working in Hunstanton and those who use the town to; access services, travel easily, use greener travel options including cycling as well as accessing an improved library offer with Adult Education and Tourist Information, combined with spaces for community groups and outreach.

The Travel and Community Hub share many aims and objectives, including improving access to community services, improving visitor information and transport connections, and promoting net-zero and sustainability. It will also provide refurbished community toilet facilities including a new Changing Places facility.

The refurbished, accessible library will be a community space for all with computers and free Wi-Fi, activities for all ages including 'Bounce and Rhyme' sessions, 'Just a Cuppa', 'Knit and Knatter' and many more.

The project is estimated to cost £2m, with £1m being funded through the Norfolk Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and £1m from the County Councils Capital Fund.

The work is being carried out in two phases to avoid disruption during the busy summer season and we are aiming to keep the bus station operational throughout both phases of the work. All elements of the project are planned to be completed by early 2025.

Question from Cllr David Sayers

7.7 How can the council address the critical funding gap in the early years sector, particularly with the current inadequacy in covering nursery charges? The sector, a lifeline for families, faces a recruitment crisis and is making it impossible to accommodate more children. Staff, overworked and underpaid, are at breaking point. Insufficient funding fails to attract talent, barely covering growing daily costs. The widening gap between government funding rates and the living wage exacerbates the issue. Without an improved funding offer, providers may struggle to retain qualified staff, jeopardising the sector's vital role. What immediate steps can the council take to rectify this urgent funding shortfall?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Early Education and Childcare funding rates are set using a national funding formula. As a local authority we consult with early years providers and a consultative group of early years providers to determine with Schools Forum the best local formula for distribution of this funding within a strict set of limited rules. We are not able to distribute more funding than we receive from central government.

In the Spring budget there were several announcements which have the potential to make a significant difference to the childcare market in Norfolk – this included from September some increase in funding for 3-to-4-year olds and a significant increase in the funding rate for 2-year-olds. Starting in April there will be a phasing in of extended entitlements for working families of children from 9 months of age. Funding allocations to local authorities were published on the 29th November – with an increase of 4.6% to the base rate for 3-and-4-year olds. The local authority will receive £5.48 per funded 3-and-4-year old, £7.70 per funded 2 year old and £10.48 for children under 2. The government has stated the revised rates reflect the increase to the national minimum wage. We remain in full agreement that funding rates remain too low, but welcome the increase and continue to do everything we can to maximise the funding available to providers.

Recruitment and retention is an issue nationwide – the Department for Education (DfE) are starting a national early years recruitment campaign in the new year and are promoting early years apprenticeships to try and grow the workforce, but there remain significant challenges across the care and education sectors in recruiting and retaining staff as a result of competition from other sectors and the increased cost of living. We have also supported new providers to open, including Little Gillies, a new provision in Wells-next-the-Sea. We have an active childminder recruitment campaign where we are supporting more new childminders to enter the market with training and start-up funding. We continue to effectively support providers to adapt their business models and be sustainable.

The evidence suggests that despite significant challenges, Early Education and Childcare in Norfolk remains strong - the percentage of good and outstanding early years providers is slightly above the national average (the most recent figures show that 97% of Norfolk providers are good or outstanding, compared to 96% nationally) and the percentage of children who reach expected standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is above the national average in every Early Learning Goal

Second question from Cllr David Sayers

The February 2023 P&CSC report outlined notable EHCP progress, especially in initial assessments. Challenges remain in prolonged EHCP plan production. EHCP reviews face persistent challenges. Baseline data comparisons highlight positive trends, but sustained efforts are crucial for EHCP performances to meet statutory timescales. How does the council intend to address challenges, ensuring timely EHCP processes and enhanced outcomes for SEND children? Additionally, could the council provide updates on progress post November 2022, indicating any continued improvement in EHCP performance?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The current performance for the number of new EHCPs issued within the 20 week timeframe is 42.3% (taken as a cumulative measure January to end of October 2023). The marginal reduction in performance from 2022 arises from clearing a large backlog of overdue EHCPs in the first quarter of 2023 where recognition should be given to the team who produce EHCPs whose exemplary performance has resulted in record numbers of new EHCPs being issued so far this year. As at October 2023, 2039 EHCPs have been newly issued, an 87% increase on the total for 2022. Demand for EHCPs continues at overwhelming rate, with requests for EHCPs on course to reach 2,500 for 2023, an increase of a further 25% from 2022's record peak. The Council continues to support EHCP delivery with further reviews of the resourcing within those teams, and effective use of the commercial sector to supply Educational Psychology resource which is suffering from national shortage. Critical to an EHCP system that is ultimately sustainable is enabling the children's needs to be more effectively met at SEND Support and this is the cornerstone of the Council's Local First Inclusion strategy which places resource, funding and support directly into mainstream schools, early years settings and colleges so that children's needs are well met and the confidence in this system increases.

7.8 **Question from Cllr Terry Jermy**

I am grateful that following my question at the Corporate Select Committee meeting that officers have confirmed there remains approximately 15,000 streetlights in Norfolk still to be upgraded to LED. This is of course disappointing news given the benefits that LED upgrades have. Can the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation confirm how many are located in each Councillor division and the timetable for upgrading those remaining 15,000 lights to LED?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation

Works are ongoing and will be completed in two years time.

The remaining non LED lights are on many roads which have been built or adopted since the start of the PFI contract. Outside of these adoptions, the remaining roads are those with the lowest energy use, as our previous upgrade programmes targeted the roads with lighting systems that used the most energy, which would therefore save the most carbon and money.

The programme of 15,000 lights are spread across the county and I have asked the team to send you details of the lights within your division.

Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton

7.9	<p>Can the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation confirm what actions are being taken to ensure the property and grounds of the Angel Road Junior School site does not fall into further disrepair?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation / Children's Services</p> <p>As previously indicated to Members, the responsibility for the site and buildings at Angel Road at present remains with the Evolution Academy Trust (EAT) under its academy lease. However, we have been working with the EAT on the basis the site will return to NCC, acknowledging that the Multi-Academy Trust has Secretary of State for Education permission to surrender the lease once the conditions are met.</p> <p>As a result, we have worked with EAT to specify the required level of security on the site, set out by NCC insurers, so when it does return to the NCC Estate, it will not require additional works to secure. When the buildings and site are surrendered back to the County Council, officers from Children's Services and Corporate Property Team will visit and agree an appropriate monitoring schedule.</p> <p>We will commission any works to the ground periodically to ensure it remains relatively tidy.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby</p> <p>Can the Leader confirm the carbon impact of reintroducing the "Your Norfolk" magazine being sent to every household in Norfolk and how this is being measured?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p> <p>Your Norfolk has been reintroduced in paper format, acknowledging not all households have access to digital means, to give residents essential information regarding winter issues and to ensure we reached every household in the County.</p> <p>We have sought further details from our printing and distribution suppliers and we will provide further information as we receive it. We believe any impact is outweighed by the benefits of supplying useful council information to all county residents, which digital channels cannot achieve on their own. We have already received a positive reaction to the reintroduced print edition.</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Colleen Walker</p> <p>Since my question last month, the people of Hemsby have seen further permanent loss and damage to the coastline, creating continuing anguish and uncertainty. The Council resolved to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – please can you share the letter that was sent and the response received?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>Thank you for your question. This matter was debated fully at the Scrutiny committee and there was a resolution to write to government concerning the appointment of a Coastal and Flood Minister. This will be brought before Council this month for debate and should it be agreed a letter will be sent from the Leader of the Council to the Secretary of State. A copy will be shared with members at that time</p>