

**Cabinet**  
**Minutes of the Virtual Teams Meeting held on Monday 7**  
**September 2020 at 10am**

**Present:**

Cllr Andrew Proctor	Chairman. Leader & Cabinet Member for Strategy & Governance.
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention.
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships.
Cllr John Fisher	Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
Cllr Tom FitzPatrick	Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance.
Cllr Andy Grant	Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste.
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Greg Peck	Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management.
Cllr Graham Plant	Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy.
Cllr Martin Wilby	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport.

**Also Present:**

Lorne Green	Police & Crime Commissioner for Norfolk (for items 8 and 9).
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**Executive Directors Present:**

James Bullion	Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Helen Edwards	Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
Simon George	Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services
Tom McCabe	Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services and Head of Paid Service.
Fiona McDiarmid	Executive Director of Strategy & Governance
Chris Snudden	Director of Learning and Inclusion, Children's Services (For Executive Director of Children's Services)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Cabinet meeting and advised viewers that pursuant to The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, the meeting was being held under new Regulations which had been brought in to deal with the restrictions under Covid 19. Decisions made in the meeting would have the same standing and validity as if they had been made in a meeting in County Hall.

Cabinet Members and Executive Directors formally introduced themselves.

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Sara Tough, Executive Director of Children's Services.

## **2 Minutes**

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on Monday 3 August 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

## **3 Declaration of Interests**

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

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

There were no matters referred to Cabinet.

## **5 Items of Urgent Business**

5.1.1 The Chairman advised that the following report would be considered by Cabinet. The report was considered urgent due to the nature of the topic and the need for immediate action and was not subject to the call-in procedure.

5.1.2 The Chairman read out a statement which set out the current position regarding the Covid-19 situation at Banham Poultry and also highlighted that Norfolk had been designated an area of enhanced support. A copy of the statement is attached at Appendix A.

### **5.2 Banham Poultry Covid-19 Outbreak.**

5.2.1 Cabinet received the report by the Head of Paid Service updating Members on the measures taken to contain the outbreak and to protect the public; ensure the welfare of Banham Poultry workers affected by the outbreak; help the company manage its voluntary partial closure and work with other similar food production companies to take further steps to ensure a Covid-secure work environment, following a Coronavirus outbreak at Banham Poultry in Attleborough.

5.2.2 In introducing the report, the Chairman thanked everyone involved at Norfolk County Council and Partners for their unstinting work over the last three weeks following the covid outbreak at Banham Poultry. Norfolk had not had the high incidence of cases that had been seen elsewhere in the country which could be attributed to Norfolk's residents and businesses following government guidelines to help protect Norfolk.

There was no evidence that the outbreak at Banham Poultry had spread beyond the staff and their households. The ongoing risk of transmission at the site was low, as well as the risk to the wider population and other food producers.

The report detailed the work that had been carried out by Norfolk County Council and its Partners on this particular outbreak and although there had been some

criticism about the speed of response, Public Health and other colleagues had worked methodically in testing and managing tracing of contacts.

Initially, following the outbreak, Public Health had recommended that all Banham Poultry staff leave the factory and isolate for 14 days or 10 days as necessary. The total number of cases stood at 119 and the percentage of infections to staff had now dropped from the initial 20% to approximately 7%.

The Chairman highlighted the assistance for contact tracing, as well as the Partnership Working as set out in the report and added that, despite the outbreak, infection rates were low compared to the rest of England and the East of England and this remained the case. The Local Outbreak Control Plan structure mainly for Norfolk Local Authorities, Public Health was stood up and the details of representatives from each organisation could be found in the report.

The Chairman also highlighted that Norfolk had been identified as an area of enhanced support which meant it would have quicker access to data; a better link to national resources and services; access to mobile testing units; priority for test results and also ring-fencing of some NHS track and trace call centres and resources. This would make it possible to continue to manage the outbreak as well as being ready should any other local outbreaks occur.

- 5.2.3 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention thanked the Public Health Team, led by Dr Louise Smith, for the immense amount of work they had carried out 24/7 since the first cases at Banham Poultry had been identified. He added that he would also like to thank the District Councils, particularly Breckland District Council, Norwich City Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council, the districts where the majority of the employees at Banham Poultry had lived, for their support. He also added that this outbreak had demonstrated the ability of local bodies in Norfolk to constructively work together.
- 5.2.4 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance echoed the comments of the Chairman and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention, adding that everyone involved had worked hard and continued to work hard following the outbreak. The outbreak had been identified and contained quickly and it was now a matter for everyone to keep up their guard and follow government advice which had worked well and he hoped if everyone continued to follow advice, the number of cases could be reduced further.
- 5.2.5 The Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy highlighted that the situation had been well contained in Great Yarmouth and the Public Health Team had done an excellent job in working on behalf of Norfolk to ensure residents and visitors to Norfolk were kept safe. The Cabinet Member also thanked the Government for recognising that help was needed locally and that this had now been received.
- 5.2.6 The Chairman thanked Cabinet for their comments in recognising the work that had been done and would continue to be done in the future. In moving the recommendations, the Chairman proposed the following amendment to recommendation 2. Cabinet agreed the proposal.

“To support the move to Norfolk County Council becoming a locally supported contact tracing area to support and protect Norfolk residents, recognising that full

costs are still to be confirmed and that they are likely to create a cost pressure **and delegating the final decision to the Leader as the Chairman of the Norfolk Covid 19 Engagement Board.**”

5.2.7 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To **Acknowledge** the work that has been carried out by NCC and partners in containing this Coronavirus outbreak
2. To **Support** the move to Norfolk County Council becoming a locally supported contact tracing area to support and protect Norfolk residents, recognising that full costs are still to be confirmed and that they are likely to create a cost pressure and delegating the final decision to the Leader as the Chairman of the Norfolk Covid-19 Engagement Board.
3. Members **continue** to support and promote Protect Yourself, Protect Others Protect Norfolk public health messages to keep residents safe.

**6 Public Question Time**

6.1 The list of public questions and responses is attached to these minutes at Appendix B.

6.2 **Supplementary Question from Cavan Stewart:**

Mr Stewart said he was pleased that the request for a 20mph speed limit on the Quebec Road and Wolfe Road in Thorpe Hamlet had been approved, adding that Cabinet should be aware that he had already submitted a petition which had been approved by Council officers some time ago. As a supplementary question, Mr Stewart asked if the Cabinet Member would confirm that the petition represented sufficient public consultation and that, assuming the Local Member Funding was available from the Local Member, if he could outline a time frame within which action could be taken.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport agreed to provide a written response regarding the consultation after he had checked that everyone who needed to be consulted had been consulted. In response to the supplementary question, the Cabinet Member said that as soon as the funding was in place, he looked forward to the work being carried out, which should be within 12 months.

6.3 **Supplementary Question from Mr Tim Jones.**

As a supplementary question, Mr Jones asked, given the Council’s public health remit, if it could have been proactive in ensuring businesses were adequately prepared rather than leaving the health of companies to private companies and intervening after an outbreak had occurred.

In reply, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention said that the onus was on companies themselves to ensure they took necessary steps to keep employees safe as failure to do so could result in their business being shut down, leading to economic disruption to their business and reputation. He added that the Health and Safety Executive was currently investigating and until the results were known, he was unable to comment further.

6.4 The Chairman introduced, Dr Louise Smith, Director of Public Health who updated Cabinet on the current situation.

Dr Smith echoed the comments of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention, in that responsibility for the safety of business premises rested with the Health and Safety Executive. She added that colleagues in Environmental Health at Breckland District Council had been working with businesses to encourage them to instigate preventative measures and was also working with the Health & Safety Executive with specific focus on Banham Poultry.

The Director of Public Health advised that, together with Environmental Health colleagues across the District Councils, over 25,000 toolkits supporting businesses in how they could ensure their premises were covid-safe had been distributed.

The Director reassured Cabinet that early evidence indicated, regarding the outbreak at Banham Poultry, that measures had been taken in line with national guidance and that the opinion of the Health and Safety Executive as to whether the response was sufficient remained outstanding.

## **7 Local Member Questions/Issues**

7.1 The list of Local Member questions and the responses is attached at Appendix C.

7.2 As a supplementary question Cllr Squire said that the response stated that body cams were used in local hot spots and that incidents were rare, which was not as reported by her local Highways Manager. She added that incidents could, and did, happen anywhere. Body cams were used as standard on highways staff in other areas and gained valuable evidence for prosecution purposes. She asked if it was the case that Norfolk County Council should do the same to protect staff and contractors.

In reply, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport agreed to consider the body cams issue and would raise the matter with the Director of Highways.

7.3 As a supplementary question Cllr Kemp said the reply to her question was inaccurate as this was a major development which would cause a climate change crisis in King's Lynn and that the Cabinet Member should know that the planning permission for Hardings Way expired (after 3 years) last week and the traffic order drafted was inaccurate. She asked if the Cabinet Member realised he would be acting illegally and bringing the County Council into disrepute if he carried out work on Hardings Way, eg bore holes, or bringing bulldozers in and would he desist.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport agreed to provide a written response.

### **7.4 Written supplementary question from Cllr Smith-Clare.**

In addition to problems some families have in feeding their children, the confusion and failure to deliver adequate transport arrangements for the return to school leaves many families feeling let down. Despite refusing to take this as urgent business for this morning's cabinet will he apologise and explain how this will put right.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services replied that transport arrangements for the return to school had been sorted, adding that Cllr Smith-Clare appeared to have got his information from social media, which was not the most up to date

situation. He added that there was no need for further explanation or to apologise to the families concerned.

**7.5 Written supplementary question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby**

Would the cabinet member like to explain what this means 'It is not the role of a Children's Services to ensure that all children are fed'?

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services replied that it was self explanatory and that it was not the role of children's services to ensure children were fed. He added that the budget was for education, social work, engaging with families and for safeguarding, adding that if a child was suffering from malnutrition it would become a safeguarding issue and Children's Services would step in to deal with the situation. The Cabinet Member added that he would be pleased to have the budget, but taking on responsibility for feeding children would take up almost the entire budget for Children's Services, which was not possible unless it became a safeguarding issue. He reiterated that feeding children was a parental responsibility unless it became a safeguarding issue.

**7.6 Written supplementary question from Cllr Brenda Jones**

That does not answer the question. Has an assessment been done taking account of the impact of modes of travel to and from the campus given the experience of remote working, taking account of operational effectiveness, overall costs and impact on carbon emissions?

The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management responded that Cllr Jones had been provided with all the data in May 2020, adding that if remote working continued and was successful, there was no intention to leave County Hall empty. Any empty spaces would be utilised, possibly by sub-letting. He added that if Cllr Jones had any other queries she may wish to contact him directly.

**7.7 Written supplementary question from Cllr Colleen Walker**

Is the cabinet member saying that Whitlingham and Holt Hall have in effect closed their door permanently? That's what it sounds like to me.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services confirmed that the future of both Whitlingham and Holt Hall was currently out for consultation, although both premises were currently closed due to covid-19. Consultation with staff and schools was currently taking place, responses had been received from schools and work was now being carried out with staff as part of the consultation. He reassured Cllr Walker that there was no intention for Holt Hall and Whitlingham to be permanently closed, adding that currently Whitlingham was being used by Trowse School as part of their normal school premises whilst they were waiting extra space to be ready.

**7.8** As a supplementary question, Cllr Emma Corlett asked if the Leader would agree, that regardless of the situation regarding funding from central government and the delayed green paper, there were many issues that needed to be addressed for people living with a disability and their carers, who had been caring 24/7 for six months solidly now. For example planning for a second wave and hearing directly what people need to avoid the isolation, pressure and burnout of shielding. Do you therefore not agree that for second wave planning and for recovery planning if we are going to ensure people already disadvantaged don't get further left behind

there are things you need to hear first-hand, even if you don't think there are things to discuss?

The Chairman replied that everyone appreciated the issues faced by members of the DNNG (Disability Norfolk Network Group) and recognised that the whole of the Adult Social Services budget had been, and remained, under considerable pressure for a wide variety of reasons. He added that it was incumbent on Norfolk County Council to continue to support all its service users and all local authorities knew how important it was to keep up the pressure on government for additional and better funding.

- 7.9 As a supplementary question, Cllr Steve Morphey said that the strong recommendation from the Independent Panel was not to take the allowances increase this year and asked what message the answer gave to Norfolk residents and businesses which were under such pressure now.

The Chairman replied that part of the response to the question was contained in his initial response, but recognised that the allowances increase was linked to staff salaries and had been locked in on that basis. He added that many people had not taken the increase and would not do so during the course of the year. He also added that the issue had been fully debated at the County Council meeting in February 2020.

7.10 **Written supplementary question from Cllr Chris Jones**

The question was whether you would accept it if it were on offer – would you accept the opportunity to apply a further precept if the government said it was permissible?

In reply the Chairman stated that nothing would be ruled in or out at this stage.

## **8 Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service – Training Facilities**

- 8.1 The Chairman welcomed Norfolk's Police & Crime Commissioner, Lorne Green, to the meeting for agenda items 8 and 9.
- 8.2 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services setting out the County Council's intention to develop a joint emergency services training academy with Norfolk Constabulary. The academy would use a number of training venues, each being best suited to meet the needs of learning outcomes and 21<sup>st</sup> century people. The report focused on an early opportunity to develop the academy approach by collaborating with Norfolk Constabulary to develop the former Hethersett Old Hall School sited (owned by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner).
- 8.3 In introducing the report, the Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services highlighted that ways of collaborating with colleagues in Norfolk Constabulary and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner continued to be explored and this report was a further example which would hopefully come to fruition over the coming months.
- 8.4 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management advised that the current training facilities for operational fire and rescue service training were based in two locations – Scottow Enterprise Park and at Bowthorpe, adding that

the training centre at Bowthorpe was over 30 years old and the building was in need of modernisation if it was to be retained.

He continued that Norfolk Constabulary had recently purchased the former Hethersett Old Hall School site and was in the process of developing the site as their primary base for training staff, and that exploring opportunities to deliver the fire and rescue service training requirements in a shared facility at Hethersett may result in the Bowthorpe site no longer being required, which may free it up for other County Council use, or potential disposal. The Bowthorpe site sat within an industrial park on the edge of Norwich and would be an attractive site for business, which could generate capital receipts as well as a subsequent reduction in the property maintenance budget.

- 8.5 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships advised that the Health & Safety at Work Act 2015 required the County Council to provide training for employees. As part of the collaboration with Norfolk Constabulary, there was an opportunity to jointly use their premises at Hethersett as an emergency services training academy which was a great opportunity for staff to learn, train and practice together and would be beneficial when they attended an emergency.

The Cabinet Member continued that, as already stated, the fire service training centre at Bowthorpe was over 30 years old and it would be more cost effective to share the Hethersett premises than to update that site. The training facilities at Scottow Enterprise Park, where fire fighters practiced entering smoke filled rooms and the Police may be interested in gaining practical experience by using this site for “dirty training” as opposed to the Hethersett site providing “clean training” with both sites complementing each other.

The Cabinet Member moved the recommendation to work with Norfolk Constabulary to develop the joint training services academy at Hethersett and at the same time consider what other training infrastructure may be useful for both services in the future.

- 8.6 The Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) welcomed the collaboration and cooperation at Hethersett Old Hall School, but felt more detail about the services and implications of deliverability and resources was needed, as he had put over £3m into the purchase of the facility with additional money to renovate the property.

Regarding collaboration, he asked the Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships to let him know what the call-rate on the fire service side was, as the Police control room was currently receiving approximately 800-1000 calls per day. The Cabinet Member would let the PCC have the information after the meeting.

The PCC asked who was paying for the office at Wymondham Control Centre being used by the Chief Fire Officer Team, as it had been occupied for some time now and some discussion was needed on the financial implications, as collaboration did not come without cost. In reply the Cabinet member for Communities & Partnerships said that the building had been offered to the Fire Service to improve collaboration and that discussions could be held outside the meeting.

- 8.7 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance stated that Norfolk people welcomed the collaboration of the police, fire and ambulance



services and that it was incumbent on parties to ensure it worked, although details of finances still needed working through.

8.8 The Chairman advised that the details of the collaboration would be considered at Joint Collaboration Board meetings.

8.9 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management agreed that a public meeting was not the right place to discuss commercial arrangements and that his understanding was that the facility at Wymondham control centre had been offered at nil value.

8.10 Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. **Agree** to work with Norfolk Constabulary to develop the emergency services training academy concept.
2. **Collaborate** with Norfolk Constabulary to develop the former Hethersett Old Hall site, as set out in the report.
3. **Task officers** to carry out a detailed feasibility study of other necessary improvements to the wider training infrastructure and, if viable, to develop a detailed business case for Members to consider.

#### 8.11 **Evidence and reasons for Decision**

There are a number of potential benefits in progressing the joint training academy approach as set out in this report. These include: -

- Bringing local buildings back into productive use, to support the local Economy
- Providing certainty in terms of future use of sites, enabling work to start and avoiding the sites falling into further disrepair
- Providing modern, progressive facilities reflecting the changing needs of emergency service staff to deliver the changing needs of Norfolk.
- Supports an efficient approach to use of resources by placing emergency services in the best possible position to enable shared and common approaches
- Whilst the development will focus on emergency service needs, and facilities could be made available for other NCC and public service authorities to access, building the shared training academy approach even further
- Ensuring Norfolk and its partners through the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) are well placed to respond to emergency response and emerging central government policy in relation to securing community wellbeing, emergency response and security.

#### 8.12 **Alternative Options**

The existing site at Bowthorpe, which is owned by the County Council, could be developed further. Retaining Fire and Rescue training at Bowthorpe in the medium/long term would require some investment in the building to enable modern facilities. There is not space on site to create the range of facilities required for our fire service and support an integrated approach to multi-agency emergency response training.

We could explore utilising the former Hethersett Old Hall School site as a single joint training academy location. There is not space on site to create the additional capability likely to be needed (e.g. a scenario room approach) and therefore it would not be possible to create this new capability. In addition, it may not be possible to locate all relevant training onto this site either as a result of potential planning issues or because it does not fit with the vision for the site.

## **9 Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service HMICFRS Improvement Plan Update**

- 9.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services setting out the progress made to deliver the activities set out in the Improvement Plan since it was last reviewed by Cabinet in June 2020 and the plans for further improvement activities.
- 9.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:
- Since Cabinet had first reviewed the plan, the service had set up staff working groups to create and develop action plans. They had been working on the completion of community risk, concept of operations review, delivery of tactical response vehicles, the establishment of the community fire safety courses, publication of the people strategy framework and completion of the equality, diversity and inclusion plan.
  - The service had been working with Norfolk County Council analytics team to identify the areas in the county that were most vulnerable to fire and other emergencies to better inform the community risk profile.
  - The service had invested in new ICT equipment and software and had commenced transferring to Norfolk County Council ICT systems.
  - Information on the use of resources and collaborative work with blue light and other agencies when responding to the covid-19 issues would help inform the operations review which was due to commence in October 2020.
  - The new cultural framework made it clear that bullying and harassment was not acceptable and advised people to assist in how to resolve staff issues and assist with cultural, equality, diversity or inclusion issues.
  - The 2020 recruitment campaign had been designed to increase the diversity of the workforce and the July campaign for whole-time firefighters had attracted 876 applications, many of whom were women.
  - Five new tactical response vehicles had been purchased and fire stations were being upgraded.
  - The service was considering opportunities to develop improved training facilities.
  - A sub-Committee of the Infrastructure & Development Select Committee included members from all groups and unions and enabled proposals to be considered by them before being presented to main committees to ensure all aspects were covered. The Sub-Committee had met and considered this report w/c 31 August.
- 9.3 The Police & Crime Commissioner thanked the Cabinet Member for the report on the progress on improvements and asked her for details of how many public engagement activities had been carried out over the last six months. In reply the Cabinet Member said that, due to social distancing, social engagement that would normally have been carried out in inspecting homes and business premises had not

been carried out, although the service was in touch with the public electronically rather than face to face.

9.4 The Police & Crime Commissioner asked if the Cabinet Member could give an assurance for budget growth in the Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service budget for the next five years. The Cabinet Member replied that, as there was a local election scheduled for 2021, it was not possible to give an assurance, although the service was well prepared for next year.

9.5 The Cabinet Member confirmed that she was aiming to move from “requiring improvement” to “good” at the next inspection.

9.6 Cabinet reviewed and considered the progress made in delivering the Improvement Plan as set out in Appendix A of the report, and **RESOLVED** to:

1. **Agree** to receive a further update on progress at the Cabinet meeting in December 2020.

#### 9.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The Improvement Plan aims to address the areas for improvement identified by the HMICFRS, and are focussed on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the service, and how we look after our people. The Improvement Plan sets out the activities the Chief Fire Officer has identified as necessary in order to demonstrate paying due regard to the findings of the HMICRS inspection, but also to improve the service for Norfolk communities.

The new Strategic Development Oversight Group will ensure that those groups representing Fire and Rescue staff are able to be involved in the future development of the service.

#### 9.8 **Alternative Options**

Cabinet may wish to amend or make additions to the Improvement Plan.

### 10 **Finance Monitoring Report 2020-21 P4: July 2020**

10.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services which gave a summary of the forecast financial position for the 2020-21 Revenue and Capital Budgets, General Balances, and the Council’s Reserves at 31 March 2021, together with related financial information.

10.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:

- The level of overspend was stable for the period ending 31 July 2020. It was now £7.901m.
- Covid-related grant funding had increased from £50.691m to £63.824m whilst covid-related financial pressures were now forecast to amount to £75.421m.
- Appendix 1 provided details of the overspend and underspend.
- The impact of the pandemic for CES had mainly been due to loss of income. It was expected the claim for lost income for the period April to

July 2020 would be submitted to MHCLG in September 2020 and as well as CES, the scope to recover lost income for adult and children's services was also being considered.

- Adult Social Services saw a small net increase in the forecast overspend in July due to an increase of £1.2m in purchase of care. This provided evidence of the Council's continued support for the sector throughout the pandemic.
- From 1 September 2020, the current discharge arrangements with NHS may change, so that placements made through the pathway prior to that date would be assessed as if under normal funding policies. This situation was being closely monitored. The worst case scenario could mean an additional £5.5m liability would need to be found this financial year to fund the ongoing increased costs which would have an additional and severe impact on the 2021-22 budget should funding not be made available to cover the costs.
- At the end of July 2020, children's services continued to forecast a break-even outturn. They received £747k additional funding to alleviate home to school transport costs for the first half only of the autumn term which would offset covid related pressures in that area.
- The high needs block within the dedicated schools grant remained a cause for concern as the forecast overspend within the block was now £9.7m. Any overspend in 2020-21 would be added to the cumulative overspend brought forward, totalling £19.703m, therefore the deficit carried forward could be approximately £29.4m. Currently the Department for Education had stated they expected to work with local authorities to enable them to pay off their deficits within the Dedicated Schools Grant funds, and work was being carried out with the DfE to understand the full implications.
- Considerable uncertainty remained around the immediate impact of covid-19 on school budgets, particularly if a second spike led to school closures, an increase in exclusion numbers, referral rates and greater demand for the high needs block.
- Covid related funding secured to date totalled £63.824m. the bulk of the additional £13.13m received was made up of Norfolk's infection control fund grant with 75% of the fund being used within care homes to help them cover the costs of implementing measures to reduce transmission. The balance must be used for infection control measures, although it could be allocated based on the Council's assessment of need.
- Any financial implications arising from the operational actions undertaken to control the covid outbreak at Banham Poultry at Attleborough were expected to be met from within the County Council's allocation of the £3.718m received by Public Health to cover the costs of responding to the outbreak.
- Forecast covid related costs were summarised in revenue annex 2 and was currently £11.6m more than the funding received to date. Work would continue with the MHCLG on the detail of lost income support and more generally with MPs and the government to increase the overall level of support.
- Cabinet was being asked to consider 2 recommendations relating to the capital programme. The first recommendation was the additional cost of £8.5m to be funded from borrowing of the next phase of main road LED street lighting across Norfolk, with a further 15k lights being upgraded, resulting in a forecast annual saving of approximately £900k, equating to 2 tonnes of co2.

- The second recommendation was the drawdown of £2.7m from the existing Accommodation Rationalisation capital budget to fund improvements to the County Hall North Wing, including public areas and meeting rooms.

10.3 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Manager supported the Cabinet Member for Finance comments adding that there had been some misrepresentation in the media about the maintenance work which needed to be carried out in the north wing to bring it back into use. The works would make the area health and safety and disability compliant. He added that, completing the work while the building was not being used was more cost effective and would also avoid disruption to services when the building was occupied. There was also a cost benefit, as prior to covid-19 approximately £1.2m per year was being spent on renting accommodation for seminars and events for 50-100 people. Once the work had been completed, the accommodation in county hall would cater for that number of people for functions. It would also be possible for community groups and members of the public to rent the space at evenings and weekends, generating revenue.

10.4 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships, as the portfolio holder for Equality & Diversity, welcomed the opportunity to make the meeting area at county hall more accessible for people with disabilities and agreed that now was the right time to carry out the work.

10.5 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance agreed that this was the right time to carry out the work, particularly the asbestos removal, as it could be done without disrupting work at county hall. He asked the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management if he would consider hiring out the facilities at county hall for residents of Norfolk to use at weekends for conferences and other events.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management agreed that renovating the north wing would provide a great opportunity to commercialise the building and use it when not used by the council and would be an excellent way of generating revenue and utilising an empty building.

10.6 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention highlighted that a direct result of the covid outbreak had caused cost pressures of just under £50m for adult social services. Norfolk County Council had chosen to spend just under £30m on protecting vulnerable service users and their providers throughout the interruption the pandemic had caused. The money had been paid to providers to ensure they were compensated for the extra costs and loss of income incurred as a result of the outbreak. The Cabinet member thanked Cabinet for their support in providing that assistance.

10.7 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services referred to the Children's Services Dedicated Support Grant funding which would be reduced with the transformation programme and the alternative provision specifically which would ensure the right specialist provision was in the right place as part of the future programme.

10.8 The Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy highlighted the loss of income to the County Council particularly for Community & Environmental Services.

## 10.9 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. **Approve** expenditure of £8.5m for LED upgrades to 15,000 main road streetlights across Norfolk as set out in paragraph 4.1 of Capital Appendix 1, to be funded from additional prudential borrowing.
2. **Approve** the drawdown of £2.7m from the existing Accommodation Rationalisation capital budget, to fund Accessibility and Inclusivity improvements to County Hall as set out in paragraph 4.2 of Capital Appendix 1.
3. **Note** the period 4 forecast general fund revenue overspend of **£7.901m** noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to reduce or eliminate potential over-spends;
4. **Note** the Covid-19 grant funding received of **£63.824m**, the proposed use of that funding and the related expenditure pressures.
5. **Note** the period 4 forecast shortfall in savings of **£17.780m**, noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to mitigate savings shortfalls through alternative savings or underspends;
6. **Note** the forecast General Balances at 31 March 2021 of £19.706m, before taking into account any over/under spends;
7. **Note** the expenditure and funding of the revised current and future 2020-23 capital programmes.

## 10.10 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision:**

Two appendices are attached to this report giving details of the forecast revenue and capital financial outturn positions:

**Appendix 1** summarises the revenue outturn position, including:

- Forecast over and under spends
- Covid-19 pressures and associated grant income.
- Changes to the approved budget
- Reserves
- Savings
- Treasury management
- Payment performance and debt recovery

**Appendix 2** summarises the capital outturn position, and includes:

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

## 10.11 **Alternative Options**

In order 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 grant or revenue funding has been identified to fund the expenditure.

## 11 Strategic & Financial Planning

11.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and the Executive Director of Strategy & Governance providing an update on the developing 2021-22 Budget and associated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

11.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:

- Engagement continued with MPs, the County Council Network, MHCLG, Ministers and Ministry's to provide sustainable and long-term funding for councils.
- The comprehensive spending review response needed to be submitted by 24 September, although it was unlikely any detailed information about long-term funding allocations would be received until mid-December 2020, providing a challenge in setting out detailed budget proposals.
- Key proposals were set out in section 2.4 of the report and the Cabinet Member highlighted the comments regarding the Comprehensive Spending Review:
  - We need to increase grant funding to meet immediate pressures from covid-19 and to provide sustainable funding for the future
  - A reform of council tax was needed together with addressing the associated inequalities.
  - Long-term and adequate funding for childrens and adult social care was required.
  - Providing adequate funding for schools, including addressing the high needs block deficit was very important
  - Environmental commitments needed to be delivered.
  - In addition, government was being urged to provide long-term clarity and certainty about the support which will be provided for 2021-22 and beyond to enable effective budget setting in the future.
  - The budget gap for 2021-22 reported to Cabinet on 8 June was just under £39m.
  - Currently we are assuming a 1.99% increase in council tax but we are awaiting government guidance in relation to an adult social care precept. Ultimately, long-term and sustainable solutions to local government funding were being sought so that the budget setting process was not surrounded by uncertainty.
  - Options to close the funding gap could only be done with additional government funding, by corporate finance related savings and using capital receipts.
  - Savings targets by department had been set out in July 2020. It was not proposed to revise these targets at the current time.
  - Budget proposals would be considered by Select Committees in September and their recommendations would provide feedback on the broad approach to be taken for each service.
  - Cabinet would consider the recommendations from the Select Committees in October, prior to public consultation on proposals.

11.3 The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance for the summary and referred to the representation to the comprehensive spending review and that if

adequate funding was received for children's and adult social care pressures, other services required from local government could be funded which would in turn help the economic recovery.

- 11.4 The Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy highlighted the business rates aspect, which needed reform as it was not possible to rely on council tax or business rates being raised in town centres when shops were closing at the rate they were. He suggested that the response to this aspect needed strengthening.
- 11.5 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance supported the recommendations and agreed that the report sets out the work that needed to be done with MPs, the Ministry of Housing Community and Local government and the County Council Network and the LGA to work together and achieve sustainable funding.
- 11.6 In supporting the report and the recommendations, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention considered that the tensions had been addressed in the report about the services we offered which needed to be funded to protect the vulnerable and that it was a difficult task to manage the demands and services to protect and serve the people of Norfolk with the funding made available. The Cabinet Member highlighted the collaborative working with the Council, other public bodies and the NHS and District Councils had chosen to work together to help deliver services, not only to reduce duplication but also the work done when working together was far greater than work carried out separately.

The Cabinet Member also highlighted that there was some discussion about Norfolk becoming an Integrated Care Service in the future which was something that should be supported as it would help resilience of the service and enable a wider range of support to be provided with limited funds.

- 11.7 The Cabinet Member for Finance endorsed the sentiments that Partners Worked Better Together with stakeholders, which had been proven throughout the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member reminded Cabinet that, unlike the government or the NHS, Norfolk County Council was required to balance its budget each financial year which was difficult without long-term planning being made available.

- 11.8 The Chairman agreed that the lack of long-term funding had been on the agenda for a long time.
- 11.9 Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:

1. **agree** key points to be included in the representation to the Comprehensive Spending Review in relation to:
  - the uncertainty about wider funding allocations and reforms;
  - the urgent need for details to enable 2021-22 budget setting;
  - the need for adequate funding to meet pressures from Covid-19; and
  - the fundamental need to address underlying pressures including adults and children's social care.



**Delegate** to the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance to approve the final response for submission on behalf of the Council reflecting the points set out in Paragraph 2.4.

2. **Agree** the key points set out in Paragraph 2.6 to be included in the response to the consultation on Business Rates system and delegate to the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance to approve the final response for submission on behalf of the Council.
3. **Note** the updated overall budget gap of £129.779m in the Medium Term Financial Strategy including a latest gap of £45.434m forecast for 2021-22, noting the key areas of risk which remain to be quantified. (Section 3)
4. **Agree** that detail of saving proposals to aid in closing the budget gap should be presented to Cabinet in October, after being developed based on the approaches set out in Sections 4-8, and following input from Select Committees about the overall strategy in each Department during September.

#### 11.10 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The County Council faces an unprecedented financial and public health crisis which has the potential to have significant implications for future budget setting. It will be essential to continue to engage with Government, MPs and other stakeholders to continue to push for adequate and sustainable funding for Norfolk to continue to deliver vital services to residents, businesses and visitors. It is also important that Government issues guidance on financial planning assumptions, particularly indicative funding allocations for 2021-22, as soon as possible. Otherwise there is a significant risk that the Council will be obliged to reduce service levels. The Council's MTFS planning builds on the position agreed in February 2020 and it is important to note that this will need to continue to be updated as more reliable information about cost pressures and funding impacts emerges through the process. Nevertheless, it remains prudent to move forward with planning for savings at the level required to close the underlying gap identified in February 2020.

The proposals in the report reflect a prudent response to the challenges and uncertainties present in the 2021-22 planning process and will ultimately support the Council to develop a robust budget for the year.

#### 11.11 **Alternative Options**

11.12 This report sets out a framework for developing detailed saving proposals for 2020-21 and at this stage no proposals have been agreed, meaning that a range of alternative options remain open.

11.13 In addition, there are a number of areas where Cabinet could choose to consider different parameters for the budget setting process, such as:

- Considering alternative approaches to the development of savings from those proposed.
- Adopting an alternative allocation of targets between services, or retaining a higher or lower target corporately.

- Considering an alternative timetable within the time constraints required to develop proposals, undertake public consultation, and meet statutory deadlines for the setting of council tax.
- Changing assumptions within the MTFS (including the level of council tax) and therefore varying the level of savings sought.

11.14 Final decisions about the overall shape of the 2021-22 Budget, savings, and council tax will not be made until February 2021.

## **12 Wymondham Market Town Transport Network Improvement Strategy**

12.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services summarising the Wymondham transport network improvement study along with the comments from stakeholders and actions taken from these.

12.2 The Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services highlighted that Market Towns were a key piece of social and economic fabric for the county and that Norfolk County Council, over the last two-three years had set out to develop an evidence-based option to help market towns cope with future expected growth.

12.3 In introducing the report and moving the recommendations, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport highlighted that a number of market town studies had been carried out over the last two years. This report summarised the Wymondham Transport Network Improvement study, along with the comments from stakeholders and the actions taken. Cabinet was asked to agree to adopt the study.

The main objectives from the study were:

- Traffic calming on the Harts Farm estate.
- Cycling and walking routes around the town.
- Public transport in the town.
- Walking, cycling, bus and parking arrangements in the Market Cross area.

The Infrastructure & Development Select Committee had considered the Strategy and supported the study.

12.4 The Cabinet Member for Finance supported the proposal, particularly the work carried out on the walking and cycling aspect, which he considered a first step in terms of revolutionising the way Norfolk looked at how people travelled around the county. He added that he was working with the Cabinet Member on a transport policy in relation to King's Lynn.

12.5 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- **Agree and adopt** the completed [Wymondham Network Improvement Strategy as published on the website.](#)

### **12.6 Evidence & Reasons for Decision.**

This market town NIS has identified a range of infrastructure measures to

support growth and which will be added to forward plans for a range of partners, including the county council, to take forward.

## 12.7 **Alternative Options**

The Wymondham NIS is the final NIS to be adopted from the two rounds of strategies and its adoption will put its status on a par with the other studies enabling its recommendations to be fully taken into account in future work programmes.

## 13 **Devolution and Local Government Reform**

13.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Strategy & Governance providing the context for Norfolk County Council's current position on devolution and local government reform and for Cabinet to approve the suggested next steps.

13.2 The Chairman introduced the report highlighting that it needed to be accepted that the upcoming local recovery and devolution white paper reflected emerging government policy. He added that the government was currently focused on Brexit and Planning Reforms, so it was possible that Local Government Reform was after them in terms of priority.

The Chairman looked back to 2014-15 when a Norfolk/Suffolk Devolution deal had been considered, adding that since then it had been the explicit aim of Leaders of Norfolk Local Authorities to work better together which had been proven over the last few months following the covid outbreak. He added that it was accepted that the role of councils was to deliver the best services for local people in the most efficient and effective way.

The Chairman continued that if devolution would give Norfolk more money, more power, more responsibility and more freedom it was not unreasonable to pursue that, although until the white paper was published planning for reorganisation should not commence.

13.3 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy agreed that the Council needed to understand what devolution would bring to Norfolk, what the benefits would be and these would not be known until the white paper was published. Therefore, any detailed planning should wait until the white paper was published, although in the meantime, he felt the Leader should be given the opportunity to talk to other Local Authorities and perhaps inform the contents of the white paper.

13.4 The Cabinet Member for Finance endorsed the comment and felt it was important that long-term funding within the context of a devolution solution was considered.

13.5 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention supported the recommendations in the report, and agreed that until the white paper was published, engagement with partners to consider the best ways of working together should be undertaken. He added that ongoing debate on how the County Council could continue to devolve relationships with partners was

something he supported and would give the Chairman as much freedom as necessary to continue negotiations.

- 13.6 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services supported the report and recommendations and said that when devolution was considered previously he had been in favour of the proposal as he believed it would provide more funding locally and that local decisions was the way forward. He agreed that any reorganisation should wait until the white paper was published.
- 13.7 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance fully supported the proposals and recommendations and considered that unnecessary spending at this stage in speculating what may or may not be included in the white paper was wrong. He supported the approach of working together and collaborating which had worked particularly well over the last few months.
- 13.8 The Chairman thanked Cabinet Members for their positive comments.
- 13.9 Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED** to:
1. **Support** the approach taken to date by Norfolk Leaders Group and the County Council's ongoing commitment to closer collaboration and joint working to deliver the best possible services in the most efficient, effective and inclusive manner.
  2. **Endorse** Norfolk County Council's approach to devolution and local government reform.
  3. **Authorise** the Leader to pursue further conversations on devolution on an appropriate geography whilst we await the white paper.

#### **14 County Council Highway Authority - Planning Consultation response to South Norfolk Planning Application 2018/2631**

- 14.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services asking Cabinet to determine the County Council's statutory consultee response to the planning application number 2018/2631. The application was made on behalf of Ben Burgess (a national farm machinery company) for the relocation of their headquarters. The new site would be in Swainsthorpe to be served from a roundabout on the A140 which was part of the national Major Route Network (MRN).
- 14.2 The Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services drew attention to paragraph 2.3.7 of the report which stated that the Local Member, Cllr Colin Foulger, did not support the proposal set out in the planning application. The Executive Director advised that Cllr Foulger had contacted him and clarified that he had never stated verbally, or in writing, that he supported nor opposed the proposed development and asked Cabinet to delete that paragraph from the report.

The Executive Director highlighted that the decision on the planning application remained with South Norfolk District Council and that the report was to determine the County Council's consultation response. Cabinet was asked to weigh up the relatively narrow highways view on the junction, versus the broader impact of the development on the Norfolk economy.

14.3 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy asked Cabinet to confirm it agreed to remove paragraph 2.3.7 of the report, as highlighted by the Executive Director in paragraph 14.2 above). Cabinet **agreed** to remove the paragraph.

The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy introduced the report, during which the following points were noted:

- Cabinet was being asked to determine Norfolk County Council's statutory consultee response to the planning application as the Highway Authority, ie to support or object the proposal as set out its reasons for the determination.
- A planning application had been submitted by Ben Burgess, a farm machinery company, to relocate their headquarters from Norwich to Swainsthorpe, with direct access onto the A140.
- As statutory highway authority, Norfolk County Council had responded to the original application recommending refusal in 2019. Since the refusal, an amended application had been submitted and Cabinet was being given the opportunity to consider the economic benefit of the proposal, alongside the highway considerations.
- the Highway Authority had been engaged in discussion with Ben Burgess before the application was submitted, during the application process and after the formal response had been made.
- The application was submitted for a new junction on the A140 part of the MRN serving the development only.
- The Highways Authority had recommended refusal.
- An amended application had been submitted and officers had considered the revised information and felt the application did not overcome the original recommendation of refusal and that an additional junction on the A140 would not be welcome. Officers had acknowledged that a roundabout was the only form of acceptable junction for the site.
- Cabinet had been asked to consider the proposal from an economic benefit to Norfolk viewpoint, which was not a consideration for highways officers, but was a consideration for Cabinet.
- Ben Burgess was a key participant in the agrifood sector and supported the agriculture sector and the wider economy of Norfolk and there would be a number of economic benefits of the company moving from its current location, including:
  - Expanding and attracting new customers, whilst maintaining its current workforce.
  - Increasing jobs and apprenticeships.
  - The business would be able to fully embrace new technology as the location was on the A140, connected to the A47 and A11, part of the Norwich-Cambridge tech corridor.
- The economic benefit of an application was not a direct consideration for the highways authority, although it was a consideration for Cabinet. Economic Development officers in Community & Environmental Services had considered the implications and for the purpose of the report, considered the economic benefits viable.

In summing up, the Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy said that Ben Burgess provided significant services to the farming sector, both regionally and nationally and if they were not able to successfully relocate in Norfolk, there was a risk they would seek another location outside Norfolk, leading to job losses. He considered Cabinet should not allow this to happen.

14.4 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy proposed the following recommendation, which was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Manager:

- Cabinet considers that the economic impact of the proposals alongside the safety and appropriateness of a roundabout on the A140 overcomes objections as a highways authority and we therefore raise no highways objections to the planning proposal.

14.5 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management supported the proposed recommendation, adding that Ben Burgess was a Norfolk company which had expanded its business to cover a large slice of East Anglia. He added that there was a danger that if they weren't allowed to develop the site, they would move their headquarters outside Norfolk, which would damage the Norfolk economy.

14.6 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships supported the proposal as it would support the local economy and safeguard the employment of staff in Norfolk. With the current situation, proposals that enabled people to keep their jobs should be supported. She added that she considered the roundabout was a suitable option.

14.7 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance also supported the recommendation as he felt it was important to keep the company headquarters in Norfolk.

14.8 The Chairman summed up that a recommendation had been made and seconded and asked Cabinet to agree the recommendation.

14.9 **RESOLVED:**

- Cabinet considers that the economic impact of the proposals alongside the safety and appropriateness of a roundabout on the A140 overcome objections as a highway authority and we therefore raise no objections to the planning proposal.

14.10 **Evidence & Reasons for Decision.**

See section 2 of the report.

14.11 **Alternative Options**

Cabinet could determine to support or object to the proposal and should set out the reasons for this determination.

If Cabinet feel that further information is needed in order to make a determination, we could request an extension of the deadline for making a

response to South Norfolk District Council to enable this. Note that the original deadline for response was 4 September and that has been extended to enable Cabinet to debate this issue.

**15 Reports of the Cabinet Member and Officer Delegated Decisions already made:**

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

**Decisions by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport**

- [Attleborough, Queens Square – Parking Amendments](#)
- [DfT Bid Submission – Emergency Active Travel Fund – Tranche 2](#)
- [Application to run e-scooter trials in Norfolk.](#)
- [Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant.](#)

**16 Point of Clarification**

16.1 The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services to clarify an earlier comment regarding Holt Hall.

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services advised that he understood from social media that the response he had made earlier in the meeting had been misinterpreted. He wished to make it clear that any decision regarding Holt Hall and Whitlingham would only be taken once the formal consultation had finished. Once all the information from the consultation had been received a decision would be made as to the future of Holt Hall and Whitlingham.

The Cabinet Member added that he understood the value and importance of outdoor learning and Whitlingham in particular provided a very important service for a county like Norfolk which contained so much water within its boundaries.

The meeting ended at 12.05pm

**Chairman**



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**Statement made by the Chairman.**

After the Government's decision to designate Norfolk as an area of enhanced support, my message to everyone today is clear – now is a time for togetherness.

Everyone in Norfolk has a role to play. By following the guidelines, together we can Protect ourselves, Protect others and Protect Norfolk.

We welcome the Secretary of State's decision on Friday to make Norfolk an area of enhanced support, following the coronavirus outbreak at Banham Poultry.

I want to be very clear. This is definitely not about restrictions. It is all about support, providing us with even more capabilities to Protect Norfolk.

There will no extra rules affecting how any of us live and work in Norfolk. Or for visitors to Norfolk

The decision by the Government to allow us to draw on added support will provide swifter data and testing and allow us to respond and act faster to support our local efforts.

The communities of Norfolk have been through a lot and I would like to reassure them, and our visitors, that Norfolk is still a safe place in which to live, work and visit.



In terms of the Banham Poultry outbreak, Dr Louise Smith has outlined that all the evidence we have so far suggests that we have contained that outbreak. The rises in infection that followed, seen in Great Yarmouth, Breckland and Norwich, were all linked to workers and their households.

It remains vital people follow guidelines and where necessary isolate to keep the spread of the infection as low as possible and support the public health teams working on the outbreak.

I would like to thank Dr Louise Smith and her team in Public Health Norfolk for the way they have managed, not just this outbreak, but the whole situation over the last six months.

We understand people are concerned and today is a day where many of us see our children and grandchildren return to school.

Children seeing their friends and teachers for the first time in nearly six months shows how important it is that Norfolk communities start getting some kind of normality back into their lives. Nothing emphasises this more than children learning and playing with their friends.

A return to normality is what we all want. As we look ahead to the coming months, I would like to thank everyone in Norfolk who has been following advice on hand washing and social distancing, as this has ensured that we do not have a serious, wider problem across our communities.

I ask you to keep doing this and to please remember, if you are contacted by test and trace, please isolate for the stated period and get tested as soon as possible if you have symptoms.

Norfolk people have been excellent in following the guidelines to keep our county safe. By continuing to follow these guidelines everyone will be playing a crucial part in keeping coronavirus under control

Thank you.

**Cabinet**  
**7 September 2020**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

**Agenda item 6**    **Public Question Time**

6.1    **Question from Cavan Stewart**

There is a problem on Quebec Rd and Wolfe Rd in Norwich where the speed limit is currently 30 mph. The danger of speeding traffic is acute outside Lionwood Primary. A recent petition that was carried out this year shows that 189 people are in favour of reducing the speed limit and asking for other traffic calming measures. Forty-three of the signatories were teachers and assistants at the Junior School. With this in mind, would the Council implement an immediate reduction of the speed limit to 20 mph and consider implementing additional traffic calming measures in this area before a serious incident occurs involving children and motor vehicles?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure & Transport**

The Highway Network Safety team have reviewed this location and have confirmed that a 20mph limit would be appropriate on Quebec Road and Wolfe Road, providing that there is sufficient support from the local community including residents. There is also a need to identify the funding required to implement the speed limit changes, which due to the required legal process, could be up to £6,000. One potential funding source is the Local Member Fund, so I would also encourage you to discuss this proposal with your local County Councillor. I encourage you to submit your petition to the Council for review to determine if further consultation will be required before a scheme can be considered for progression.

6.2    **Question from Sandy Lysaght**

The cabinet member does not support campaigns to end holiday hunger. He believes that parents have a responsibility to look after their children and use the benefits system already there to support those in genuine need. Has the cabinet member ever visited a food bank; or met families and children experiencing holiday hunger and food poverty in order to inform these views?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention**

Thank you for your question. I have always thought that it is important to consider genuine need before committing taxpayers money to any project. I was asked to support a blanket scheme to give money or vouchers to people for their children's lunches during school holidays, whether they needed it or not, without any checks or balances. I am disappointed that Cllr. Smith-Claire doesn't feel the same way. Given the facts of the situation I have not needed to visit a food bank to make an informed decision.

6.3    **Supplementary question from Sandy Lysaght**

What does the cabinet member of Adult Social Care mean by 'genuine need' in his response to a request for support to end holiday hunger?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention.**

Thank you for your question. "Genuine need" means exactly what it says, I cannot think of a simpler way to put the phrase

6.4 **Question from Mr Tim Jones**

Given that as far back as April meat processing plants across America and Europe were identified as Coronavirus hotspots and given the amount of research explaining why this would logically be the case (see, for example, Middleton, Reintjes and Lopes' "Meat plants - a new frontline in the Covid-19 pandemic" from July 2020), why were procedures not put in place at Banham Poultry in Attleborough to prevent the outbreak there before it occurred?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention**

Thank you for your question. The guidance to meat processors issued as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic is very comprehensive. It is the responsibility of the firms themselves to implement them, this is no different from other countries across Europe and America. Any questions relating to the prevention measures at Banham Poultry should be directed to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who are responsible for reviewing the procedures.

## Agenda Local Member Issues/Questions item 7

### 7.1 **Question from Cllr Sandra Squire.**

Having witnessed a road rage incident outside my house a few weeks ago, where Highways personnel were verbally abused by a driver and then deliberately driven at while resurfacing the road, I've been told this is a common experience for those working on our roads. Would the Cabinet member agree it is totally unacceptable for staff or contractors to have to experience this and what would he suggest could be done to protect them.

### **Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport**

Fortunately, the incidents of road rage in Norfolk are rare. However, Roadworkers are often subject to bad language & have had items thrown at them. The traffic management staff are trained to stand back & not incite confrontation. If they are threatened, they take down the vehicle registration & report the incident to the police. In known problem areas where issues have been previously reported, the Council request a minimum of 2 traffic management staff and body cameras. Signs are also provided which state "CCTV cameras recording on this site".

### 7.2 **Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp**

#### Climate Change & Public Health

Hardings Pits Doorstep Green won the Norfolk Biodiversity Award and, with the high flood-risk grassland east and south, is suitable for - a County Wildlife Site; mitigation for: Climate Change, Natura 2000 sites, and Lynn's 26-hectare Green Infrastructure Deficit - but not development. The Environment Agency advises against ground-floor accommodation, due to rapid inundation-zone flood risk.

Will the Leader halt all ill-advised traffic orders that : facilitate environmentally-unsafe development; break County's £5.3 million funding agreement by bringing considerable traffic on the bus-and-cycle lane; slow down strategic Bus Travel; risk public safety on 10,000 residents' only safe route, that encourages Active Travel for public health.

### **Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport**

The proposed scheme and traffic order (promoted by the Borough Council and delivered by the County Council), is to enable access to commercial premises, derestricting the southernmost 125m for that purpose only. The proposals also involve constructing an additional length of footway & cycleway where none currently exists. The remainder of Hardings Way is not affected, so the route will remain a key bus, cycling and walking route.

Therefore, there are no plans to halt the traffic orders.

### 7.3 **Question from Cllr Dan Roper**

Is there a case for delaying significant new capital expenditure on the fabric of county hall and on site car parking until there is greater clarity on the likelihood of

local government reorganisation in Norfolk?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management**

There is not a case to delay the capital expenditure to the County Hall Campus, as it has had historic underinvestment since it's original construction, meaning for example that the Council Chamber is not properly accessible for disabled Councillors, staff or residents.

The County Council has also had a clear strategy of consolidating functions and activities onto the campus, looking to make the best use of the estate – for example in moving multi-agency partners such as the MASH team from expensive accommodation in Vantage House into County Hall. This process is continuing with the consolidation of Carrow House into County Hall, bringing Coroners and a number of frontline social work teams into County Hall. These moves help generate capital receipts, but also real revenue efficiencies for the County Council, as well as a better environmental footprint.

In order to facilitate this, the County Council does need to make sure that the infrastructure at County Hall is able to support a higher level of utilisation and provides a modern flexible workspace.

Local Government re-organisation has had a chequered history and there is no clear timescale or indeed agreement on what a future structure may look like. A similar argument could be made for delaying decisions around 'health and social care integration' or any number of white papers. Local Government needs to make efficiency savings now and these changes enable those savings.

Whatever the outcome of Local Government review, it is likely that County Hall will need to remain as a key public sector hub not least given its local listing, historic grounds and the restrictions on the land. As such the works that are being planned, will allow for a well utilised, flexible building serving Norfolk residents in the future

7.4 **Question from Cllr Tim Adams**

People with disabilities tell us that they have lost all respect for how they have been treated by the council over the last 2 years. What will the Cabinet member do personally to seek a change in this view?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention**

I am sorry to hear that, change is often difficult for any of us, even if it is for the better. I am happy to give my word that we will continue do everything that we can to give the best service possible with the money that we have available. This has been my driving principle since I became the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services.

7.5 **Question from Cllr Brian Watkins.**

What is your vision for a sustainable transport policy?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport**

You will know that the county council is reviewing its Local Transport Plan, which will set out the county council's transport strategy and policies, taking a medium-term view over the next 15 years. The LTP is the county's overarching transport strategy and will set out how the county council will take forward and deliver the principal ambitions of the council and our partners including the county council plan and the LEP's Integrated Transport Strategy and Economic Strategy. It will also show how the council will secure and deliver the necessary transport system to meet the ambitions of stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

The plan will take account of environmental, economic and social factors in order that a truly sustainable transport policy can be set out. Cllr Watkins is on the Member working group for the plan's review and will be able to help shape the plan before it comes to Members to agree.

In the meantime, the county council continues to devise and implement a range of transport schemes that balance the needs of the environment, economy and social issues whilst meeting the county council's overall objectives.

7.6 **Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone**

How valid were the comments made by George Freeman MP that the Task and Trace of the Covid outbreak at Banham Poultry has been too slow and ineffectual and what actions are being taken to protect the rest of Norfolk from this outbreak?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention.**

Thank you for your question. It is always interesting to hear from George Freeman, and I have no doubt he was sincere in his comments. I am now sure he is properly up to speed with what has happened since the start of the outbreak.

Following notification of the first positive case on 21 August staff who were in close contact with staff member were immediately asked to self-isolate and get tested. This resulted in further 7 cases confirmed on 24 August and testing was put in place for 376 workers who worked in the same section of the Banham Poultry plant. Subsequent extensive testing has taken place with all staff at Banham Poultry and their households, being asked to self-isolate in accordance with required procedures.

Norfolk County Council notified the Government's Covid-19 Joint Biosecurity Centre and staff from both the Department of Health and Public Health England have been attending local meetings to advise on containment of the virus. A daily Incident Management Team meeting chaired by Dr Smith, Director of Public Health, of lead local, regional and national agencies along with Banham Poultry management continues to monitor and take action on the situation. Mobile testing units are now in place in Great Yarmouth, Norwich and Attleborough to encourage wider community testing. In addition to the NHS Contact Tracing service to increase local contact tracing capacity, it was decided to bring in Essex and

Southend Contact Tracing Service.

The risk to the wider population of Norfolk has been assessed as small and there is no evidence that the outbreak has spread further than Banham Poultry.

**7.7 Question from Cllr David Harrison**

If a child is found to have Covid in a school in Norfolk what would be the process for dealing with this safely and effectively?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

There are detailed procedures in place and clear steps for schools to follow in the event of a child being poorly at school or testing positive for COVID-19.

If a child becomes poorly at school, they are isolated from others as soon as and parents are asked to collect child asap. The whole household then has to isolate and get tested. If a child is positive, they have to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the date of the test and until temperature returns to normal. Remaining family members isolate for a further 14 days from the date of the positive test. Schools have been provided with a flow chart, contact points and template letters to parents. Every school is being supplied with a small number of home test kits that they can supply to families if children are in need of a test. These will be distributed to Norfolk schools next week. If more than two children or two related cases to a child test positive this will be tested as an outbreak and covered by the local outbreak plan.

**7.8 Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare**

In the light of comments in the recent past by two cabinet members about responsibility for hungry children in Norfolk will the Leader set out what the administration's policy towards ensuring parents have the wherewithal to feed their children, how shortfalls in their ability to feed their children are tackled by this council that is responsible for the well being of children, and how the council will deal with the consequences of Norfolk children becoming malnourished?

**Response by the Leader**

Children's Services alongside colleagues across the County Council have been working with vulnerable families including where providing food for their children has been identified as a worry. During the summer term our education team worked closely with schools and education providers to ensure that families whose children were now eligible for free school meals were able to access this support and food was provided. This included during the summer holiday period following the government decision to extend free school meals through July and August, including via the voucher scheme. In each district Children's Services have enabled families to access support including via the Norfolk Assistance Scheme and linked closely with food banks and other organisations that can provide short term assistance to families. Where Children are at risk of harm including possible malnourishment the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) continue to work with professionals across the county to ensure that these children are identified and a timely response provided which has including visiting children at home and



making sure the right support is in place.

**7.9 Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby**

A recent Food Foundation report has found that 5.1 million people in the UK are living in households with children who have experienced food insecurity since the start of the pandemic. What has the cabinet member done to ensure those affected are helped and that this number doesn't increase during a possible second spike?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

The children of Norfolk eligible for Free School Meals have been supported throughout the pandemic and over the school summer holidays through the voucher scheme and some locally organised arrangements. I have made it my business to monitor and understand that this programme is running well for children and families. As children return to school next week this support for them continues. It is not the role of a Children's Services to ensure that all children are fed, but to hold officers to account for their part in ensuring that programmes such as Free Schools Meals are appropriately delivered. During the pandemic I am pleased to report that we offered an instant checking service and staff worked around the clock to process new applications to ensure that children could be included in the Free School Meals voucher scheme.

**7.10 Question from Cllr Brenda Jones**

What evaluation and assessment has been done of the numbers of staff that need to be based at county hall and their modes of travel to and from the campus given the experience of remote working, taking account of operational effectiveness, overall costs and impact on carbon emissions?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management**

An analysis of the numbers was provided as part of the recent planning application, this included the increased number of visitors expected to the site. A summary of the demand data was provided to the Councillor in May 2020.

**7.11 Question from Cllr David Rowntree**

The cabinet member for Children congratulated Norfolk's children on their exam results but many young people suffered undue anxiety, disappointment and a change to their future plans due to the Government's disastrous algorithm strategy for deciding exam results. What would the cabinet member like to say to those young people about that and what did he do to address their concerns?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

It was very regrettable that the initial position with regard to examination outcomes caused some distress to young people. Of course, I want to say how very sorry I am that they and their families experienced this. No – one would want to cause young people this kind of upset and like all of us I was relieved when it was overturned and teachers' assessments of their pupils and students were used to form their grades. This was a central government decision which, although it must have seemed too long for young people, was turned around relatively quickly. I

know that our schools, colleges and officers have been working tirelessly to support those young people who may have been affected. Our post 16 'Keeping in Touch' team will continue to follow up on every young person who does not register somewhere in one form or another- in September. The contact team will telephone every young person who does not appear to have signed up for a next step and work with them to identify an appropriate pathway to continue their education, training or work place ambitions.

**7.12 Question from Cllr Colleen Walker**

Extended learning through outdoor study visits are acknowledged as providing invaluable personal and social developmental opportunities. Can the cabinet member outline the educational and social value provided by Holt Hall and Whitlingham Adventure Centre and explain the importance of these outdoor resources in offering safe and varied learning options for schools during the ongoing Covid Pandemic?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

Holt Hall and Whitlingham Adventure are part of the council's education traded services. Up until the pandemic both were open to school parties. When the national lockdown occurred in March both sites were closed. School trips and residential visits were barred from taking place under COVID restrictions. Just before the school summer holidays officers surveyed Norfolk schools and asked for an indication of the impact of prioritising certain activities – e.g. support for the curriculum, and clusters, and de-prioritising other provision for example the use of Holt Hall and Whitlingham. Following a return from over 90% of Norfolk schools approximately 4% expressed some concern about the continued closure of Holt Hall and Whitlingham for the forthcoming term. Holt Hall remains closed therefore and we are ensuring the outdoor learning advice and guidance is focused on schools and their sites for safe learning. I fully recognise the important role that learning outside a classroom can play and know that many Norfolk schools make use of outdoor learning space, and programmes like Forest schools to support social and emotional learning. Right now, Holt Hall is not a place where children need to go for residential or day visits, as schools will be limiting their transport requirements to those which are essential to get to and from school. The priority is providing learning on school sites as per the government's clear guidelines and expectations. Whitlingham has previously been open to the public and used for school parties and also at this time remains closed. This decision is constantly under review, however, at this time there is no consideration that it will be re-opened for school parties in the near future. Encouraging learning to take place outside the classroom is important and we will continue to promote the outdoor curriculum opportunities that schools can provide.

**7.13 Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton**

Marcus Rashford, Aldi, Asda, Co-op, Deliveroo, FareShare, Food Foundation, Iceland, Kellogg's, Lidl, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose all support expanding an existing school holiday food and activities programme to support all children on free school meals in all areas of England instead of the current 50,000 children that are helped. Can Cllr Borrett explain why he does not support tackling holiday

hunger too?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention**

Thank you for your question. I have always thought that it is important to consider genuine need before committing taxpayers money to any project. I was asked to support a blanket scheme to give money or vouchers to people for their children's lunch in the holidays whether they needed it or not, without checks or balances. I am disappointed that you Cllr. Brociek-Coulton do not feel the same way, given your awareness of the many demands on public funds.

**7.14 Question from Cllr Emma Corlett**

The Leader has promised cooperation with DNNG and other groups in lobbying for additional resources for disabled people in Norfolk. Will he detail what steps he has taken to organise this cooperation, how it has manifested itself in practice and what progress has been made?

**Response by the Leader**

I have recently corresponded with the DNNG reiterating that it remains the case that until we see the Social Care Green paper there is little that can be discussed further at this time. Having said that we are supporting the campaign lead by the CCN and LGA to get more funding into counties and unitaries for all the peoples services we are responsible for.

Once the Social Care Green paper is published, I welcome further discussions with the DNNG about how any changes that affect them are implemented in Norfolk.

**7.15 Question from Cllr Steve Morpew**

It is clear the majority of councillors has either declined to accept the allowances increase or will be using it for community purposes and would be prepared to vote against taking it if asked. Will the Leader now join me in taking a motion to council this month reversing the decision to apply the 2.75% increase to councillor allowances backdated April and ensure the increase is not included in the September payroll run for councillors pending the council meeting on 21 September?

**Response by the Leader**

The recommendation to link any increase in Councillor allowances to staff increases ensures that we don't see the catch up in allowances that we have seen in the past. As you say many members (including myself) will not be taking this year's, increase and it is up to each individual Councillor to make that decision.

Therefore, I do not agree that a motion is required.

**7.16 Question from Cllr Chris Jones**

If the government extends the ability of councils to increase the precept to pay for social care will the cabinet recommend doing so to council and what ceiling would

be acceptable to them?

**Response by the Leader**

Any future guidance published by Government concerning Adult Social Care precepts would be considered at that time, until then we cannot make decisions based on speculation.

7.17 **Question from Cllr Terry Jermy**

Could the Cabinet member for transport confirm whether the timetable and costs for the Western Link have been impacted over the past few months due to COVID 19?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport**

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event with issues emerging all the time. However, over the past six months, the Government has repeatedly highlighted the importance for infrastructure investment to help with the economic recovery. In May 2020, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced its approval for the building of the scheme to both complete the dual carriageway orbital route around Norwich and also relieve traffic congestion on local roads.

Now that the business case has been approved by central government, and Norwich Western Link has gained conditional entry into DfT's 'Large Local Majors' project funding programme, the team are now progressing the necessary design and environmental work to proceed to the next stage of the statutory approvals processes and start the procurement process.

This is slightly later than the original planned timescales, primarily due to the later approval of the business case by the DfT. A procurement exercise is currently underway which will provide more cost certainty for the scheme, and the project remains within the overall budget.

7.18 **Question 1 from Cllr Danny Douglas**

Does the cabinet member for transport and environment have sympathy for Mrs Susan West of Little Bethel Street in Norwich City Centre who has increased the use of her inhaler due to the deterioration of air quality linked to the increased amount of traffic congestion and does the cabinet member recognise this has been partly caused by road closures in Norwich City Centre and is damaging Norwich's economy and hampering access for emergency services of long periods of the day?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure & Transport**

I have a great deal of sympathy for the health of all our County's residents and I am sorry to hear of Mrs West's situation, however I believe the increased congestion Cllr Douglas refers to has been caused primarily in relation to a road closure for a major new private development of student housing on the edge of the city centre.

Our recent emergency covid works in the city centre have been designed to take traffic out of the city centre and support the local economy.

We consult closely with all emergency services on the implementation of all highway measures and have taken steps to adjust signal timings at Chapelfield roundabout to improve traffic flow. No further issues have been reported so far and this area will continue to be monitored closely.

We firmly believe that new city centre accommodation and current highway projects will contribute to significant economic growth of the city centre in the longer term and many schemes featured in our forthcoming Transforming Cities proposals, such as the redevelopment of the St Stephens bus corridor are heavily focused on reducing air pollution in the city centre.

7.19 **Question 2 from Cllr Danny Douglas**

Can the cabinet member outline how he is monitoring the impact of the changes and roadworks in the city centre?

**Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport.**

Council officers continually monitor the impact of all changes and roadworks in the city centre, by looking closely at traffic levels to identify any congestion hot spots and taking feedback on board from all those affected and taking action where necessary. This can be demonstrated in our continual adjustment of signage for temporary traffic management, adjustment of the signal timings at Chapelfield roundabout and through further adjustments such as the provision of additional loading bays and relaxing of loading restrictions to support residents and businesses in the St Benedict's / Exchange Street areas. We try to keep disruption to a minimum wherever possible, whilst balancing the needs of all users and ensuring our teams can work safely.

7.20 **Question from Cllr Ed Colman**

There is currently a lot of talk about the forthcoming Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper which, as I understand it will include possible Local Government Re-organisation guidelines. I read with great interest the County Council's Network's recent commissioned publication 'Making Counties Count'. Would the Leader please share his views on that publication's findings and whether he agrees with them

**Response by the Leader**

Making Counties Count explores the current and future role of counties in the context of the devolution of powers away from Whitehall, something I'm pleased to hear the Member has read and found of interest.

A fairer and more consistent approach to devolution across the country would ensure that central government should provide substantive powers and budgets to county authorities, such as Norfolk, enabling them to best address the economic impact of Coronavirus, and continue their leading role in promoting economic growth.

This consistent approach is critical, in my view, along with a national framework from government to best ensure a successful attempt to secure a deal. Whilst this report is excellent background we should still wait for the publication of the White Paper in the coming months in order to maximise the potential of any deal.

In terms of the financial benefits, the report found that single county unitaries deliver the greatest financial benefit, would be most understandable to the public, retain local identities and provide the most coherent geography to develop local economic recovery strategies. It clearly demonstrates that size and scale is a key driver towards these cost savings, better service delivery and a coherent approach to economic development and recover.

Furthermore, the publication outlines that there would be new powers for town and parish councils to focus on local issues, with local representation and citizens voices being delivered through new local governance arrangements.

I would encourage Members to read the report.