

Cabinet
11 May 2020
Local Member Questions

Agenda Local Member Issues/Questions
item 7

Question 1 from Cllr Mick Castle

Does Cllr Fisher finally acknowledge the scale of Boys underperformance in Norfolk Schools as evidenced by OFSTED's analysis of last Summer's GCSE results where there was an overall 8% gap between boys and girls and will the Cabinet now 'ringfence' sufficient funds in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to fund pilot schemes focussed on strategies to address this most important issue, and actively engage with Academy chains like the Inspiration Trust who appear to have secured better performance by Boys in disadvantaged areas in Norwich and Gt Yarmouth with regard to the culture of the school, teaching styles and curriculum which elicit improved engagement and achievement by Boys?

Response:

We agree that there remains a gap between the performance of boys and girls in Norfolk, however we are pleased to note this gap is smaller than that nationally. Last year there was a 5.8% gap between girls and boys for a strong pass in English and mathematics. Nationally this was 6.6%. We are always looking for best practice to support schools in narrowing the gap. We discuss improvement strategies with Academy Trusts in our annual conversations. We congratulate Inspiration Trust in their improved outcomes, which saw a slightly narrower gap than for whole of Norfolk and we will be keen to see whether this improvement will be sustained year on year, as performance of schools can be variable. We will encourage Inspiration Trust to share their practice with colleagues through the Secondary headteacher forum. Secondary schools determine their own approaches to teaching learning and curriculum and some share practice with each other. The LA wants to invest in the early development of language and communication skills and early reading to better support boys many Norfolk boys in their journey through school.

Question 2 from Cllr Mick Castle

Would Cllr Dewsbury agree that Libraries represent an essential service for many of our residents, providing not only access to books and newspapers but also to computers which are an absolute requirement for folks applying for and maintaining eligibility to state benefits and undertake to seek re-opening of at least one public library in each main conurbation (or significant market town) to enable local people to access these services within a safe social distancing regime?

The Great Yarmouth Library until the Coronavirus 'lockdown' fulfilled this role in an excellent manner.

Response:

Cabinet recognises the importance of libraries in supporting people who don't have access to the internet to carry out transactions, to apply for state benefits and to apply for jobs. The UK government regulation in relation to Covid 19 specifically mentions libraries as places that must be closed, and we need to ensure that when restrictions are lifted we put in place measures to keep staff and public safe. We will follow the guidance of Public Health England in doing this. In the meantime, detailed recovery plans for libraries are being drawn up, with computer access for the most vulnerable being one of the most important functions to recover first.

During the closure period the library service has redeployed our staff into supporting food distribution, purchasing PPE and coordinating the volunteer effort across the county, as well as investing in e-books and e-magazines and setting up an online library activity offer. The Community Resilience Group has developed a range of offers to support people suffering hardship during the Covid 19 crisis and more information about this can be found by phoning 0344 800 8020.

Question from Cllr Tim Adams

How is the information on deaths from Covid19 being collated and what are the current figures for hospital, care homes and community in Norfolk and is there a specific figure for council run care providers as opposed to private?

Response:

Norfolk County Council uses the weekly Office of National Statistics (ONS) data on deaths as the most reliable source of information which provides a weekly count of all deaths in England and Wales where COVID-19 is recorded on the death certificate. This data is provided by ONS at local authority level and place of death is included.

Information can be found via the Office for National Statistics. (ONS). See link below <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregisteredweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/latest>

The data on private and council run care home providers is not reported separately, because Norse Care is run by its own management.

Question 1 from Cllr Brian Watkins

How much has the council spent currently in officer staff time and through committee time on the transforming cities bid?

Response:

Given the large scale of funding , a number of officers were engaged in preparing the Transforming Cities Fund application, which, at times was on a full-time basis over the period 2018/19 and 2019/20. The same officer team was also engaged on preparing our Future Mobility Zone application, which was closely linked to our Transforming Cities application. Officer time spent preparing these applications cost £383,000.

Question 2 from Cllr Brian Watkins

Will the amount of resources the council puts towards the transforming cities schemes be changing following the government's small allocation. If not, what will be the percentage of the proposed original schemes that will now be delivered?

Response:

Should Transforming Cities funding be secured as hoped, the officer resource allocated to overseeing the delivery of this programme will be the commensurate to the size and complexity of the project. This includes roles such as a Programme Manager, Project Manager and Project Delivery Co-ordinator. A larger funding allocation would require

more resource allocated to the design and delivery of individual projects, as there would be more projects to deliver.

Question from Cllr Tim East

With the council's failure to get a decent allocation for the transforming cities bid what guarantee can you realistically give that the council will get its full allocation of funding for the Norwich Western Link?

Response:

At this time, it is not possible to guarantee what funding may be allocated for the Norwich Western Link, or indeed any other infrastructure project nationally. The possible funding settlement for Transforming Cities is a completely separate process and does not provide any further insight on this.

The scheme has already been agreed as a project of regional priority by Transport East, and the Department for Transport has indicated it does not require any further work and is satisfied with the details in our Strategic Outline Business Case submission. Therefore, it is important to continue to press the case for the Norwich Western Link with Ministers, the Treasury and Department for Transport, to finalise the conditional approval status for the project.

Question from Cllr Dan Roper

What is the current take up of school places for key workers and for vulnerable children both in terms of numbers and the proportion in relation to the latter?

Response:

The current take up of places in schools, as at 27th April 2020 was a total of 4,616 pupils who attended across the week. This includes all maintained schools (LA and Academies, mainstream and special) and independent schools. Of those, 3297 were children and young people of key workers. 1319 were vulnerable children. We would want the majority of children in need and with child protection plans to be in school if possible, and the only exceptions would be if this was not desirable because the child or family was symptomatic or a need to shield someone because of their health status. The most recent information from schools indicates that

- 25% of children in need are attending school
 - 46% of children with child protection plans are attending school
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Question 1 from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby

Emergency plans included no provisions for either food supply or distribution during a crisis. Can the Leader reassure the residents of my division that plans for food sourcing and distribution will continue until the end of this epidemic and that emergency plans for future crisis of all sorts will include providing and distributing food to those who need it?

Response:

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented event and has presented a significant challenge both locally and nationally. Public authorities, voluntary and community groups in Norfolk have worked together to put arrangements in place to support Norfolk communities, particularly those who are the most vulnerable. The County Council has also contributed £100,000 to the Community Response Fund to support local charities working hard on the ground to keep vulnerable people safe. The paper on the agenda for Cabinet today sets out the other fantastic work that has been taking place to support communities, and work to provide much needed assistance and support to Norfolk communities will continue.

We will of course ensure that steps are taken to capture learning from Covid-19 to inform future planning.

Question 2 from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby:

The shortcomings in the emergency plans need to be addressed before any second or further spikes in infection. Which cabinet members will be involved, in what way, and how will my residents be able to influence the planning process?

Response:

Norfolk's emergency response has been a collective effort of public bodies through to voluntary and community groups and individuals – and rather than criticise I want to commend each and every responder. Emergency plans will always evolve to respond to the particular issues raised by any incident. As set out in the papers for Cabinet meeting today, it proposed that a Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board is launched comprising local government, health, police authorities and the New Angela Local Enterprise Partnership. If agreed, this group will consider how best to engage residents in planning for normalisation and recovery.

Question 1 from Cllr George Nobbs

Cabinet members and other councillors have no role in any of the Local Resilience Forum or any of the groups set up to manage the emergency response under its auspices. What role have cabinet members been playing and does the Leader agree with my residents who think there should be some member oversight and greater transparency in how a crisis is managed?

Response:

The Norfolk Resilience Forum is overseeing the multi-agency response to the Covid-19 emergency, and a major incident has been declared. This approach is in line with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

In addition, individual authorities/agencies have their own response arrangements to deliver those activities that do not require a multi-agency response. At Norfolk County Council, officers have established Silver and Gold groups comprising senior officers from across all departments.

Although formal Cabinet meetings have, until now, been suspended, Cabinet Members have continued to work with officers in the usual way and have received regular briefings and updates.

Question 2 from Cllr George Nobbs

Where have the spending decisions been made between the council and the Norfolk Resilience Forum during the emergency? I would like my residents to have a better understanding of how the system works.

Response:

Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) is a multi-agency group made up of senior officers from Norfolk local authorities, emergency services, NHS and other agencies. The NRF brings together all relevant bodies in one place to enable Norfolk's approach and response to be jointly planned, co-ordinated and any risks managed.

The NRF is not a legal entity and does not have its own budget. Any decisions on expenditure are for individual authorities/agencies to make; any decisions on County Council expenditure relating to Covid-19 have been made within the provision set out in the County Council's Constitution. The paper on the agenda for Cabinet today sets out the financial implications of Covid-19 on the County Council's budget.

Question 1 from Cllr Steve Morpew

The absence of single point of responsibility for care that means my residents don't know who has ultimate responsible and accountability for residential care and home care standards. That lack of a single point of responsibility has resulted in a lack of coordination, lack of timely information and the belated provider of last resort intervention of the NRF. What does the cabinet member for Adult Service and Public Health think should change to provide the certainty that a single point of responsibility would give?

Response:

Responsibility for care home and home care standards sits with the CQC as the statutory regulator who have duties under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and the Council, who have duties under the Care Act 2014. There is very good coordination between agencies, under an ADASS/CQC Joint Working Protocol (Feb 2019). All care providers are engaged with a dedicated Quality Monitoring Officer.

Locally, the Adult Social Services quality assurance team has provided an effective single point of contact for all care providers via a widely publicised email address. This has been coupled with regular, timely communications. We have been complimented on the effectiveness of communications, and on the work to ensure a supply of PPE in what were difficult and extraordinary circumstances. There are twice weekly meetings which bring together representatives from providers with representatives from quality assurance, public health, CCG and Care quality commission.

As the result of a change from Central Government, from 04 May 2020 a virtual incident centre for COVID-10 related provider enquiries has been established, to manage the work delegated to NCC by Public Health England, to manage ongoing interventions resulting from COVID-19 outbreaks.

There will be much to review and learn from the COVID-19 crisis however it is currently too early to consider longer term changes.

Question 2 from Cllr Steve Morphew

Notwithstanding the excellent job and hard work put in by council staff in securing supplies of PPE supply for which they should be congratulated, council staff and those we fund for residential accommodation, home care and other services should not be put in a position where supplies of PPE could run out. I have care workers and vulnerable residents in my division who I want to be able to reassure that should there be further outbreaks there will be adequate PPE available to protect them. What steps is the cabinet taking to ensure this will be so?

Response:

The Cabinet member for Finance continues to work closely with the Director of Procurement, whose team has secured large supplies of PPE. For example, more than 700,000 face masks have been received, and some 2.4 million are in the pipeline. A standing order has been placed with a local supplier for 500,000 aprons per week. Local suppliers have converted production to supply hand sanitiser and visors. We are as confident as we can be in the circumstances that we will continue to have adequate PPE supplies available.

Question 1 from Cllr Kim Clipsham

Data on outbreaks and mortality is unclear, late and absent because of the reporting mechanisms and lack of single point of responsibility. Care home outbreaks and mortality have been impossible to quantify in a timely way. What changes to reporting should there be, how can our own systems within registrars be improved to give assurance the council can identify future localised spikes early enough to make a difference and, to ensure there is greater transparency for my residents on the number of deaths and the causes of death, will cabinet publish the number of people who have died in Norfolk month by month compared with last year?

Response:

Norfolk County Council uses weekly Office of National Statistics (ONS) data on deaths as the most reliable source of information which provides a weekly count of all deaths in England and Wales where COVID-19 is recorded on the death certificate. This data is provided by ONS at local authority level and place of death is included.

Since the outbreak of Coronavirus Registrars have introduced new and safe ways of being able to register and record deaths:

- Medical Certificates of Cause of Death sent to NCC registrars electronically by doctor (hard copies sent via post)
- Families able to register deaths via telephone
- 'Green Forms' for burial or cremation being sent directly to funeral director or crematorium

The information on monthly data for Norfolk is available from Office for National Statistics (ONS). See link below

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregisteredweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/latest>

Question 2 from Cllr Kim Clipsham

Will the cabinet make public and publish weekly Covid-19 sickness rates of council staff and residents, rates and results of testing for both residents and staff, supply and shortfall for PPE and where it is being supplied from? My residents understand the priority has been the response to the emergency but no longer want to be kept in the dark.

Response:

We have no records on testing as this is a facility which individuals organise independently. We have records of absence for potential covid-related reasons. This currently stands at 19 live cases and 80 cases where employees have now returned to work as at 24 April. This accounts for less than 2% of the workforce.

The council will continue its current practice of making the PPE availability dashboard available weekly to group leaders

Question 1 from Cllr David Rowntree

Some businesses have been able and willing to repurpose to manufacture ventilators and PPE while others have profiteered from PPE shortages. Will the cabinet member join me and my residents in thanking those that stepped up to help, tell me what steps are being taken to recognise those businesses and encourage them to prepare for a future need for flexibility in changing production, take steps to prevent those who have exploited PPE shortages by profiteering from being suppliers to the council and advise my residents what steps are being taken to make Norfolk less reliant on imports for critical equipment like PPE by building local production capacity?

Response:

I am pleased to again extend my thanks to the local, national and international organisations that have helped us by supplying PPE, including the University of East Anglia and several local firms that have repurposed their facilities to provide PPE. Our strategy is to put in place a diverse supply chain and minimise our dependence on middlemen. We are one of very few councils to have sourced large quantities of surgical masks directly from China, at less than half the prevailing price via UK agents. We have also procured very large quantities of aprons on a standing order basis from a Norwich based supplier.

It is premature to speculate about long-term production of PPE. There will undoubtedly be a national review of the topic once the response phase is past.

Question 2 from Cllr David Rowntree

The school meals voucher scheme has been and is still proving unsatisfactory. With the possibility that a further spike could lead to extended or repeated closure of some schools, what steps is the cabinet member taking to ensure the voucher scheme for schools will operate satisfactorily for children in my division if it needs to be called upon in future?

Response:

- Schools are responsible for choosing the scheme for Free School Meal vouchers for the children in their schools.
- Many have chosen the national scheme; however, they have the freedom to setup their own approach, providing meals directly or buying vouchers or gift cards for parents.

- Schools surveyed 27th April - 4th May tell us that meals for over 20,000 pupils were provided. 15,067 (73,42%) were provided through the government's national voucher scheme. The remaining ones were schools' own schemes.
 - The scheme continues for the foreseeable future and will continue through a period of transition as schools expand the number of children attending
 - The national scheme is organised through the Department for Education (DFE) and is delivered by Edenred who have been awarded the contract for the whole country.
 - Schools apply directly to the company and not through the local authority.
 - Local authority officers talk daily with school leaders who collect any issues as they arise, and these are shared with the DFE.
 - Whilst there remain some issues with delay in getting vouchers to parents, overall there has not been a high degree of dissatisfaction reported to us about how the national scheme is working, beyond the first few days
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Question 1 from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare

In my division and I understand across Norfolk the number of vulnerable children attending school during the lockdown has been worryingly low. What are the attendance figures, what analysis has been done to establish what contact was made with the families, what risks were highlighted to those children who did not attend and what is being done to ensure their well-being and safety?

Response:

- The number of vulnerable children attending school has been better in Norfolk compared to national statistics reported to date. However, in Norfolk we have worked to ensure we have an agreed position for every child with a social worker and consequently discussions have taken pace with schools directly to support them in promoting attendance, and with families where we feel children would benefit from being in school
- Attendance remains voluntary, and many parents report that they wish to observe the lockdown with their families.
- Since the start of the summer school term we have seen a significant rise in numbers attending school.
- Schools are in constant contact with children and their families and are especially vigilant with those that are most vulnerable. Considerable work is underway across Children's services to ensure that all vulnerability is identified, not just those children with a social worker or an Education health and Care Plan.
- Conversations are happening with groups of children and young people to discuss the support that they want and need, where that is not in school.
- The council launched a campaign prior to the Easter bank holiday which engages the whole community of Norfolk in being the eyes and ears for children – See Something, Hear Something, Say Something
- In addition, we have launched a dedicated phoneline and adapted in collaboration with our health partners the chat health text service for children to communicate directly where they feel unsafe.
- The current take up of places in schools, as at 27th April 2020 was a total of 4,616 pupils who attended across the week. This includes all maintained schools (LA and Academies, mainstream and special) and independent schools. Of those, 3297 were children and young people of key workers. 1319 were vulnerable children. The most recent information from schools indicates that 25% of children in need

are attending school and 46% of children with child protection plans are attending school

- The baseline expectation is that all children with an allocated Social Worker on a Child In Need or Child Protection plan should attend school as a critical protective factor, and that is the approach practitioners are taking with parents in safety planning
- Attendance at school or otherwise informs their ongoing risk assessment and determines the frequency and nature of visits to children, which is now more often, and for many on a plan still means face to face contact with families and seeing the child alone
- Professional networks and teams around children, albeit working differently and more virtually, remain largely intact, and Social Workers continue to work and meet with them regularly to ensure visibility of the child is maximised
- Additionally, family networking and the engagement and participation of extended families has increased during this period further adding eyes and ears on the child/children
- There is weekly liaison between Social Workers and school attendance officers who contact all schools in any given week to monitor attendance, and where there is non-attendance, jointly plan with teaching staff what work will be done and support offered to families ensure this is remedied
- Whilst Social Workers for these children do not have the powers to compel school attendance and continue to try and work in partnership with parents, in some cases where non-school attendance is assessed to increase risk unduly, then court proceedings have and will be initiated to safeguard the child including coming into care if absolutely necessary.

Question 2 from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare

What changes will the cabinet member propose for future emergency plans to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable children is a priority should schools be closed again?

Response:

- All schools have remained open for children who are vulnerable or for key workers.
 - Some have closed their buildings but are making provision in neighbouring, or partnership schools.
 - Any future announcements of 'closure' are likely to be under the same terms as currently, which means children who are vulnerable are able still to attend school.
 - Schools will continue to make contact with children and their families, especially those they consider the most vulnerable
 - Schools have been working in clusters and have resilience plans in place which ensure that if they have significant reductions in staff and are unable to be open safely, there is back up provision for places for children elsewhere.
 - Furthermore there is a plan for an emergency workforce that can be drafted in to support schools.
 - Ongoing work across children's services will maintain the focus on vulnerable children, enhancing the oversight of vulnerable children through our campaign - See Something, Hear Something, Say Something.
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Question 1 from Cllr Chris Jones

Many local groups and organisations have sprung up driven by local volunteers and a tremendous community spirit. The cabinet will wish to join my residents in thanking all those who stepped forward. However, there was little support or advice available to those groups in the initial period and some of the encouragement did not take account of safeguarding issues for vulnerable people. Will the cabinet ensure proper advice is available to those volunteer groups that continue their work once the emergency passes and will they ensure future emergency planning includes advice that can be issued to volunteers setting up groups to help their community?

Response:

I will of course join you in thanking all of those residents that have stepped forward to volunteer - as well as those providing support to these volunteers. The enthusiasm and willingness of people to volunteer to help those in need has been a testament to the people of Norfolk.

Officers have been working closely with Voluntary Norfolk to co-ordinate the formal volunteering effort, which extends across the whole county and includes various roles. Officers have also sought to provide the best advice possible to voluntary and community groups.

We will of course ensure that steps are taken to capture learning from Covid-19 to inform future planning.

Question 2 from Cllr Chris Jones

Norfolk County Council has placed children with high needs in specialist SEN schools. Many of them are in receipt of Free School Meals. Because independent schools have been excluded from the Government's voucher scheme these children are now being denied the food they need. What is Norfolk County Council doing to protect these vulnerable children and their families from the consequences of NCC's choice of placement?

Response:

- We are aware that the national voucher scheme is not currently accessible for independent schools and we have raised this as an anomaly with the DfE and are lobbying for a change to the scheme so that independent schools are included.
 - DfE are considering this at present but have not yet reached a conclusion.
 - We have asked that all schools where NCC funds places, that schools use a very small amount of that funding to ensure that the eligible pupils in their care do receive the support they need, either in the form of locally sourced food vouchers or locally sourced food boxes.
 - This is a reasonable request as funding has been provided as part of the advance by NCC to the school and would be used in normal circumstances towards the catering provision.
 - If the government retrospectively include independent special schools in the national voucher scheme, it is likely that they will then reimburse any previous costs such as this, as they have done with publicly funded schools.
 - Additionally, schools may be able to apply to the government for help via small business relief that publicly-funded schools cannot access.
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Question 1 from Cllr David Collis

Emergency planning did not envisage the closure of schools in my division or elsewhere in the county. Who will be taking responsibility for including in future emergency plans how school closures will be managed in my division and across the county in future emergencies?

Response:

- The government announcement to close schools on March 20th was made with the proviso that schools should stay open only for children of key / critical workers and vulnerable children who needed a childcare place.
 - Schools largely remained open, or re-opened rapidly to ensure that this provision was made.
 - Many opened across the Easter school holidays.
 - Since the start of the summer school term all schools are now technically open, even where their building may be closed, because pupils have been moved to neighbouring or partnership schools.
 - We anticipate that schools will be asked to expand the number of children coming to school in future weeks.
 - If that expectation is reversed, we will continue to expect schools to stay open for identified children unless the government directive indicates otherwise.
 - Children's Services will continue to co-ordinate the provision across the county and capacity for schools to remain open as expected by the government.
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Question 2 from Cllr David Collis

Norfolk County Council retains responsibility for educational standards in schools. What steps will be taken to help school students from my division and beyond whose education has been set back as a result of not being able to be at school?

Response:

- The Local authority has the duty to promote high standards.
- Schools have the responsibility to ensure they make appropriate provision, deliver a broad and balanced curriculum and achieve positive outcomes for children.
- Governing bodies or Multi-Academy Trusts have direct responsibility for educational standards ensuring that children have a good education and make good progress.
- Schools are providing learning resources to children and families, many host lessons on line, or are sending out work packs and resources.
- There is a significant amount of on-line learning, video-based lessons and BBC resources for children and young people to support their learning in school for those attending and for those at home.
- This will be enhanced for some children by the national laptop scheme.
- The impact of this time out of the classroom is difficult to measure, for some children learning is still very much a part of daily life.
- All schools will be developing a 'recovery curriculum' which means they will be working to identify the gaps in children's learning as a result of this period, not in structured learning.
- We will support schools in this, and we will share strategies and resources.
- The responsibility for children's learning and subsequent progress remains that of the school.

- Once schools return to normal practice, we will resume our monitoring of the quality of children's outcomes for LA maintained schools
 - The responsibility for the progress of students in academies will continue to be that of the Regional Schools Commissioner.
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Question 1 from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton

Emergency plans do not include a definition of key workers or what support may be required for them if called upon in an emergency. Which of my residents should be considered key workers in future and where will plans for supporting key workers for including in future emergency planning be determined?

Response:

The definition of key workers has arisen as a result of the unprecedented Covid-19 emergency, and have been defined by Government.

We will of course ensure that steps are taken to capture learning from Covid-19 to inform future planning.

Question 2 from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton

When commissioning care home places, home care and supported living for vulnerable people what risk assessments are undertaken into the capacity of the provider to cope in times of emergency taking account of the need to isolate, access PPE and provide safe working methods for staff involved in providing care?

Response:

Live information is available to our Operational teams on those care providers where there are concerns about quality (including capacity to make safe admissions). This feeds into the person-centred assessments carried out by social workers to ensure that all placements are made into the most appropriate care settings to meet the needs of the individual. The ongoing quality of services (including the availability of PPE and safe working practices) is being monitored remotely by the Integrated Quality Service.

We also participate in a regional approach to quality monitoring via our integrated quality team – supporting care homes to improve against key themes

Question 1 from Cllr Colleen Walker

The LEP does not recognise the care sector as a major employer or economic driver for Norfolk and yet many of my and all Norfolk County Councillors residents rely on these jobs. There are around 700 employers whose business is delivering care. Will the Cabinet member for Economic growth insist this changes and the care sector now gets the recognition in Norfolk that it deserves as a crucial part of the Norfolk economy?

Response:

The Health and Social care sector represents 9.4% of economic activity and 14.2% of employment in the County with Health dominating those figures .. The focus of work, with partners, has been on supporting workforce development in the sector through an £8M ESF project across New Anglia focused on upskilling the workforce, developing higher value jobs in the sector and supporting management and leadership in the sector. With an increasing elderly population, the Social care sector will continue to play a crucial role in supporting the health and wellbeing of our community. It is particularly relevant at this time

to extend our appreciation to all the social care staff currently working at the front line of the fight against Covid 19 and the County Council will continue to highlight the value of those jobs and support the great work that the sector provides.

Question 2 from Cllr Colleen Walker

As we look forward to once again welcoming tourists and relatives visiting loved ones back to Norfolk to boost our economy, there is a considerable risk from a surge a people visiting coastal areas and relatives in care homes. What plans are there to mitigate that risk and when will businesses, Norfolk residents and those in my division be consulted on them?

Response:

Like the rest of the country, we will be reflecting on the announcements that the Prime Minister made just yesterday. Officers will continue to work with other agencies through the Norfolk Resilience Forum to closely monitor the impact of any lockdown restrictions, or easing of these restrictions.

Question 1 from Cllr Mike Sands

Small shops and small businesses have supported our communities like mine and many other divisions. Will the cabinet member join me in congratulating and thanking them for supporting their communities, and tell me what steps will be taken to ensure that their role as critical parts of our community infrastructure is recognised and they are protected as community assets?

Response:

Small and Medium size businesses make up over 90% of the Norfolk economy and play a valued role in the wealth and wellbeing of our County. Through this pandemic the Government have made unprecedented support available to the vast majority of small businesses through grants and loan schemes. New Anglia LEP have re-purposed their Growth Deal funding to support businesses to diversify with a focus now on the production of PPE. The County Council is actively looking at the outcome of business surveys to determine where best to focus our support to business during the early phase of recovery and is also working to support various of our district Councils through the High Street Fund and Town Deals. Many people have made significant changes to the way they buy food and there is clear evidence of a resurgence in business for local shops like butchers and grocers. Working with new Anglia LEP a new platform has been created that supports the local food and drink sector to meet local supply and demand providing a valued service to local people.

Question 2 from Cllr Mike Sands

The Norfolk economy generates huge wealth through renewable energy created offshore and distributed through our county to power the UK economy. Isn't it about time we got a fair share of the wealth generated in our county that could be used to reduce the poverty that increases the vulnerability of some communities and would help us rebuild our social, community and economic infrastructure?

Response:

The clean energy sector, which includes renewables, offers Norfolk a real opportunity to grow jobs and supply chain businesses. That is why it is a sector that is included in the

Local Industrial Strategy and why the County and District partners are looking to maximise investment into this sector. Creating well paid jobs and employment opportunities, supporting the creation of new businesses and spin outs from larger companies that focus on innovation is key to creating more wealth in local economies. That combined with supporting people with the skills they need to access those jobs and create those businesses is the best way to improve the living standards of all our residents and help sustain community infrastructure.

Question 1 from Cllr Jess Barnard:

For the last decade cuts to the funding for charities and community organisations has reduced their capacity and resilience. My residents have seen charities go under during the emergency and many have been making pleas for help to keep them going so they can continue to deliver exactly the kind of crucial support communities need during times of crisis. What steps will the cabinet be taking to support charities and community groups in the short term and ensure their resilience for the long term and replace or restore services those lost when Open were unable to continue?

Response:

Cabinet recognises the vital role the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors are playing in response to Covid-19- and in supporting our residents in normal times.

We have worked with our partners as part of the Norfolk Resilience Forum to consider how to support local efforts for our residents.

Some charities are eligible for government grants providing their occupation and use fall under the definition of Retail, Hospitality or Leisure.

As part of the wider Community Resilience work, Norfolk Community Foundation have raised over £1m and Norfolk County Council donated £100k towards that fund. Norfolk Community Foundation have been successful in providing both lower level grants of £k to grass roots organisations, as well as larger amounts of up to £10k aimed at larger VCSE organisations for more strategic interventions related to Covid-19 support.

We also grant fund the Working Together Partnership made up of some of the infrastructure organisations who provide ongoing support and advice to the wider sector.

Nationally, the Government has provided a £750 million package for charities to ensure they can continue their vital work during the coronavirus outbreak and the County Council will look to support local organisations to access this.

The Council is supporting charities locally through a range of measures where they provide services to us directly (in the same way that we are supporting all providers) and those indirectly delivering services which support the Council's work. Details of the wider support to charities is published on the Council's website <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/coronavirus/business-support/support-for-charities>.

Question 2 from Cllr Jess Barnard:

Some of the people hardest hit by lock down are the zero hours contract workers who are not eligible for the governments furlough scheme and have been left for more than 6 weeks without pay. This includes some of the sub contracted workforce of Norfolk County Council, including supply teachers and cleaners. What is Norfolk County Council doing to ensure that these workers receive payment and to prevent Norfolk workers being pushed into poverty, debt and rent arrears?

Response:

Under furlough arrangements, zero hours contract workers are eligible to be considered for furlough if on the payroll at the relevant date. Within NCC we identified all our casual workers and have undertaken a detailed exercise to calculate an average pay so that they are not disadvantaged. No employee in NCC is disadvantaged

Question 1 from Cllr Terry Jermy

This emergency has highlighted the crucial role of public transport for residents in my Thetford division and across Norfolk, especially the heroes that have kept our county going during the crisis. Does the cabinet member agree it is time to revisit our priorities and give greater weight to investing in public transport rather than new roads?

Response:

The County Council has a good track record of investing in public transport and, unlike most other local authorities, we have not reduced the public transport budget for at least the last 6 years, despite the challenging financial situation. As well as conventional public transport, Norfolk also has a good network of community and demand-responsive transport. I agree that public transport is of prime importance and of course if we were to receive any additional funding, we would always consider any public transport needs that were not being met.

Question 2 from Cllr Terry Jermy

Could the Cabinet please provide an update in relation to what is happening with the former Cosy Carpets building at Minstergate in Thetford, which was compulsory purchased by Norfolk County Council in 2013.

Response:

The site is subject to a current legal case scheduled for the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) under the title "Nolan Guthrie v Norfolk County Council" (Reference: ACQ/289/2019).

All parties are working together to resolve the case in advance of reaching Land Tribunal. It is therefore inappropriate to discuss at this point.

Question 1 from Cllr Danny Douglas

Mancroft residents look forward to plans being presented concerning the return of children to schools in a safe and appropriate manner, part of which will be the transport

arrangements to school. What plans have been drawn up in case of one or more of Norfolk's bus companies fail or are unable to provide an adequate service?

Response:

We are working closely with transport operators to help them plan to deliver transport that is required when children return to school. We are ensuring that all companies receive payments at pre Covid-19 levels and are assisting them with claiming any monies that the Treasury have offered to support bus operators. Children will return in a phased manner and we are working closely with Children's Services and transport operators to ensure the necessary transport can be delivered safely when and where it is needed.

Question 2 from Cllr Danny Douglas

My residents have been asking why the council doesn't run its own bus services to ensure resilience for Norfolk's transport system. Will the cabinet member ask the government to suspend or revoke Clause 22 of the Local Buses Act 2017 which prohibits local authorities from owning local bus companies in order to enable essential bus services to be delivered to Norfolk residents?

Response:

We do not believe that this will be necessary, or appropriate. We are supporting Norfolk's bus operators in every way we can and are committed to continue doing this in the months ahead. I believe that the bus companies themselves are best placed to provide Norfolk's transport services, and with our help I am confident they can continue to do so.

Question 1 from Cllr Brenda Jones

It is unlikely the savings budgeted for this year can be achieved and the additional demands on the adult services budget may not be covered by extra funding from government. What contingency plans are in place to protect services in the event of a shortfall and what impact does the cabinet member expect for my residents and others in Norfolk?

Response:

As identified in the report to Cabinet, it is too early to fully quantify the financial impacts of the pandemic. The Government has provided funding to support Councils in delivering the response to coronavirus and this is also intended to address the impact of lost savings. While we are still in the early stages of the response to the pandemic, officers are continuing to assess the wider financial impacts and will report this regularly to future Cabinet meetings. However, all services are seeing a profound impact from the pandemic, which is affecting the strategy and direction of resources. Within adult social care for example some preventative services have been redeployed to support the safe discharge of people from hospital and some costs being incurred will rely on NHS funding. Many council services will look different in the coming months to meet the changing needs of residents, providers and partners. The Council will continue to highlight the cost, income, and lost saving pressures across all service areas to Government to seek to ensure that sufficient funding is forthcoming to protect vital service provision.

Question 2 from Cllr Brenda Jones

What has the cabinet member Adult Services and Public Health for done to find out the experiences and needs of adults with disabilities during the lockdown and the experiences of carers during this time?

Response:

As you would expect Adult Services are in regular contact with those individuals or their carers contacted by the initial emergency care planning work for C-19. This identified over 7000 service users and carers who required a range of assistance in developing an emergency plan regarding the loss of care or carer/s and plans to mitigate this loss. From this cohort, a significant number are being called weekly or less regularly depending on their situation. This is based on the initial risk assessment and their own requirements for contact. These calls are both to ascertain current care and support needs/circumstances, wider concerns which includes safeguarding, shopping and financial welfare. It also allows a space for a service user/carers to speak directly to a social worker and to be advised on care and respite services or receive advice.

Another cohort of service users and carers are being contacted regularly both by Adult Services and Day Service providers. These service users are those who attended day care which has been suspended. A similar intervention process is in place via weekly calls or less if not required, to these service users and their carer's. This process is assisted by particular Day Care providers via telephone contact. Other interventions are occurring such as planned conversations/meetings with voluntary sector partners and service user representatives via team managers and more senior management staff. This information is being collated to provide background evidence and direction to assist in the consideration of how Adult Services will work within the new C-19 environment or 'new normal' with our service users and carers

Question 1 from Cllr Emma Corlett

Since the lockdown there has been a significant increase in the number of people coming to my division to buy and use illicit drugs. What steps have been taken to ensure the safety of drug users during the pandemic and the safety of residents who are facing numerous people (who do not have access to hand-washing facilities while they are out) using and buying drugs entering stairwells, lifts and communal areas.

Response:

I know the police take the issue of people selling drugs very seriously and I am sure they would be very happy to respond to any questions you may put to them.

We have asked our partners Change Grow Live (CGL) to do a number of things to support drug users during this pandemic. They are

- Reducing the need for clients to leave their homes by changing their prescribing regime to two week supply (subject to an individual assessment of clinical need and risk)
- Providing lock boxes to keep medicines safe. Many hostels are supporting clients by holding the lockboxes as well.
- Delivering medicines for self-isolating clients and carrying out welfare checks.
- Offering Naloxone to clients, family members, friends and hostels in case of overdose situations.

- Continuing to provide needle exchange and harm reduction advice, encouraging people to take more than they normally would, so they don't have to keep leaving their home.
 - Ringing clients on at least a weekly basis and providing virtual support groups for clients and affected others
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Question 2 from Cllr Emma Corlett.

A consequence of this increased drug-related activity in my community has been an increase in shoplifting in the local pharmacy and shop. What financial support is available to compensate these independent businesses providing a critical service to the local community for the additional losses they are facing as a result of this shoplifting.

Response:

Shoplifting itself would be a matter for law enforcement and insurance. That said, a local pharmacy and/or shop will likely be eligible for the additional reliefs and grants announced in the wake of COVID-19. These measures are available to help businesses cope with the general commercial stresses of the pandemic:

Business Rates Relief (automatic): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-your-retail-hospitality-or-leisure-business-is-eligible-for-business-rates-relief-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

Small Business Grants: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-business-support-grant-funding-guidance-for-businesses>
