

Cabinet
31 January 2022
Public & Local Member Questions

Agenda item 6	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from Joe Mooney This cabinet report is in my opinion a key milestone in terms of securing a new recycling centre for Wymondham. The existing site is no longer fit for purpose and it does need replacing. I welcome the news to secure the site outlined in the cabinet paper and I very much hope that it can be brought to fruition as soon as possible. My question is outlined below.</p> <p>Could you give me a timetable for the project and will the agreement to sign the lease and the removal of the soil heap be conditional on securing all of the necessary permissions such as planning and permits</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment of Waste Thank you for your support and ongoing interest in the replacement of the Wymondham Recycling Centre. Providing a new recycling centre for the Wymondham area is part of the County Council's programme of improvements to Norfolk's recycling centre network, which is to make sites easier to use, to improve recycling performance and to allow for increased usage and a greater focus on reuse.</p> <p>For the Wymondham project, applications for permission to build and operate a new recycling centre are expected in summer 2022. If approvals are secured, then construction would be expected to start in spring 2023 with the new recycling centre then opening in late 2023 or early 2024.</p> <p>And the answer to the second part of your question is yes; as the County Council will only trigger the lease for the site and payment for site clearance when it has secured the relevant permissions, and when the County Council is ready to start its work to construct the new recycling centre.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Iain Duncan COUNTY HALL, NORWICH: I know that a small amount of lighting may be needed 'out-of-hours', but why is County Hall (inside and out) and its grounds apparently fully or nearly fully illuminated 24/7 and 365 days a year?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management Over the past few years, Norfolk County Council have consolidated a number of buildings into County Hall – which has changed the activities and hours of operation of the building. A number of teams – notably colleagues from Adult Social services, Children's Services and partners such as Norfolk police operate out of the building on a 24/7 basis.</p> <p>Cleaning, maintenance and security teams will also be working in the evening (normally starting their shift after 18.00). There is significant activity across the floors by these teams across the evening, which require the floors to be lit.</p> <p>All of the lights are on 'proximity sensors' that switch on the low voltage LED lights on when there is movement on sections of the floor. They will switch off after a set period of time. The floors in County Hall are open plan, so whilst one section may be lit – this will be visible from the windows.</p>

We have looked at the 'timing' of sensors and also on reducing security inspections of the building, however have to balance this with the comfort and usability of the building – particularly by staff working in the evening.

The use of electricity has significant fallen in County Hall over the past ten years, as well as the significant property savings from moving teams from across Norwich from (less visible) offices into County Hall.

Exterior lighting provides wider security and works with our CCTV system to ensure users of the building and the wider public using the footpaths can do so safely.

Supplementary question from Iain Duncan

PARK AND RIDE CAR PARKS: Why are these apparently fully illuminated at all times, and not just when the buses using them are running?

I am concerned about the apparent huge waste of energy - with large financial cost, atmospheric damage (in the face of a climate catastrophe), and light pollution.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Highways and Transport

The streetlights at the park and ride sites are left on at 50% capacity at night for security reasons – we have unfortunately had several incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour on the sites and so to leave them in total darkness would increase this risk and lead to more cost in repairs. However, we are exploring more efficient lighting and the use of solar power as part of our Net Zero programme.

**Cabinet
31 January 2022
Local Member Questions**

Agenda item 7	Local Member Issues/Questions
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale If Conservative governments hadn't cut renewable energy support, people would now be paying £140 less in fuel bills. Yet it's also been revealed that only 7% of homes that should have been were insulated through the Green Homes Grant, partly due to a lack of skilled workers. There is a need for local coordination and training to ensure homes are insulated and bring down the cost of living and carbon emissions. Will the county council establish a local retrofit taskforce to ensure appropriate training and funding to achieve this?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Under the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme (part of the wider suite of government funding, including the Green Homes Grant) a consortium led by Broadland District Council (including Norwich City, Breckland District Council, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and South Norfolk District Council) successfully secured funding. Full details of successful Local Authority bids can be found here. The current phase of the LAD scheme is managed by the Greater South East Energy Hub, which also covers Norfolk. More details about the current scheme can be found here.</p> <p>The New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has established a clean growth task force with one of the five focus areas being the Workforce for the Future and a key action being to shape the Decarbonisation Academy proposal and the wider clean growth skills agenda. The Decarbonisation Academy aim is to create the skilled workforce that is required to support a zero-carbon economy and the pilot project will look to develop the institutional and physical infrastructure needed to support the rapid deployment of high-quality training programmes needed to deliver cutting-edge property decarbonisation schemes. The County Council sits on the task and finish groups set up for the project covering a range of themes including planning, economic development, and skills.</p> <p>We have also recently funded a Local Energy Asset Representation, which has provided data on housing stock and are leading the proposal for a Local Area Energy Plan, which will set out the infrastructure and investment required to achieve the transition to net zero.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Paul Neale Norfolk's Enhanced Partnership Plan for improving bus services proposes bus priority studies on only 6 corridors (two in each major urban area). Considering the scale of the shift to public transport needed to meet climate targets, a limited target of 6 bus priority studies is insufficient. Will the Cabinet Member for Highways reconsider this and expand the areas considered for priority studies?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and</p>

	<p>Transport</p> <p>The target of 6 bus priority studies listed in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme is only a starting point – you will see that the target date is June 2022. In this initial Scheme we could only list commitments that we knew we could realistically carry out without knowing what funding we will get from the Department for Transport. Assuming we get a good level of funding for our £106m Bus Service Improvement Plan bid, which we hope to know by the end of February, our intention is to review and scale up those commitments in line with the amount of funding allocated to Norfolk.</p>
7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare</p> <p>Food banks in Norfolk are reporting overwhelming demand, rising running costs and an end to financial support. Most recently, Mandalay Wellbeing's food bank in my division reported that it ran out of food, had to turn people away and its future is now uncertain.</p> <p>The Council continues to build emphasis on the community and voluntary sector supporting the delivery of public services, including health and wellbeing. As health inequalities widen in Norfolk, how does the Council propose to either help support Norfolk's food banks in their vital work, or eradicate the need for them entirely?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy</p> <p>Norfolk County Council, alongside Great Yarmouth Borough Council have provided £2,000 in direct funding to Mandalay Food Bank to support their ongoing food provision to vulnerable households in the town, as well as 30 pre-packed food parcels. In addition the Mandalay food bank also received £10,000 via the Norfolk Community Foundation to provide £50 grants to 200 families in Great Yarmouth. Both elements have been funded from the Household Support Fund allocated to Norfolk County Council from the Department of Work and Pensions.</p> <p>We are aware that foodbanks offer a temporary solution to concerns linked to sustainable employment, the rising cost of living and other economic factors affecting household finances exacerbated by the pandemic. Norfolk County Council has supported around 29,000 children and young people with free school meals vouchers during school holidays, increased funding to Norfolk Assistance scheme by £1.2million this winter as well as supporting over 6,000 households with direct food provision to help them shield or self isolate during the pandemic.</p>
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb</p> <p>The council estimates it will spend at least £575,000 on legal fees for SEND Tribunals this year. 95% of decisions in the last year have gone in favour of the family and against Norfolk County Council. At the Council meeting in November 2021, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services described this as "not a good figure for the Council to have to defend" and that he was to have a meeting to discuss this. Please can he give an update on the outcome of this meeting and next steps?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>The figure of 95% seems to have been taken from a national figure that has been reported by various media sources and has been used in discussions regarding the situation in Norfolk.</p>

	<p>To clarify the position for Norfolk, in academic year 2020-2021, 8% of appeals lodged were decided by a Judge. Of those 8%, 60% were upheld in favour of the parent.</p> <p>94% of the total number of all appeals lodged by parents that year were for special school places, which is reflective of the supply and demand pressures of our special school system due to the significant increase in parental requests for special school places experienced since the 2014 reforms and the expectation the tribunal places on our existing special schools to accommodate greater and greater numbers of children within ever decreasing space and facilities.</p> <p>As our new special schools open we anticipate we will see a reduction in appeals for special school placements.</p> <p>I do agree with Cllr Webb that we need to ensure council funding for SEND should be used effectively and I can reassure her that our investment for SEND over the past 3 years has led directly to our improved performance for EHCP assessments and also the opening of the first two of our new special schools.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton Angel Road Junior school has been allowed to become unsafe through lack of maintenance. It is proposed children will use modular classrooms funded by the trust instead of a new purpose built school paid for by the county council as it should be and my community deserves. Can the cabinet member explain how this council neglect led to children losing out with the only winners being the county council who will be handed back a valuable site?'</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Angel Road Junior School became an Academy in March 2018 along with the Infant School, originally as part of Diversa Academy Trust and then both schools were later rebrokered to join Evolution Academy Trust (a process managed solely by the DFE with no involvement with a Local Authority).</p> <p>Around the time of academisation a condition survey is completed and shared with parties. In a small number of cases Norfolk County Council funds urgent capital works to address condition issues, and this was the case at Angel Road Junior School – resulting from the age and condition of the building. The buildings are passed to an academy as safe, warm and dry at the point of academisation and after this, the responsibility for condition of buildings (including health and safety) passes to the academy trust and they are funded directly from the Department for Education either via a School Condition Allocation for larger Academy Trusts or via a bidding process for those under a specified size.</p> <p>The funding for schools' capital nationally is fragmented between central government, Academy Trusts and local authorities. It would only be appropriate for NCC to invest in a new building for an academy where there is a need for additional pupil places and this is not the case here. So when issues arise at a school such as Angel Road Junior it is not appropriate for NCC to step in to resolve but we will continue to work with all schools and academies for the benefit of children and young people in schools.</p> <p>The site is yet to formally return to NCC but we have been informed that it will</p>

	<p>happen in the coming months. The reuse of the site will be considered in the normal manner.</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy There have been worrying reports of an increase in drugs paraphernalia dumped around Thetford including discarded used needles spotted in the river. Many people locally have linked these issues with a decrease in levels of NCC commissioned drugs and alcohol support services provided by 'Change Grow Lives' in the town. Will the Cabinet review the service provided locally to ensure that it is adequate?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. As you are already aware the responsibility to collect any litter is one for the local, District Council. We therefore do not hold any data on whether there has been an increase in litter in Thetford.</p> <p>I can say that there has been no reduction in the level of services we commission to treat drug and alcohol addiction. A needle exchange scheme is offered by local NHS pharmacies and at Breckland House in Thetford. All suppliers are contracted to collect used needle and syringes at their premises. They are also asked to encourage service users to return their used paraphernalia.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Terry Jermy Repairs to broken and faulty NCC street-lights and illuminated road signs appear to be taking a considerable amount of time at present. What is the agreed time period with the contractor for repairs to be undertaken and is this being achieved?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Streetlighting faults including illuminated road signs should generally be rectified within five business days upon receiving notification of the fault.</p> <p>Where faults involve the repair of UK Power Network equipment, these should generally be rectified within 20 business days. This however is often outside of the control of our contractor and can take longer being dependent on attendance by UK Power Networks. We are aware of certain issues regarding UKPN faults and our contractor is actively engaging with UK Power Networks to rectify the issues being experienced. During 2020-22, more than 98% of faults were rectified on time and within the five business days.</p>
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett When RM033 was included in the Corporate Risk Register last year it was rated an Amber possible major risk. In the light of delays in the consultation, increasing controversy, continuing cost increases and adverse comments from Department of Transport officials on the environmental impact, what is the current risk rating of RM033?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The risk register refers to delays to funding and statutory approvals. At this time, whilst the consultation has been delayed, we are looking at the overall timings for</p>

	<p>the project. There is no indication that funding is at risk. Once the project timescales have been reviewed the risk register will be updated as part of the regular review process. The rating is currently still Amber.</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Steve Morpew We have all joined in congratulating and thanking those in Norfolk who worked so hard to guide us through the pandemic. We have all expressed heartfelt sympathy with those who lost and sacrificed so much. In the light of the Sue Gray report and police investigation into behaviour at the heart of the government will the Leader now take this opportunity to reflect the feelings of so many in Norfolk that the Prime Minister must resign?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy As the Sue Gray report has not yet been published, I have no comment to make</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Sharon Blundell Is the council meeting its current pothole repair target times and how does this performance compare to those being achieved by the authorities in the rest of the East and England?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport In this current financial year, 95.1% of urgent/dangerous potholes we identify or are reported to the Council are repaired or made safe within our target timescales. All other potholes are assessed individually taking into account factors such as location and severity to form a risk based approach and response times will vary according to each individual assessment. In addition, we closely monitor contractor performance and we know that so far this financial year only 3.5 % of pothole jobs have gone past their target date. This comprises pothole jobs assessed across all priorities.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Sharon Blundell Section 73(14) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 says the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance is excluded by law from being taken into account for charges. The mobility component of Personal Independence Payments should also be disregarded.</p> <p>Therefore what people do with that component (leasing a motability car or otherwise) should not be factored in.</p> <p>The council's Adult Social Services Department Transport Policy reviewed in June 2021 says "Adult Social Services would not normally provide Council funded transport for a person who is in receipt of a Motability vehicle or mobility payment."</p> <p>Can you please explain how it is lawful for the council to do this?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question.</p> <p>This is very straightforward; the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance</p>

	<p>(or Personal Independence Payment) is excluded in means-tested charging to allow people to keep this benefit (or a Motability vehicle) to help them get around if they have an illness or disability. This is to avoid mobility payments (or a Motability vehicle) reducing the value of this payment or preventing its use to help the person get around. Norfolk complies with this requirement within our charging arrangements. As people are expected to use the mobility payment (or a Motability vehicle) to get around, the Council's position in its policy of whether to include transport funding in care plans is that people will be using this benefit to transport themselves to whatever service they are using. The assessment process allows a full discussion of transport issues to take into account any problems or issues in applying the policy.</p>
7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins</p> <p>According to a report from the Centre for Cities, Norwich has lost 33 weeks of potential sales during the pandemic. With the rise of online shopping, the future of our high streets across the county is extremely uncertain. Small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) are particularly vulnerable and need the support of local people. The Federation of Small Businesses says that for every £1 spent with an SME, 63p goes back into the local economy. What further measures can the Council take to help SMEs survive and increase footfall, to help Norfolk avoid the closure of more local shops?</p> <p>Response from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy</p> <p>Unfortunately our high streets were already finding it challenging to compete with the rise of online retailers before the pandemic - a national problem reported by the Federation of Small Businesses - which has led to a steady increase in vacancy rates in our towns and city over time.</p> <p>However, the County and district councils have been working closely together, to put in place measures of support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building on the grants administered in the first wave of the pandemic, district councils are distributing additional grants for hospitality businesses affected by Omicron.• The 'Click it Local' scheme, currently covering businesses in Norwich and South Norfolk, enabling customers to order gifts, food and essentials from small businesses.• Town Deal high street improvements in King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth, to make these town centres more attractive to shoppers (in line with the Government's Build Back Better High Streets Strategy).• Delivery of our Go Digital programme, to help SMEs improve their productivity and competitiveness with digital tools. Over 450 businesses registered on the scheme, with plans to support over 1000 by March 2023. District councils are also co-funding the programme.• Our Employer Training Incentive Programme is helping businesses to become more competitive through up-skilling their staff for the new trading circumstances. Over 325 SME supported to date, with over 1,200 interventions. Source of funding being explored for the waiting list of 200+ businesses, now that the initial grant funding has come to an end. <p>The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June are also an opportunity for SMEs to attract people to their high streets for celebratory experiences and associated purchases.</p>

7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Tim Adams What work is being done to address potential reduced levels of activities and increased isolation for older residents in Care homes?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. As you are already aware Care Homes in Norfolk are independent businesses.</p> <p>The Council has detailed in the specification for all the Residential and Nursing Care homes it commissions places within, a clear requirement to ensure that support is available to people, so they can enjoy a variety of activities and social opportunities based on their preferences and strengths, as part of everyday life. This includes activities within the home but also to support people's access within the wider community.</p> <p>As part of our approach to ensuring Quality of care in Norfolk, the PAMMS (Provider Assessment and Market Management Solution) audit that all residential and nursing care homes will receive, includes areas such as Personalised Care and Support, which includes this expectation. The findings of these audits are discussed with the providers to ensure any areas for improvement are identified.</p> <p>We understand that during the various restrictions placed on Care Homes to protect their residents from Covid, regarding visitors and movement of people, activities available will have been impacted. With the recent easing of social care restrictions, this will support the return of activities as well visitors, which will reduce people's isolation and improve their well-being.</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Dan Roper Is the council looking to introduce a lane rental scheme to prevent utility companies outstaying their welcome with unnecessary traffic lights and what would the terms of the scheme be?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The council already issues fines on utility companies where they have taken too long to complete their street works. These fines are based on the number of extra days those works took to complete. Since 2001 highway authorities have used Section 74 of the New Roads & Street Works Act to achieve this.</p> <p>A lane rental scheme allows a highway authority to charge all works promoters (including those undertaken by the highway authority) for the use of the highway on a small part of their road network. These daily fees are based on the number of days taken to complete the work with the income collected used to operate the lane rental scheme.</p> <p>Only London and Kent County Council currently operate lane rental schemes. Norfolk, along with other regional highway authorities are keeping the position under review to help us consider if a lane rental scheme would be beneficial to Norfolk.</p>

7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Lucy Shires In 2020/21, there were almost 200 cases of serious harm or death involving babies in England, which is a 31pc rise compared to 2019/20. Yet in Norfolk we see press reports that Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust, which is paid millions of pounds a year by Norfolk County Council to provide the service, has failed to visit the vast majority of Norfolk families in 2020. What are you doing to urgently address this?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention The Health Visitor, Healthy Child Programme is a Public Health commissioned, NHS delivered service. It is a universal service to support parents, and all children's healthy social, emotional, and physical development. Norfolk County Council has fully funded the service and has also used Government Covid money to increase investment during the pandemic.</p> <p>Like all NHS services our NHS provider is experiencing severe pressures due to Covid - I also understand that there is a longer-term national shortage of health visitors, who are trained by NHS Health Education England. The National Guidance supports the provision of a mix of face to face, on-line and phone appointments. In line with this the Norfolk Health Child programme offers a 'blended' service. Face-to-face appointments are undertaken for vulnerable and higher risk families. For lower need families the youngest babies are prioritised, for example 94% of new-borns are seen in face-to-face appointments. All families are contacted either in person or virtually for every mandatory check. Throughout this time the NHS has prioritised those who are the most vulnerable and families with highest need. The NHS meets regularly with the commissioners and is producing an immediate recovery trajectory with increased face-to-face appointments as short-term sickness in staff reduces with reducing numbers of Covid cases. And an in-year catch-up programme for families most affected by the pandemic is being agreed as the peak in Covid is passed.</p> <p>In addition, our NHS provider is implementing a longer-term workforce plan to address the challenges of national NHS shortages in Health Visitors.</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell When considering any imminent Wisbech incinerator planning application the Planning Inspectorate will give Councils 14 days to report on the validity of the public consultation. Is this Council ready to meet this deadline and to declare the public consultation in West Norfolk to have been inadequate in its coverage of the actual population living downwind of the incinerator?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste No planning application has been received and if and when it does come forward Norfolk County Council will follow its obligations under planning law as a statutory consultee</p> <p>The validity of the public consultation undertaken by MVV will be assessed against the published Statement of Community Involvement dated June 2021. The contents of which would have been considered by all local planning authorities before adoption by MVV</p>

7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp The NSPCC says delivery of the Health Visitor Service over the phone or on Zoom, instead of in person, makes it harder to spot developmental delay or domestic abuse. The Health Visitor needs to see how parents and children interact. This is best done face-to -face. Norfolk County Council commissions Norfolk’s Health Visitor Service. In Norfolk Health Visits after the first visit, are conducted virtually. Can the Cabinet Member ensure that Norfolk has enough Health Visitors to make every Home Visit in person?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. Please see the answer to question 7.12 for the full response.</p>
7.15	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn In 2020, Norwich City Council unanimously adopted a Green Party motion to trial safer consumption spaces in the city to reduce drug-related deaths and prevent situations where drug-users take drugs in the stairwells of residents, with faeces, blood and drug paraphernalia being left outside residents’ front doors.</p> <p>Recently, Bristol welcomed the Overdose Prevention Centre, a mobile unit where drug-users can find safety and supervision to reduce deaths. This is done with the express support of the police, even though the Home Office has not granted permission.</p> <p>Will Norfolk follow the example of Bristol and many European nations by working with partners to establish a safer consumption space in Norwich?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. As you would expect Norfolk County Council is committed to reducing the number of drug related deaths. Our public health commissioners follow National Policy, therefore we would not support “Consumption Rooms” because they are not supported by the Home Office.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Jamie Osborn Government proposals to make voter photo ID mandatory to vote could block 2.1 million people from voting despite voter fraud being negligible. This would disproportionately disenfranchise people from minority ethnic backgrounds (eg: 47% of Black people in England don’t have a driving license, compared to 24% of white people) and social-renters. Will the Council Leader urge his Conservative colleagues to oppose this Bill that threatens to disenfranchise already-marginalised groups in Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy Thank you for the question. This is a difficult issue that will no doubt be subject to a</p>

	<p>lot of debate in the lead up to any decision being made. My position is very similar to that of the Electoral Commission- It is important that the UK's electoral system is both secure and accessible.</p> <p>There are already checks in place to confirm a voter's identity if they are voting by post. But there are no similar checks in place at polling stations in Great Britain to prevent someone claiming to be someone else and voting in their name. This makes polling station voting in Great Britain vulnerable to fraud.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, there has been a requirement to show ID when voting since 1985, updated to photo ID in 2003.</p> <p>The UK has very low levels of proven electoral fraud, and voters should feel confident about their vote. But we know from public opinion research that it is an issue that concerns some voters. Two-thirds of people say they would feel more confident in the security of the voting system if there was a requirement to show ID.</p> <p>If introduced it must be done with consideration for everyone who is eligible to vote and importantly must come with funding to allow Local Councils to implement it.</p>
7.16	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price</p> <p>Thorpe Hamlet Children's Centre supported a top 20% most disadvantaged area offering the first Sure Start Programme in Norwich. In 2010, the centre was saved after Greens worked with parents against plans to close it. In 2019, a decision was made to shut 38 of Norfolk's 53 children's centres, including the Thorpe Hamlet centre. Removing access to this essential service had a detrimental impact on children and families I represent. Does the cabinet member accept the redesign of the service has been a failure, opportunities have been reduced for children and their families, and it's time to reinstate this essential service provision and reopen the Thorpe Hamlet centre?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>The transformation of our early childhood services with the creation of the Early Childhood and Family Service in 2019 was not about reducing access to support for families but about making better use of resources through focusing on funding front line delivery and support for families who need it, rather than operating buildings. Whilst the last two years have been a very challenging period with significant disruption both for families and services, the Early Childhood and Family Service has continued to support families during the pandemic through a mix of face to face delivery and online and digital support. The service is working closely with other local services and agencies, including in the Thorpe Hamlet area, to help ensure that families who need help can access the support they need in a coordinated way.</p> <p>The Thorpe Hamlet centre has continued to be used by local families as a result of Lionwood Junior School taking it over. Families are also accessing the nursery provision onsite which has been enhanced under this arrangement. The Early Childhood and Family Service is able to use the centre to meet with families, alongside other community venues and within families' homes. Through the council's community funding for early childhood groups, within the Norwich North area that Thorpe Hamlet is within, four new community groups have been supported to set up and a further two have been supported to continue to operate</p>

following the pandemic.

Second question from Cllr Ben Price

Norwich City Council's climate commission provides expert advice on reducing carbon emissions area-wide (not just for the council's own operations) and follows best practice for place-based climate leadership by integrating energy, governmental, educational, arts and civil society sectors in producing a credible and legitimate climate action plan. Does the county council agree that involving these sectors in decision-making is important and will it establish a climate commission for Norfolk?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Norfolk County Council has committed to achieving net zero across its own estates by 2030, and also to working closely in partnership with key organisations, including District partners and the private sector, in terms of the county's wider journey towards net zero.

Norfolk County Council is an active member of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and many other networks, including the ICS, committed to tackling climate change.

The Council's Member Oversight Group for the Environment also continues to consider and make recommendations around other partnerships and the membership of wider networks and bodies, regionally and nationally, which will help Norfolk County Council deliver its net zero goals.