

Cabinet

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 11 May 2020 at 10am

Virtual Teams Meeting

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.

Executive Directors Present:

Tom McCabe	Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services and Head of Paid Service.
James Bullion	Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Helen Edwards	Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer
Simon George	Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services
Fiona McDiarmid	Executive Director of Strategy & Governance

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first Cabinet meeting since the COVID-19 lockdown began and advised viewers of the following information:

- 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 Cabinet meeting would have the same standing and validity as if they had been made in a meeting in County Hall.
- The reports on the agenda were available on the council's website. Item 9 (Covid-19 financial Implications for Norfolk County Council) had been included as a general exemption because it had not been listed on the Forward Plan as a Key Decision 28 days prior to the meeting and was therefore not subject to the usual call-in process. The Chair of Scrutiny Committee had been notified of the item.

Cabinet Members and Executive Directors formally introduced themselves.

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Minutes

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on Monday 2 March 2020 were agreed as an accurate record and would be signed by the Chairman as soon as practicably possible.

3 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

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

None.

5 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

6 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

7 Local Member Questions/Issues

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

8 NCC Response to COVID-19

- 8.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Strategy & Governance providing it with a summary of Norfolk County Council's planning and response to Covid-19. The report detailed the work Norfolk County Council was undertaking in response to the pandemic and the contents were based on circumstances which were changing frequently, therefore some areas may have been superseded by new information on an ongoing basis.
- 8.2 The Executive Director of Strategy & Governance highlighted that the report was a snapshot in time in a fast-moving scenario and that it had captured the situation at the time it was published. The information would be updated as the situation changed and progressed.
- 8.3 The Chairman, in introducing the report and to recognise and thank everyone for the efforts they had made, read out the Executive Summary from the report:
- "The response to Covid 19 in Norfolk has been a huge community and partnership effort spearheaded by local government. In the past few weeks, the county has stood up and adapted to the new "norm" of remote working, the

suspension of key services, home schooling and changing the way we operate, with frontline workers serving the public having to observe strict social distancing rules.

Particularly in the first few weeks of the pandemic, the county council has had to respond swiftly and effectively, to rapidly changing Government announcements, including: social distancing, shielding those with health conditions, the use of buildings and transport; closures of schools to all except for vulnerable children and children of key workers; distribution of food and community support; guidelines on the use of protective personal equipment (PPE) and efforts to source this at a time of high international demand; firefighters offering mutual aid to the ambulance service; and many more.

Enormous change has been managed and delivered in just a few weeks. In addition to the work on critical services, the council has tried to ease the pressures of people in “lockdown” by offering digital support through the library, adult learning and museum services, to help people’s wellbeing and support home schooling. Councillors have continued to serve their communities, often through digital means. This Cabinet meeting is the first one at NCC to take place virtually, so that people can see that we remain open and accountable, despite the challenges.

The local government sector has shown that it can respond in the most challenging of times, sometimes against all the odds, and in the toughest of environments. Everyone working in it wants to make that positive difference to people’s lives which has been illustrated so well by the dedication and commitment shown by colleagues across Norfolk County Council, working with all its partners, making a difference to everyone in Norfolk in these extraordinary times.

The NHS has responded magnificently to the challenges it has faced and so too have all the people working in the care sector, who play a crucial role in easing pressure on hospitals; social workers making home visits to the most vulnerable people in our communities, young and old alike. School staff have managed an unprecedented situation maintaining a curriculum and structure for home schooled children and being there for vulnerable children and key workers. Many colleagues have refocussed their work or taken on new activities such as working in our new distribution hub, contact centre staff taking on a prominent role including working at weekends, the fire service supporting the ambulance service, sourcing PPE, different demands within public health, health and safety, waste and highways along with all our operational staff needed to run the council.

Residents in Norfolk have responded so well to the massive changes which has helped the Council do its work.

To all those I have mentioned, my fellow Councillors, the senior management team, volunteers who work alongside us in fact everyone, whatever your role, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation for what you all have done and I am sure will continue to do.”

- 8.4 The Chairman said he recognised there had been a horrendous number of deaths in the country and within Norfolk from Covid-19 and on behalf of all

Councillors and staff at Norfolk County Council offered his condolences to the families and friends of those who had lost loved ones, together with his best wishes for a speedy and full recovery to everyone who may have contracted the virus.

He added that locally and nationally, the peak appeared to be over which was a credit to everyone's work over the last couple of months, although it was recognised that it was not a case of "flicking a switch" and everything would be back to normal.

8.5 The Chairman highlighted that the report summarised the work Norfolk County Council had carried out, together with Partners, to ensure critical services remained operational, adding that this work would continue for the future.

8.5.1 The Chairman stated that when problems were identified, lessons were learned and work adapted to ensure services could continue for the future. One example of this was the procurement and sourcing of personal protective equipment (PPE) which showed how Norfolk County Council's Procurement Team had worked with Partners and businesses to source an ongoing supply of PPE, putting Norfolk County Council in a position to not only meet its needs, but meant it was also able to supply other organisations when they needed it, leading to a confidence in the future supply of PPE.

The Chairman quoted from the report that all this work had been achieved through the extraordinary efforts of the sourcing and logistics teams who had been able to obtain necessary PPE equipment in the face of quite exceptional circumstances.

8.5.2 The Chairman also highlighted the role the Public Health Team had played in leading the Council's response to the pandemic, adding that the Director of Public Health had been the person of authority and understanding for Norfolk, particularly in liaising with the media.

8.5.3 The Chairman added that Norfolk County Council had planned for a possible pandemic in September 2019 so that when this pandemic occurred, the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) was prepared, with two key groups of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (initially chaired by Dr L Smith, Director of Public Health and now chaired by Mr T McCabe, Head of Paid Service and Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services) and the Tactical Co-ordinating Group (chaired by Trevor Holden, Managing Director at Broadland and South Norfolk District Council). All Local Authorities were represented on the NRF, together with representatives from the Police, NHS, Public Health and other organisations. As the current situation was not an ordinary situation, it was expected that the NRF would remain operational for approximately 12-18 months.

It was highlighted that good quality data was vital in the current situation and said that the Intelligence and Analytical colleagues had carried out extensive modelling and prediction work to support the NRF.

8.5.4 The Chairman also highlighted the three phases which would need to be worked through:

- Response phase – which was currently being experienced.
- Normalisation
- Recovery

He added that there were many aspects to the recovery phase, particularly around the economy and the Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy would speak about the impact the pandemic had on the economy and what work was needed to help the county recover.

8.5.5 The Chairman continued that Partnership working had been vital to the work everyone within the county had been able to achieve, which, although never easy, showed that when there was a common purpose such as in the current situation, achieved quicker results.

8.5.6 The Chairman referred Cabinet to page 45, paragraph 8.4 of the report which stated “It is therefore proposed that a Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board in launched comprising local government, health, police authorities and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. The purpose of the group would be to consider issues of strategic importance to Norfolk’s recovery, and collectively shape and drive our strategic agenda locally, and with central government” **and proposed the following additional recommendation to those included in the report:**

- To task officers to set up the Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board comprising local government, health, police authorities and the New Anglia Local enterprise Partnership. The purpose of the group will be to consider issues of strategic importance to Norfolk’s recovery and collectively shape and drive our strategic agenda locally, and with central government.

8.5.7 The Chairman continued that the Prime Minister, on 10 May, had set out the first steps as to how the country could move forward, including the possibility of opening some schools by 1 June. The Prime Minister had also talked about the ability for people to go to work if they could not work from home, as long as social distancing was observed, giving an opportunity for the construction and manufacturing industries to recommence, which meant there was some lessening of the lockdown rules, although caution would remain to ensure lives were protected whilst rules were relaxed.

8.6 The Vice-Chairman, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy echoed the sentiments of the Chairman’s comments to everyone in the country and county affected by the Covid-19 virus.

8.6.1 The Cabinet Member stated that the effect on the economy had been dramatic, leading to a very difficult time for businesses and people who had been furloughed, or laid off. He drew Cabinet’s attention to paragraph 6 of the report titled “Effect on the Economy”.

8.6.2 The Cabinet Member continued that Norfolk was a Member of the Rural Services Network and had responded to a survey on the impact of Covid-19 on the rural economy in Norfolk, particularly food and farming, where a supply and demand mis-match had seen some producers with too much stock, for example milk and cheese which supplied hospitality businesses, whilst other

businesses could not obtain stock. He continued that the changes in shopping habits, together with the loss of income were seriously affecting businesses and in addition, diversified farms could not easily furlough staff, as those with animals and visitor attractions still needed to be maintained.

He added that raw materials for agricultural fertilisers were in short supply as the UK had a heavy reliance on long supply chains for these products.

Regarding labour, those employers with food crops were approaching their busiest time with the harvest season and as many of these businesses had previously relied on large numbers of migrant labourers, with high returnee rates leading to high productivity and low training and management costs, the restrictions on people movement in certain countries and no scheduled flights, meant there was uncertainty in this area. He added that recruitment of domestic labour had been good, although challenges remained with training, health and safety commitments which could mean crops were uneconomic to harvest, possibly impacting on the food supply chain.

- 8.6.3 Regarding tourism and leisure, the Cabinet Member continued that the visitor economy was critical to Norfolk's economy, which was the largest sector in the county worth approximately £3.52bn. He added that with attractions, accommodation and support services currently in shut-down and Easter, which was traditionally a critical time affecting annual performance, as well as the early summer bank holiday, income had been lost. He continued that concerns had been raised about borrowing money, and managing cash flow which was a significant issue, with businesses still liable for rent, wages, services, insurance etc. as some are offering refunds to guests and with no income firms were finding it hard to maintain their business, particularly where banks were slow to offer approved loans and those businesses with little money set aside.

Tourism, retail and hospitality businesses were reportedly reluctant to apply for local authority small business grant funding, although Visit East of England has applied for Visit England's destination management organisation resilience fund.

- 8.6.4 As a percentage of seasonal workers were on zero hours contracts, the Cabinet Member highlighted they could be seeking other work and therefore may not be available when they were needed after the lockdown was eased.

- 8.6.5 The Cabinet Member reassured Cabinet that, although the picture appeared negative, economic recovery plans were in place, led by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Development of the Economic Recovery Plan was being led by the Local Enterprise Partnership, in conjunction with local authorities and other organisations and would build on the economic strategy, ensuring the economy could get back on its feet as quickly as possible.

The proposed approach had two phases –

- A short term recovery plan covering the next 10-12 months, and
- A long-term recovery plan covering three to five years.

It was important the approach covered the transition between response and recovery and was agile to the possibility of transitioning back into response mode if there were further lock-downs.

- 8.6.5 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy added that it was proposed an Economic Recovery Group would be formed which would be based on a similar structure to the Economic Coordinating Board which would take on the role of Steering Group for day to day development. This group would report to the LEP Board and the Norfolk and Suffolk Resilience Forum Recovery Groups.
- 8.6.6 Visitor economy had its own Response and Recovery Group which would also be working very closely with the New Anglia LEP, Visit East of England, Local Authorities, culture sector representatives and tourist attractions, and the Cabinet Member added that it was important these moved very quickly as, once it was safe to do so, domestic tourism could recover quickly once visitors took the opportunity to travel in their local areas to get fresh air rather than travel abroad. It was recognised consumers would need the confidence that it was safe to travel and therefore partners should engage with messages such as social distancing and promoting less well-known destinations to help smaller communities.
- 8.6.7 The Cabinet Member reassured Cabinet that a plan was in place to recover the economy, adding that every element of that economy was being identified and that he was confident that, once the relaxation of lockdown occurred, with safe measures in place, the economy would recover quite quickly.
- 8.7 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services drew Cabinet's attention to the report which outlined how Children's Services had rapidly reshaped its services to respond to the pandemic. He particularly thanked the Executive Director for Children's Services, who had kept staff informed with daily updates, which he knew had been appreciated by all the staff concerned. In particular, the Cabinet Member highlighted the following:
- Setting up cluster schools for key workers.
 - The establishment of a new school meals system which was now working well.
 - Special schools kept open, with attendance levels in Norfolk above the national average.
 - Coordination with Further Education colleagues.
 - Continuation of Parents Forums.
 - There had been some concern about school construction sites shutting, but it was hoped these would commence again soon, ready for school admissions in September 2020.
 - Safeguarding and family support services continued.
 - Foster Carers, who had been critical in supporting services.

The Cabinet Member said he supported all the recommendations, including the additional recommendation, and placed on record his thanks to the Children's Services team for their work, adding that if schools did open in June 2020, Children's Services would rise to the challenge.

- 8.8 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention echoed the comments already made about how hard everyone had worked to deliver a

different way of working and make delivery of services as seamless as they had. He added that staff had been incredible in rising to the challenge by working 7 days a week and with such a “can-do” attitude.

He added that Adult Social Care and Public Health had sifted through 13500 cases and had telephoned approximately 2,500 people considered most at risk in the community, ensuring they knew what to do and who they could contact if they needed help. They had also called approximately 2,100 people who were in receipt of direct payments to check on them. These statistics give an idea of the enormity of some of the challenges faced by Departments.

The Cabinet Member particularly thanked all the staff in Adult Social Care and also thanked James Bullion, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Dr Louise Smith, Director of Public Health, who had been clear and focused on the tasks required and provided incredible leadership. He also congratulated James Bullion on his appointment as President of ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) which would be a good appointment for Norfolk as well as the Government.

He added that the pace of change had been incredible and the work of the STP and the Health and Wellbeing Board had led to the integration with the NHS which was a strategic ambition around closer working, and one of the key outcomes of which had been enabling work to progress on a new hospital discharge process and deliver necessary services, which had been an ambition for a number of years

The additional money from the Government had been incredibly helpful, as it had allowed the County Council to carry out its work without worrying about who would be paying for it, allowing the focus to remain on delivering the necessary services in a key way.

He added that there were lessons that could be learned within the social care and health services and the Cabinet Member was keen that these lessons were not lost once the emergency was over as there were many achievements which would benefit service users and providers and which could be used as a basis for service delivery in the future.

The Cabinet Member also paid tribute to the response from members of the public in Norfolk and he wished to thank them personally. He added that the number of volunteers and support received from communities and stories of people that had established networks to help keep an eye on the vulnerable and those in their communities who might be struggling as a result of this change had been uplifting to hear.

The Cabinet Member drew Cabinet’s attention to the Adult Social Care section on pages 50-51 and 53-55 of the agenda which provided information to help readers understand the work the Public Health and Adult Social Care teams at Norfolk County Council had been carrying out. He also stated that he fully endorsed the recommendations.

- 8.9 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport fully endorsed the comments already made and wished to thank the Highways Team in particular, who had recently received a letter from the Transport Minister, the Rt

Hon Baroness Vere, thanking staff for their work in Highways across the country. The letter stated that, in particular, she wanted to thank all staff in highways, maintenance and construction teams, and street works operators who were all vital to the resilience of the road network. The letter said they were doing an outstanding job under extremely challenging circumstances and thanks to their dedication and commitment, strategic and local road networks remained open and as a result, crucial supplies of food, life-saving medicine, fuel and other products had been able to move around the country, while helping other emergency workers to travel to where they were most needed.

The Cabinet Member also wished to add his personal thanks to Tom McCabe, Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services as well as all officers and highways workers across the county for their dedication and hard work throughout the difficult and challenging time. Many staff had also helped in other services, for example delivering vegetable boxes to care homes and others.

The Cabinet Member fully supported the recommendations in the report and referred to other initiatives introduced by the Community & Environmental Services department covered by his portfolio in response to the pandemic:

- Free parking for health and care workers
- Bus passes for people to use at any time, so the older generation could access supermarkets and other places earlier in the day when shops were opening special hours for them to do their shopping.

- 8.10 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management stated that he felt sure everyone had been struck by the speed of change over the past few weeks and the ability of Norfolk County Council to respond to the challenges and the strengths the staff had shown in their ability to adapt to meet the challenges faced to keep services running.

The Cabinet Member formally recognised the officers under his portfolio who had helped to deliver the background infrastructure keep critical front-line services operational in identifying and fitting out step-down facilities in case they were needed, particularly in the following areas:

- Cawston Care Home which had been fitted out in record time and although not needed at the present time, it was available in there was a second wave of the pandemic.
- The Central Logistics facility, managed by the Property Management Team and staff from the libraries team and Norse, for procuring and delivering PPE to front-line workers.
- Assisted the Norfolk Resilience Forum delivering a temporary facility at Scottow Enterprise Park which ensured residents would be treated with respect and loved ones would be looked after at a most difficult time in their lives.

The Cabinet Member fully endorsed the comments already made by other Cabinet Members and also endorsed the recommendations.

- 8.11 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance stated that Norfolk County Council had not just reacted to the current situation, it had

been ready to face it, with testing of equipment for staff working from home having already been carried out before the lockdown. The Cabinet Member particularly thanked the Executive Director of Strategy & Governance, Fiona McDiarmid, the Director of IMT & Chief Digital Officer, Geoff Connell and the Infrastructure Services Manager, Kurt Frary for their work in enabling the technology to make this to happen.

The Cabinet Member continued that it was realised that this was the future way of working with staff working from home and working patterns changing to provide a seamless service to residents of Norfolk. Soft telephony had been introduced to allow staff and Councillors to make and receive phone calls using Microsoft Teams through their computers and this initiative was working well. Staff had risen to the challenge of working from home since 17 March and the work of Norfolk County Council had been recognised by the Society of IT Managers. The Cabinet Member added that he endorsed the recommendations.

8.12 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships also wished to thank all staff in Community & Environmental Services within her portfolio, particularly those customer services staff who were answering up to 800 queries per day working 7 days a week, assisted by staff redeployed from other areas. She also highlighted the work continuing throughout the county under her portfolio area:

- Trading Standards staff were working as normal, as well as working with Environmental Health and the Police to enforce restrictions and raise awareness of new scams.
- Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service was providing business as usual, as well as driving ambulances for the NHS and providing bulk deliveries, with good collaboration with other blue light services. It had also continued its work with the Princes Trust Award Cadet scheme, allowing cadets to finish their course.
- Virtual library services, offering e-books and helping people with school work and helping older people feel less lonely during the lockdown.
- The registration service in two Norfolk libraries had continued.
- Virtual museums service running virtual tours and running art tours and educational programmes and competitions.
- Records office offering online programmes.
- Arts Service – supporting culture by providing access to grants.
- Adult Learning Service offering 200 on-line courses in a range of educational and vocational courses, with approximately 2700 people enrolling on on-line courses initially.
- The Equality Impact assessment report would ensure Cabinet decisions were made whilst recognising people with protected characteristics were recognised and protected. It was continually being updated to help inform business continuity planning.

8.13 The Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste said he particularly wished to thank the recycling centre staff who had returned to work on 11 May as well as all NCC teams for keeping vital services running.

The Cabinet Member, as Chairman of the Norfolk Waste Partnership thanked the Norfolk District Councils for continuing waste collection services during the lockdown.

- 8.14 The Head of Paid Service and Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services stated that from the various feedback he had received from staff, they had felt appreciated and supported by the organisation; managers at all levels had stepped up to the plate and had taken accountability; front-line staff had been selfless in going the extra mile by getting out into communities and making a difference in looking after customers. He added that the dedication and long working hours of staff had helped mitigate some of the worst impacts of the virus and he wished to thank everyone for a wonderful team effort.

The Chairman endorsed the comments made by the Head of Paid Service.

- 8.15 In summing up, the Chairman reminded everyone of the major challenges ahead, and the need to avoid complacency. He reiterated the work being done in care homes and the need to ensure the work continued to make sure the sector was well supported. He also thanked Sara Tough, Executive Director of Children's Services and said it was important the safeguarding work continued to ensure vulnerable children were looked after.

- 8.16 The Chairman, moved the recommendations, including the additional recommendation below:

- To task officers to set up the Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board comprising local government, health, police authorities and the New Anglia Local enterprise Partnership. The purpose of the group will be to consider issues of strategic importance to Norfolk's recovery and collectively shape and drive our strategic agenda locally, and with central government.

8.17 **Cabinet RESOLVED to:**

1. formally thank all staff involved in the significant effort to keep people safe and protected
2. **acknowledge** the work that has been carried out by NCC and partners during the COVID-19 pandemic
3. **agree** the proposed areas of focus and provide direction as to the priorities for the Council
4. **note** the findings of the dynamic equality impact assessment of COVID-19, as set out in Section 11.4 of this report and in doing so, **note** the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5. **Task** officers to set up the Norfolk Public Sector Leaders Board comprising local government, health, police authorities and the New Anglia Local enterprise Partnership. The purpose of the group will be to consider issues of strategic importance to Norfolk's recovery and collectively shape and drive our strategic agenda locally, and with central government.

9 COVID-19 financial implications for Norfolk County Council

- 9.1 In accordance with Regulation 10 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, it was impracticable to give 28 days notice of the intention to take this Key Decision, as at the point when the Notice of Key decisions for 11 May 2020 Cabinet was published on 7 April 2020, the financial implications and the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic were still emerging. In particular, details of the allocations of the second tranche of funding were not published until 28 April. The forecast use of additional grant funding met the criteria of a key decision as it would result in the Council incurring expenditure which was in excess of £1.25m, and was likely to have a significant impact on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions. For these reasons this item was not subject to the usual call-in process.
- 9.2 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services which provided details of the Council's forecast use of COVID-19 funding from Government. The Council was proactively responding to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain the delivery of vital services across all areas of its operations, support the NHS and health system through enhanced hospital discharge processes to free up capacity, protect vulnerable people, support businesses, and ensure the safety of all staff delivering this vital work.
- 9.3 The report provided Cabinet with an overview of the current assessment of the emerging financial impact of COVID-19 for the County Council, which would have a profound impact on the organisation's ability to achieve planned budget savings and income for 2020-21.
- 9.4 In introducing the report the Cabinet Member for Finance expressed his thanks to everyone for working incredibly hard during the current situation, and during which the following points were noted:
 - Services were seeing a profound impact from the pandemic, affecting service delivery, demand and ways of working and in particular the key role care providers made. Plans for the future would need to consider how the care provider sector could be harnessed and supported.
 - In view of the rapidly changing landscape of government announcements, it was proposed to present an updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Budget Setting Process for 2021-22 to the June Cabinet meeting when some further clarity may be available
 - The implications for the Council's budget, both this year and beyond, remained unconfirmed. However it was highly likely key income sources, including Council Tax, both through the collection fund and tax-

base growth and business rates would be under pressure in 2021-22 and would require a major outward revision to planning assumptions.

- The Government had provided significant additional funding to local authorities of some £3.2bn to help them in responding to the Covid-19 virus. They expected councils to play a crucial role in maintaining social care front-line services in order to assist with the provision of care and education of children of key workers, to support vulnerable children and to support businesses and individuals suffering hardship.
- Norfolk County Council's share of the grant was delivered in two tranches – the first, announced on 19 March of £26.932m with a second allocation delivered in early May of £16.742m. The funding was distributed nationally on a per-capita basis. The second tranche was split 65-35 between county and district authorities meaning the County Council would receive slightly less in the second tranche of funding than previously estimated.
- The current identified demand for this funding exceeded the grant available and as set out in the report, the forecast available would incur cost pressures of £62.709m against a total grant funding to date of £43.674m, leaving a shortfall of £19.035m, the details of which were set out on Table 1 on page 66 of the agenda.
- The high level of uncertainty around the forecasts meant they would continue to be refined as the situation developed and timescales became clearer.
- The budget set in February 2019 for 2020-21 was fundamentally robust, it was based on sound finances and prudent planning, therefore Norfolk County Council had started in a good place when responding to the major challenge of Covid-19 and although only one month into the new financial year, the Cabinet Member was confident with the basic spending assumptions that sat behind the current year's budget, although with an estimated £19m shortfall in grant funding to cover Covid-19, central government would need to keep its promise to deliver whatever funding was needed to allow Norfolk County Council to achieve a balanced budget.
- Although overshadowed by the ongoing response to Covid-19 the Governments Spring budget included various announcements with implications for local authority funding; these included the comprehensive spending review which was due to complete in July 2020 and which was now in doubt with an expectation that another one-year announcement for 2021-22 would be made.
- In February 2020 the budget deficit was forecast to be nearly £39m in 2021-22.
- The Council was evaluating how the likely 2021-22 gap would be funded but there was a need for a new relationship with the government to rectify some of the long-term problems surrounding local government funding.
- Additional funding would be needed to deliver a balanced budget in 2021-22.
- Covid-19 had placed extra pressures on already stretched services, although there were some changes that could be helpful in the long-term, such as the considerable savings to the amount of buildings occupied; how they were occupied and the increased delivery of services through digital means, although these changes alone would not balance the budget.

- The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy had set out the next phase of recovery plans, particularly to enhance Great Yarmouth's position in the off-shore renewable sector.
- Tourism and leisure were vital for the economic wellbeing of the county providing stable employment which offered opportunities to retain positives from the lockdown to the benefit of sustainable tourism to flourish.
- Robert Jenrick MP had said that Councils were the unsung heroes of the pandemic response and Norfolk County Council had proved how it could rise to the challenge. In order to maintain the "can do" spirit, fair and sustainable funding would be needed.
- A resolution for sustainable funding for Adult Social Care in particular was not only long overdue but would redraw the relationship between central and local government, hopefully in a way that allowed local communities to have a long-term solution to enable planning for the future.
- Work was being undertaken, to find a long-term solution to the financial situation, with the Local Government Association (LGA) to help inform central government, with the responses made by the Cabinet Member for Finance being used as a template for how County Councils respond to the government.

The Cabinet Member then moved the recommendations in the report.

- 9.5 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention endorsed the comments made by the Cabinet Member for Finance, adding that the financial stresses on the social care system had been well documented over recent years and that recently the Government had delivered funding which would enable the County Council to provide services, although a long-term solution for Adult Social Care funding was still required.

The Cabinet Member continued that he fully endorsed the approach through the Local Government Association to ensure the government was aware of how important funding was to enable services to be maintained.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance for the excellent report which set out the cost pressures faced for all departments.

- 9.6 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services supported the recommendations and referred to Table 1 on P67 of the agenda, where the costs for Post 18s remaining in placements; Additional respite care costs and additional hardship funding for tier 2 had been marked "TBC" (to be confirmed) as the costs were currently unknown. He clarified that costs would be incurred within Children's Services in a number of areas and notified Cabinet that some money within the respite care cost category had been spent on providing play equipment for children who needed respite care which would also help their parents and families.
- 9.7 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation and Performance endorsed the comments made by the Cabinet Member for Finance and said it was important the County Council continued to lobby for proper funding as the demand for services would remain in the future.

9.8 In moving the recommendations in the report, the Cabinet Member for Finance highlighted the three key areas in the report where the additional estimated £62.709m pressures as a result of the pandemic had been identified:

- Lost income –partly from libraries which were unable to operate at the present time.
- Additional costs incurred supporting services particularly in Adult Social Care.
- Savings no longer deliverable.

9.9 In summing up the Chairman highlighted the following points:

- the key issue of the costs of the response to Covid-19.
- the work being done through the LGA and CCN to lobby government for fair funding.
- the areas of uncertainty had been faced for some time but were currently exacerbated, particularly from a social care aspect.
- The impact on the budget for 2021-22.
- The need for a new relationship with local government and central government working together to provide sufficient funding

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

1. **note** the current package of financial support being provided to the Council by the Government to enable its response to COVID-19;
2. **approve** the forecast use of the COVID-19 grant to meet expenditure pressures, income reductions, and lost delivery of savings, noting that:
 - a. this does not represent a definitive budget allocation and there will need to be a degree of flexibility to respond to cost pressures, risks and opportunities as they arise; and
 - b. the forecast cost and income pressures exceed the available funding and to the extent that they are not met through additional allocations by Government, will need to be funded from other County Council resources.
3. **agree** that a review of the financial planning position for 2021-25, including formal allocation of targets, be presented to Cabinet in June as part of the 2021-22 Budget planning process, to enable a more complete picture of the impact of COVID-19 on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to be incorporated.

9.11 **Alternative Options**

The report sets out the forecast use of the initial tranches of COVID-19 funding, but this should be seen as indicative only because the Council will need to respond with some flexibility to emerging cost pressures and the rapidly developing situation. No specific alternative options have been identified.

9.12 **Evidence & Reasons for Decision**

The County Council faces an unprecedented financial and public health crisis which will have significant implications both during 2020-21 and for future budget setting. It will be essential to continue to engage with Government, MPs

and other stakeholders to campaign 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, including 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

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

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

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

- [A47 North Tuddenham to Easton Dualling Scheme.](#)
- [Great Yarmouth Local Plan – Part 2.](#)
- [Tarmac Trading Ltd – Contract Extension.](#)
- [Additional Funding – Supported Bus Services.](#)
- [Civil Parking Enforcement Powers to Norwich City Council.](#)
- [Diss – TRO.](#)

Decision by the Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships

- [Wensum Lodge Steering Group](#)

Decisions by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management.

- [Site 4 – Site Acquisition Wymondham](#)
- [Acquisition of Priory Nursery, Great Yarmouth](#)

Decisions by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

- [Schools Capital Programme Update](#)
- [DSG Additional Decisions](#)

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

- [COVID-19 – Impact on MIG and PIP Charging Increases.](#)
- [COVID-19 – Legislation Implications for Adult Social Care.](#)
- [Additional Financial Support for ASC Providers.](#)

Decision by the Executive Director of Strategy & Governance

- [HR & Finance System Transformation Project.](#)

Decisions by the Head of Paid Service.

- [Concessionary Travel Bus Pass Scheme – Hours of Operation.](#)
- [Trading Standards](#)
- [Health Scrutiny Arrangements for Waveney - Amendment to Norfolk County Council Constitution](#)
- [Police & Crime Panel Scrutiny Arrangements - Amendment to Panel Arrangements](#)

The meeting ended at 11.35am.

Chairman



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**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
-

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 Morphew

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
-

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.
-

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.
-

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.
-

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.
-

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

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>
