

**Cabinet**  
**1 February 2021**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

Agenda item 6	Public Question Time
6.1	<p><b>Question 1 from Eleanor Laming</b>  A report by Uearthed (Greenpeace UK) shows that more than 3400 of England's high consequence flood assets (there is risk to life and property if they fail) are in very poor condition.</p> <p>I am pleased to see that at the Cabinet meeting on 12 January it was announced that a review of the 2015 Local Flood Risk Management strategy has been undertaken. However, we have already seen the impact of recent flooding in Norfolk, including episodes where people and vehicles had to be rescued.</p> <p>How many high consequence flood assets in Norfolk are in a poor state of repair?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b>  The report by Uearthed (Greenpeace UK) relates to information obtained from the Environment Agency and to answer your specific question we would recommend that you contact them directly.</p> <p>I can add that the Environment Agency have provided this statement:  The Environment Agency (EA) routinely inspects both EA and third-party defences for main rivers and the coast where they act as the Coastal Protection Authority. Where there is an immediate danger of flooding, emergency repairs will be undertaken straight away, or contingency plans put in place if this is not possible. The EA advise third party asset owners where there are concerns about their assets condition, offer them advice and encourage them to make repairs.</p> <p>The EA's annual maintenance programme includes a range of activities that are prioritised and timetabled using information from inspections, maintenance standards, levels of flood risk and from legal and statutory obligations. The maintenance programme is published on GOV.UK</p> <p>The EA maintain approximately 78,000 flood assets across England, 95% of which are in good condition and repairs prioritised where there is significant threat to lives and livelihoods.</p> <p>The EA's 2020 recovery programme inspected over 20,000 assets and, supported by a £120m government investment, all of the EA assets are winter ready either through repairs or, where these have not been completed, robust contingency plans are in place to manage risk until repairs are completed.</p>
6.2	<p><b>Question 2 from Eleanor Laming</b>  Has the Council allocated sufficient funds in its budget to deal with the issue of repairing assets for which it is responsible and dealing with future flooding?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b>  In our role of Highway Authority, we have six highway pumping Stations</p>

Site Ref.	SITE
H08	Caister High Street Pumping Station
M07	Caister-on-Sea Depot Pumping Station and Flow meter
H03	Bacton Pumping Station
H05	Heacham Pumping Station
H09	Tunstead Road, Hoveton Pumping Station
H10	Corpusty Bypass Pumping Station

Additionally, we maintain subway pumps: two in Gt Yarmouth; one in Holt; and one in Kings Lynn. Pumps are also present at two of the Norwich Park & Ride Sites.

These are all maintained under existing contact arrangements and we have sufficient funds for deal with their inspection, maintenance and future replacement.

Our other highway drainage systems consist of gravity-based surface water drainage systems.

These are typically in:

- urban areas – such as gullies and pipes to positive outfalls, soakage disposal, SUDS features, or outfalls into systems maintained by others i.e. Anglian Water.
- Rural areas – such as grips and backdrains. Again, these may be soakage features or outfall onto other systems maintained by others such as land drains.

We have an established proactive gully cleansing regime informed by risk assessment with the cleansing operation being carried out under contract to Tarmac.

In 2020-21 we had a revenue budget of £487,000 for gully cleaning, £413,000 for drainage cleansing and £340,000 for emergency cleaning.

In the same year we had a capital budget of £2.9m for improvements and repairs to drainage systems.

We have funds for repairs and cleansing.

However, they all have a finite capacity and any system can be overwhelmed in periods of intense or prolonged rainfall, particularly when the ground is saturated, and periods of high fluvial or tidal conditions.

6.3

**Question 1 from Hayley Pinto**

Doughnut economics is an approach to sustainable planning which helps organisations assess projects to ensure they stay within environmental planetary boundaries (eg climate change and biodiversity loss) and social boundaries (eg

	<p>equality, housing etc) (<a href="http://bit.ly/DNutEcon">http://bit.ly/DNutEcon</a>). It is being increasingly adopted as a planning tool by organisations worldwide including Amsterdam and Cornwall council (<a href="http://bit.ly/DNutCornwall">http://bit.ly/DNutCornwall</a>) The approach provides a framework which improves transparency and promotes systems thinking. It would ensure all projects are aligned with the councils stated goals of achieving net zero emissions, protecting biodiversity whilst protecting and improving the wellbeing of the population and social equality.</p> <p><b>Would the cabinet consider adopting this approach for Norfolk?</b></p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste:</b> This suggestion and its implications will be further explored by Cabinet in light of the NCC Environmental Policy and the 7 themes identified in the recent Natural Capital Compendium covering Norfolk. Our approach will also be informed by key Government legislation, expected later in 2021.</p>
6.4	<p><b>Question 2 from Hayley Pinto</b> Could the council demonstrate how the decisions to decimate established and thriving ecosystems with infrastructure projects like the western link road and Thorpe wood housing development would be consistent with the aspirational principles outlined in this approach and their own environmental policy?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste:</b> The Norwich Western Link (NWL) is vital to ensure we have adequate infrastructure to avoid existing problems linked to traffic congestion getting worse and to allow for the continued growth of Greater Norwich and Norfolk. We are committed to building the NWL in an environmentally responsible way and want to limit any adverse environmental impacts the new road may have. We will seek opportunities to enhance the environment in the area and are taking full account of our Environmental Policy as part of this. The scheme proposals and more detailed information are being developed and will be shared in our next public consultation, currently planned for the summer of this year. As part of these proposals we plan to include the creation of new habitats and improvements to existing ones in the local area to support a wide range of wildlife.</p> <p>The Thorpe Wood housing development is an issue for the local planning authority, in this case Broadland District Council.</p>
6.5	<p><b>Question from Dr Andrew Boswell</b> The Constitution (Appendix 22) governs the conduct of, and relationship between, officers and members. It includes an obligation of mutual respect for each other's roles, and a requirement not to seek an unfair advantage or influence. The council employs highway officers, who in May 2019 responded, under the scheme of delegated powers (Constitution Appendix 5) on behalf of the council as a statutory consultee in relation to South Norfolk planning application 2018/2631. In Sept 2020, the Cabinet supplanted this response, and substituted it with a decision issued by Cabinet.</p> <p>How does the Cabinet explain its failure to act within and in accordance with the terms of the Constitution?</p> <p><b>Response by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy &amp; Governance</b> Appendix 5 of the Council's Constitution sets out at paragraph A.3(b) that the powers delegated to officers are subject to:</p>

	<p>‘...referral to the Executive for consultation or decision on all matters of public controversy or undecided matters of policy or substantial change from previous practice or which involve difficult or major issues where custom and practice or initial consultation with elected Members indicates that such referral should take place’.</p> <p>The circumstances, therefore, in which matters delegated to officers may be referred to the Executive are very broadly expressed and include ‘all matters of public controversy’, ‘substantial change from previous practice’ and those which involve ‘difficult or major issues where...initial consultation with elected Members indicates that such referral should take place’</p>
6.6	<p><b>Question 1 from Michael de Whalley</b>  Figures extracted from environmental permit EPR/WP3234DY/A001 for Rookery South Energy Recovery facility (<a href="https://bit.ly/EP_RookerySouth">bit.ly/EP_RookerySouth</a>) show that it is calculated to generate 65 MW of electricity from 585,000 tonnes of waste and will release c. 176,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per year. From these figures, a 20,000 tonne input of waste is calculated to produce 6459 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/year. Please explain why the council derived figure of 545 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/year (answer 6.31 at last month’s Cabinet) for CO<sub>2</sub> from “the treatment process” is so radically different (c.12 times smaller)?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste.</b>  The reference made to ‘c. 176,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per year’ appears to relate only to the release of emissions from a waste treatment facility. However, this is not equivalent to the carbon impact of a treatment process, as emissions are only one part of the carbon impact of treatment, which also includes other aspects such as energy generation.</p>
6.7	<p><b>Question 2 from Michael de Whalley</b>  The carbon intensity is 347 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/kWh for the generated electricity. Government emissions factors (March 2019, <a href="https://bit.ly/Govt_EF">bit.ly/Govt_EF</a>, Table 1) show the carbon intensity of the UK electricity grid to be 281 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/kWh in 2019 and a projected 118 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/kWh in 2030 when NCC plans to be “carbon neutral”. How does generating electricity from 180,000 tonnes of waste which will be three-times as carbon intensive as the grid by 2030 fit with your Environmental Strategy?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste.</b>  The arrangements to use waste from April 2021 to generate electricity, in a way that increases the recycling of metals and recovery of aggregates, and also removes the need to send waste direct to landfill, whilst also having flexibility to allow for further waste reduction and increases in recycling and reuse, fits very well with the County Council’s Environmental Policy.</p>

**Cabinet  
1 February 2021  
Local Member Questions**

<b>Agenda item 7</b>	<b>Local Member Issues/Questions</b>
7.1	<p><b>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp</b></p> <p>Norfolk Councils and the NHS form part of Norfolk's Integrated Care System so take collective responsibility for managing resources, improving Norfolk's health, and ensuring high quality services. In order to prepare for a gradual but safe return to school, and to protect key workers in their vital jobs, the Covid Vaccination Programme need to be extended immediately to teachers, police and prison officers. I have been contacted by worried families of constituents who are Prison Officers and regularly accompany prisoners to hospital in enclosed transport vehicles that increase the risk of Covid transmission.</p> <p>How is Norfolk County Council securing the priority of Norfolk's key workers in the Coronavirus Vaccination Programme?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health &amp; Prevention</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question. As you are already aware the NHS is responsible for the vaccination programme. However the Council is providing details of eligible care workers to the NHS. We have built an IT system to do that and contacted all care employers, are working with voluntary organisations, and are feeding names to the NHS as soon as we receive them.</p> <p>I personally would not recommend overruling The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) who have decided the order of vaccination. They will advise the Government if they should consider, beyond frontline health and care workers, whether other occupational groups may need to be given priority for vaccination once the clinically vulnerable and those over fifty have received theirs. The systems that we have built with the NHS can be used to support vaccination of other groups if that is what the advice is changed to.</p>
7.2	<p><b>Question from Cllr Penny Carpenter</b></p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the project to improve the accessibility to County Hall?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services &amp; Asset Management.</b></p> <p>County Hall provides an accessible workplace and we have worked hard to ensure that the office and key meeting rooms areas can be accessed by all of our communities. As was identified in 2020 additional works are required to our North Wing meeting rooms, which include the Council Chamber.</p> <p>Works are progressing well on the site and we would like to thank our contractor MACE for helping to meet a challenging program. Despite the current issues around COVID nationally, they have put in place an excellent programme to ensure the safety of their staff on site – which has been independently reviewed by a</p>

number of external bodies.

It is worth reminding ourselves as to the reason for the works This area has been largely unchanged since it was opened in 1968. There are significant maintenance backlogs and it does not meet the needs of residents, particularly those with disabilities. In particular, the current design does not support Councillors with disabilities – a situation that is unacceptable in 2021.

These are the major problems with the whole suite of meeting rooms and public area comprising the Council Chamber, Cranworth room, Marble Map area, Colman room and Edwards room as well as the toilet facilities

- No compliant access for disabled people (particularly around fire evacuation)
- No working heating or cooling
- Poor lighting levels
- No access to the public gallery in the Council Chamber for wheelchair users

The project is designed to focus on:

- Replacement of plant to provide appropriate levels of heating and cooling and controls so that the environment in each space will suit the occupation levels and activities.
- The existing mechanical ventilation is obsolete and does not work at all. The project will provide full mechanical supply and extract ventilation to all occupied areas. With this level of mechanical ventilation the building can be considered a well ventilated space, which is good in the context of controlling the transmission of Covid 19.
- The Council Chamber has no natural or mechanical ventilation. Under the current HSE guidance on Covid, the Chamber cannot be used for any meetings (including socially distanced meetings). Officers have explored other ways of mechanically handling air into the chamber, but a sufficient quantity cannot be provided.
- The current Covid legislation that allows 'virtual' meetings will expire on the 7th May 2021, but it will be important to provide confidence that we are providing a safe environment for them in undertaking the democratic function as well as for visitors and staff.
- In addition to changes to physical access and facilities, the scheme aims to tackle less obvious barriers arising from poor lighting that are exacerbated by poor colour contrast, busy colour patterns on the carpet that cause distress to certain neuro-diverse sufferers and poor provision for those who rely upon robust modern audio-visual installations.
- The work cannot easily be sub-divided so all works to improve disabled access and the air handling are best done as a single package.

Works are underway and scheduled to handover in May 2021

7.3	<p><b>Question 1 from Cllr Eric Seward</b> How much funding in different grants has the Council received from the Government to do with the Coronavirus pandemic?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b> Thank you for your question. The Council has received £104.588m as set out in Table 4a in the Finance Monitoring Report on the Cabinet Agenda on page 69</p>
7.4	<p><b>Question 2 from Cllr Eric Seward</b> Can you please detail all of this income and expenditure figures for each individual grant to date?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b> Thank you for your question. Forecast pressures by service are shown in Table 4d in the Finance Monitoring Report on the Cabinet Agenda on page 72 with further analysis provided on pages 85-87.</p>
7.5	<p><b>Question from Cllr Dan Roper</b> 61 crashes have resulted in injury or fatalities since the Northern Distributor Road, also known as the Broadland Northway, completely opened in April 2018. What additional safety measures do you think are needed to prevent further injuries and fatalities on this road?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b> Over the past twelve months, we have provided replacement signposts and signs, repairs to damaged kerbs, countdown marker signs on roundabout approaches, revised road markings at Wroxham Road roundabout, additional chevron and 'get in lane' signs, additional planting and SLOW road markings.</p> <p>At the current time, we are seeing a falling trend in personal injury accidents. Whilst this is positive news, it will be partly influenced by the reduced level of traffic relating to Covid-19 restrictions. We are continuing to monitor the safety performance of the road and will take appropriate action if specific interventions are considered necessary.</p>
7.6	<p><b>Question from Cllr Tim Adams</b> The chair of the education select committee has urged ministers to put "the whole engine of the state" behind paving the way for schools to safely reopen. In this spirit what additional measures are Norfolk County Council planning to put in place to support schools in reopening once the government signals that they can do so?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b> Thank you Cllr Adams for this question. Officers across the council are working in a wide range of ways to support settings, schools and colleges. Many of the current challenges, which affect the current situation and the fuller opening of schools require considerable support corporately. For example, testing, health and safety controls, public health guidance, procurement of PPE, transport for children and provision of laptops. In Children's Services we have focused considerable resource on supporting the education system, from across the department. This continues to include support for remote learning, attendance, welfare and safety of pupils, support for mental health, and for vulnerable families.</p>

	<p>We have a clear approach to recovery which takes account of re-opening of schools for all children. We continue to meet multiple times a week with education leaders and provide regular alerts and information to early years, schools and colleges. We take account of challenges and issues raised by education leaders and where needed local solutions to support the re-opening of all schools for all children will be prioritised. For example, we await the national decisions about implementation of mass testing of pupils in schools and we have resource ready to support schools with that if necessary.</p> <p>Throughout this crisis we have commented on the amazing effort and resilience of our staff, teachers and leaders and I'm pleased to say that the education system in Norfolk functions very well with great collaboration and mutual support.</p>
7.7	<p><b>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins</b></p> <p>How much is the current overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant and how much is it anticipated to grow this year especially as schools are having to spend additional money to deal with the effects of the Covid pandemic?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>Thank you Cllr Watkins for this question. The current forecast overspend for 2020-21 on the DSG is £11.260m as per the Finance Monitoring Report on the Cabinet agenda (item 8 – Appendix 1, 2.11). This is a full year, outturn forecast, in line with the Council's approach to all financial monitoring to Cabinet.</p> <p>The cumulative deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant brought forward from previous years totalled £19.703m (item 8 - appendix 1,2.13), and so the anticipated carry forward on the deficit at the end of the year is forecast to be £30.963m.</p> <p>We are not currently anticipating any significant increase in the forecast prior to the end of the financial year as a result of the effects of the Covid pandemic on the High Needs Block. Schools have been able to recoup some COVID related costs from the Government. Where necessary, schools are being offered support to manage their financial position through our schools' finance team, part of our traded education services.</p>
7.8	<p><b>Question 2 from Cllr Brian Watkins</b></p> <p>When does this cause a major concern for the County Council's Finances particularly if the government decides to change the rules?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>Thank you Cllr Watkins for this question. The Government have made no indication that they are considering changing the rules with regards to the terms and conditions of the Dedicated Schools Grant. We continue to work co-operatively with the DfE in relation to our cumulative DSG deficit.</p>



7.9	<p><b>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy</b></p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Waste confirm what work the Council has undertaken with the Environment Agency and local landowners to ensure that ditches, dykes, and drains are well maintained and kept clear over the last four years?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b></p> <p>The Council takes a risk-based approach to formal enforcement action and works with local landowners where issues are identified. The majority of local issues are resolved through negotiation and close working with the relevant landowners and other agencies, which negates the requirement for expensive and lengthy formal legal action.</p> <p>The Council also proactively publicises messages where we are undertaking studies and works to ensure landowners and property owners are aware of their roles and responsibilities under the Flood &amp; Water Management Act 2010. Flood Investigation Reports also provide a means to reinforce these roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Close work with the Environment Agency continues and we will look forward to this being enhanced in the coming months as part of the Council initiative to drive closer working with the many agencies who have water management responsibilities in Norfolk.</p>
7.10	<p><b>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare</b></p> <p>We are finally seeing the Cabinet Member for Children's Services finally taking some responsibility to address digital exclusion and connectivity issues for our children and young people, albeit it six months after the Labour Group proposed action on this very issue. In light of the continuing uncertainty about when schools will reopen, can he confirm how the current actions to address digital access issues and connectivity are being developed into a sustainable plan long term plan to reduce and eradicate the digital divide in Norfolk?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b></p> <p>I would like to thank Cllr Smith-Clare for the question and I'm sure he would join me in congratulating all the staff involved for the work they have done and for giving me the opportunity to highlight this excellent work. As Cllr Smith-Clare knows we have been working with the schools system to ensure that the rapid increase in the access to digital devices to support learning has a long-term impact on raising attainment and participation in education for children and their families. Although the pandemic has undoubtedly had a negative impact on learning for many, it has also brought learning into the family home and built much stronger relationships between school and home around children and their learning. We are very determined that this current, urgent work to roll out of devices and connectivity is the first step in building a strong legacy that will have a positive impact on reducing inequalities in opportunity and achievement for disadvantaged children and young people. Planning is underway to establish an ongoing programme of work to roll out refurbished corporate laptops to digitally disadvantaged children and families and that options to address longer term internet connectivity needs will also be developed.</p> <p>In addition to the roll out of equipment and connectivity, Norfolk's Libraries and Children's Services staff are offering support for families who need advice and guidance associated with getting online and coping with online learning.</p>

7.11	<p><b>Question from Cllr Chris Jones</b> How much additional income has the Council generated from commercial services over the last four financial years?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b> The most significant commercial activities are undertaken by the Norse Group Limited and each year a Norse Group value statement is produced for the Norse Group Shareholder Committee. For 2019-20, this included direct financial payments to the Council of £3.1m.</p> <p>In addition the Council also receives income from charging for services within the revenue budget. The income from these charges is used to support the delivery of all the Council's services and assist in balancing the overall budget. There are a wide range of charges, some of which are defined by statute, and in broad terms, where they are not defined in statute, they are based on a market basis in terms of rents, on a cost recovery basis or a contribution towards overheads. Some examples are rental income from County Farms, rental income from solar panels at Scottow, museums charges, and fees for registrars.</p>
7.12	<p><b>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby</b> What is the current average response rate for a decision on an application to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme?</p> <p><b>Response by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy &amp; Governance</b> The Norfolk Assistance scheme forms part of the Councils approach to supporting people in financial hardship through the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Since the 1 December the Council has received 7,144 applications to the scheme of which 1,327 were in the last week alone. The scheme is under considerable pressure and is working hard to train new staff to support the team and increase capacity. All applications received are assessed and prioritised with CEV and people Self Isolating being processed within 24 hours alongside applications from families with children under 5. Applications for emergency Food and Heating then take priority followed by those seeking help with household items including cookers and fridges.</p> <p>Of the 7,144 applications made since 1 December 5,435 have been completed and closed. A further 1,709 remain open however 813 of these have been allocated to support workers and are being progressed with applicants. The remaining 896 applications will be allocated and worked on shortly.</p>
7.13	<p><b>Question from Cllr Danny Douglas</b> When will the Cabinet Member for Highways ensure the correct street signage is on St Margarets Street to replace the current signage which incorrectly advises vehicles that they cannot access St Benedicts Street?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, infrastructure &amp; Transport</b> Thank you for highlighting this issue. I will ask the Highways Team to look into the issue raised.</p>

7.14

**Question from Cllr Colleen Walker**

How many first time buyers has the Council helped to get a foot on the property ladder through the new homes that have been built on surplus Council property since 2017?

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

I am pleased that Cllr Walker supports more home ownership. This is not a metric that the Council collects and we are not aware of any other authority that collates this information around their own land. Unless a first-time buyer is clearly identifiable (for example through participation in a Government scheme) this information is not something that can be easily collected.

Land sold (especially prior to 2017) may have or passed through several owners before coming forward for development. Local planning policy will determine the tenure of any new homes that are built in an areas – on any land – and will reflect the local need, as determined by the Local Planning Authority, based upon their assessment of the housing market in each District. They will record these numbers for all land where planning is received and where development starts. It may not always be possible to identify whether a purchaser is a first-time buyer or not.

Where the Council is developing homes through its housing company Repton – there are a variety of products that will appeal to first time buyers, including shared ownership products. These will provide high quality homes at an accessible price. At Acle, the first development where Repton is on site, we have exceeded the ‘policy compliant’ amount of affordable housing - supporting another key part of our housing market.