

Cabinet
4 September 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from Gemma Guynan We live on hall road, opp asda, cars use the hall road as a racing track and also outside our houses even though its 20 miles an hour. We would like to see if speed cameras would be considered on hall road to at least slow the traffic down and not have a racing circuit outside the house?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport It is disappointing to hear that drivers are choosing to ignore the existing 20mph speed restriction on this residential road. Enforcement of speed limits is a matter for Norfolk Constabulary and your concerns have been raised with them directly.</p> <p>With regard to the installation of safety cameras, the Safety Camera Partnership work to national guidelines produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) in order to identify where the provision of safety cameras would provide the greatest casualty reduction benefits on the highway network.</p> <p>In terms of Hall Road there are no recorded injury accidents and therefore the provision of a safety camera would not meet DfT guidance and would not be a priority to investigate further.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Gemma Guynan Would speed humps be considered outside the house, its already a 20 mile an hour zone but this doesn't stop the rat run?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Priority is given to those sites where a proven need is identified which usually targets locations where personal injury accident records exist. As Hall Road does not have an injury accident record a traffic calming scheme would not be considered a priority to investigate further.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Beverley Broadhead Ref. Closure of Reablement Unit Benjamin Court, Cromer</p> <p>How will vulnerable people, previously living alone, benefit with no interim assessment period in a reablement unit in their locality?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Thank you for your question. This change is about re-purposing our reablement service to be home-based rather than in-patient based, which is where people want to be.</p> <p>Since Covid, demand for home-based reablement has increased and this is why we are tailoring our service to provide more support in this way, with the NHS focusing on in-patient support for people with higher medical needs.</p> <p>Our current bed-based reablement is not set up to deal with such medical needs and this has led to falling occupancy levels at Benjamin Court. There have been many changes in health and social care, and particularly in the out-of-hospital care in recent years. The NHS has been able to increase its community-based care for people with</p>

	<p>medical needs, leaving hospital for example through virtual wards and therapy-led recovery in community hospitals. Much of this provision wasn't there when we set up our beds in Benjamin Court.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Rev'd Dr Mike Bossingham When the decision to close the reablement faculty at Benjamin Court was made was there consultations with the NHS about adequate coverage of this service?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Thank you for your question. Yes, there were discussions with the NHS regarding our proposals around Benjamin Court and our aim to provide increased levels of home based reablement in our communities.</p> <p>The NHS focus is for in-patient support for people with higher medical need.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Rev'd Dr Mike Bossingham If so when and how did these take place and what was the outcome?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Discussions with the NHS with regards to our Benjamin Court proposals were ongoing over a period of time at the many joint meetings held between ASSD (Adult Social Services Department) and the ICB (Integrated Care Board) on a regular basis.</p> <p>NHS recognised the falling numbers who were accessing the service, our ambition to provide more community reablement support which the people of Norfolk want, and that other services such as 'virtual wards' have now been developed which complement our home-based model.</p>
6.4	<p>Question from Jane Overhill Why wasn't the excellent report and proposals drawn up for Wensum Lodge ever shared with council members and the public for their views at a time when interests rates were low enough to make the scheme much more affordable?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships On 16 January 2019, a paper titled "Future vision for the Wensum Lodge site, Norwich" was considered by the Council's Communities Committee. At the meeting, the Committee received a detailed presentation from Hudson Architects which included the potential opportunities and how the site layout could be used to meet a creative hub vision. This meeting was held in public and both the report and presentation are available to view on the Council's website here (the presentation is appended to the minutes of the meeting).</p>
6.5	<p>Question from Martin Booth Is the half a million pounds saved from ending the lease on Benjamin Court part of the Council's £60 million savings for this year, or is it is being reinvested in care, and if so, how?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Thank you for the question. The majority of the resource deployed at Benjamin Court will be redeployed to our home-based reablement service. Any residual funding related to the building related running costs will form part of the wider management of the existing Adult Social Care Budget.</p>

6.6	<p>Question from David Russell Despite Cllr Borrett's statement x 3 that there will be public consultation on NCC issues there was none about the closure of Benjamin Court.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Thank you for your question. It was an operational decision to close Benjamin Court based on a number of drivers, but the services continues to be provided elsewhere.</p> <p>Our aim to support more people in the community where they want to be supported, best use of our resources – in this case our skilled reablement staff – to help the most people we could and falling occupancy level.</p> <p>The decision also reflects the many changes in health and social care, and particularly in the out-of-hospital care, in recent years.</p> <p>Supplementary question from David Russell Can I have an assurance that something like this will not happen again please?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care The department will continue to make the right operational decisions in the interests of the people of Norfolk and will always liaise with a range of stakeholders, as appropriate.</p>
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	Member Question Time
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</p> <p>The Postwick park and ride reopening is welcomed after a long absence. However it is disappointing that it is only on a trial basis.</p> <p>It needs heavyweight promotion of the reopening such as area-wide road signage, signage at the other Park and Ride sites and near city car parks, to name a few options. If you do not take every opportunity to promote this facility, then it could be claimed that the reopening has been designed to fail.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet member explain what measures have been put in place to promote this facility apart from the odd press release?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>We have extensively advertised the re-opening of Postwick P&R, including a direct mailout to more than 10,000 homes to the east of the site. In addition, signs will be placed on the entrance road on the 4th September when it re-opens, we have placed adverts in the Yarmouth Gazette and Yarmouth Mercury, there are posters at the other P&R sites and on the buses, there has been a social media campaign reaching more than 50,000 users, and also a feature on Radio Norfolk where I was interviewed about it.</p> <p>Therefore, significant promotion has already been undertaken and we will continue to promote the re-opening and raise public awareness.</p>
	<p>Second Question from Cllr Paul Neale</p> <p>Two recent collisions of cars with cyclists in the city resulted in a serious injury and a death. This follows nearly 200 similar incidents recorded over a 4 year period. In March the Cabinet Member said the council is adopting a Safe System Strategy. In light of the tragic and alarming deaths of cyclists, please provide details of how the Safe System Strategy will be implemented as a matter of urgency to prevent further deaths</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>We are saddened to hear of these recent collisions and our thoughts are with the families of those affected. Both accidents are currently being investigated by the road safety partnership to understand the circumstances and identify what, if any measures may help prevent further accidents. The Council has already adopted the safe systems approach in our current Local Transport Plan strategy.</p> <p>Officers from Public Health and Highways teams regularly meet with our blue light services colleagues to jointly deliver a safe systems approach. This includes an annual £250,000 Local Safety Scheme programme of safety engineering works targeting locations with a poor accident safety record. In addition, there is further funding allocated to enable the delivery of walking and cycling improvement schemes following several successful bids including to the Active Travel Fund (£5.6m) and Transforming Cities Fund (£66m overall) as well as through the member-led Road Safety Community Fund (£1m). Some notable recent examples of improvements include the Earlham Road, Fiveways roundabout and St Williams Way segregated facilities and imminent</p>

	plans for improvements at Heartsease roundabout and St Andrews Street. The Council's road safety team also provides free Bikeability courses for thousands of school children every year, and safer riding and driving courses to more than 25,000 adults every year. We actively continue to seek further funding so that we can deliver further initiatives and improvement schemes in line with our safe systems approach.
7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Catherine Rowett The Government's ripping-up of environmental protections with the scrapping of nutrient neutrality rules leaves our already highly-polluted rivers at even greater risk of being choked with effluent. The Government's plans furthermore do nothing to address agricultural run-off that is also a huge contributor to the dying off of our rivers. Norfolk boasts some of internationally important chalk streams that are under threat from this pollution, which went uncontrolled for years under a Tory government. Does the Cabinet Member agree that the health of our rivers cannot be allowed to continue to deteriorate and that the Government must introduce more effective pollution controls which hold polluters to account?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste There is common agreement that water quality in our waterways needs to be improved. Natural England and the Environment Agency are the key regulators who have responsibility for addressing this challenge. The County Council works closely with these agencies and seeks to support them wherever possible to help deliver improvements in this key area. Particularly as Lead Authority for Local Nature Recovery (LNRS) in Norfolk.</p> <p>Second Question from Cllr Catherine Rowett Will the Cabinet Member work with district councils to coordinate the strengthening of pollution controls and mitigation to ensure that the gaps in protection left by the Government's new approach to Nutrient Neutrality are filled as far as possible through the development of robust local planning policy?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste The Government's recent announcement on Nutrient Neutrality comes with no advice yet issued by Natural England, the Government's own advisor on Nutrient Neutrality. Consequently, it is too early to confirm how local planning policy can best respond to this new approach.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the County Council will continue to work closely with all the Local Planning Authorities in Norfolk to identify ways in which we can protect and improve the condition of our waterways through the Planning system.</p>
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn The retendering of National Highways' contract for dualling the A47 is likely to result in increased costs as inflation is still very high. The retendering adds additional uncertainty to the A47 project which would connect with the NWL. It could also prefigure similar events occurring on the NWL: Ferrovial were appointed two years ago, and with no sign of funding being committed and costs spiralling, it would not be a surprise if the firm had second thoughts about the project's viability. How are these risks being built into the NWL risk register?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure and Transport</p>

	<p>National Highways are not re-tendering the A47 dual carriageway works for the Easton to North Tuddenham (or Blofield to Burlingham) projects. They are likely to seek a different contractor for the delivery of the Thickthorn junction improvement works – details of which are yet to be confirmed by National Highways. They are maintaining their commitment to deliver this project as well as the other A47 improvements and the County Council fully supports this. Ferrovial UK Ltd, the contractor for the NWL was appointed as part of a design and build contract and they remain actively engaged in working towards the approval of the NWL project as soon as possible. A further update report will be brought to Cabinet in November 2023 to provide an update to the NWL project, which will include details of risk assessments.</p> <p>Second Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn Speeding on Old Palace Road in Norwich negatively affects residents, especially young families and elderly people who find crossing the road risky. Will the County Council explore options to make Old Palace Road 20mph, and liaise with the police to ensure that enforcement would be taken?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure and Transport Speed limits are set in accordance with national guidelines and the criteria are outlined in the Council's recently approved Speed Management Strategy. Old Palace Road does not meet the criteria for a 20mph speed limit, however other options to improve crossing facilities could be explored including through the Road Safety Community Fund or a future potential bid for other suitable national funding. A pedestrian crossing assessment, possibly funded using the local member fund, could be used to assess the need and feasibility for new crossing facilities, which can then be used to inform future bids for funding when they become available. If you would like to use some of your local member fund for this purpose, please discuss this with your local Highway Engineer. A request to the Police can also be made by the local Highways team as part of any assessment and to enforce the existing speed restrictions.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price Wensum Lodge is a county owned asset which has been woefully underinvested in for a long time. It is a site that is unviable for development by the private sector. The local community, local ward councillors and the general public deserve a say in the future of the site. Will the cabinet member be willing to ensure that the local member for Thorpe Hamlet is included in any high level conversations about the next steps for Wensum Lodge, ahead of any decisions being taken?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Innovation The site is listed as an Asset of Community Value and the County Council will set out the process for community organisations to put forward their proposals for the site in the autumn.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Ben Price Many people in the county, and especially those with disabilities and the elderly, are deeply concerned about the consequences of the closure of ticket offices at railway stations. Can the Cabinet Member provide details of what actions he has taken to address these concerns with Greater Anglia and whether he will continue to push for the reopening of ticket offices?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p>

	<p>I have responded on behalf of the Council to the consultation on the matter setting out the Council's concerns. In this we replied that we "firmly oppose the proposal to close ticket office closures at Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Diss, Downham Market and Thetford and reduce capacity for selling tickets at Norwich." I have also spoken to senior managers at Greater Anglia, the train operator providing the majority of services to Norfolk.</p> <p>The County Council is strongly supportive of rail travel, recognising the many benefits that good services bring to the county. It is important that everyone is able to use, and feels comfortable using, the rail network. We know from feedback how important people consider facilities such as ticket offices and that, without them, many people may not use the railway.</p> <p>I know that my concerns are shared by many others including neighbouring authorities in the east and I hope that the feedback to the consultation nationally, which closed on Friday 1 September, will lead to a change of mind about closures.</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp As County Councillor for West Winch, I support Norfolk County Council's Outline Business Case for Government funding for the West Winch Housing Access Road. Without the Housing Access Road to take out HGV's and heavy through traffic to enable traffic calming of the current A10 and improve road safety for all users, the 4,000 new town development in the Local Plan will not be sustainable.</p> <p>With what measures is Cabinet going to resolve West Winch's real concerns about increased congestion, safety issues and worse pedestrian conflicts, that would emanate from Highways current permissibility for 300 new houses on the A10 before the construction of a link road to the A47?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The support for the Outline Business Case for the West Winch Housing Access Road is helpful and appreciated. As you will be aware, Cabinet is fully supportive of the project and recognises the importance of the new road, providing resolution to the existing traffic related issues in West Winch as well as supporting the delivery of the planned housing of up to 4,000 homes. It is noted however that it is also important that there is confidence that the housing will be delivered and up to 300 homes are considered to be possible ahead of the completion of the new access road. However, there is also scope for some crossing improvements to be delivered that support this initial housing delivery and provide benefits for existing West Winch residents, as well as new residents. It remains both the County Council's and Borough Council's intention to deliver the new Housing Access Road as soon as possible, with the current programme indicating it will be delivered ahead of any significant housing growth.</p>
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins Many people will have been dismayed that the Council has had to write-off more than £2 million because of a dispute over who should pay for the care of vulnerable people across Norfolk. Whilst it appears that no one actually missed out on care, it is important to understand the reasons that this matter was not uncovered sooner. Understandably, the claim that it is a 'pragmatic decision' to accept the write-off, will 'stick in the craw' for those who rely so heavily on adult social care. What safeguards will the Cabinet member seek to put in place to ensure that this never happens again?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care</p> <p>Thank you for your question. Officers from both the council and the ICB are working closely together to formulate an equitable, comprehensive, and binding agreement with NHS partners that will ensure that all future 'shared care' agreements, recharges and reimbursements are reliably recorded and honoured, regardless of organisational changes or re-structures, changes in personnel, or other external factors such as the Covid pandemic. The delivery of care to people with high health and social care needs can be very complex, as are the financial arrangements to support this delivery.</p> <p>However, the council and NHS colleagues are committed to continue working in partnership to provide the care people need, underpinned by a new, robust protocol which will prevent any future dispute or misunderstanding. Due to the scale of our financial relationship, over 30,000 invoices during the five years in question, there is always the chance of records not wholly aligning. In this instance, we will now have a refreshed process and multi-layered supporting governance that ensures these instances are managed and resolved in a timely and appropriate way.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Brian Watkins</p> <p>Norfolk currently has around 700 refugees and asylum seekers in the county who are in desperate need of hope, help and practical support. One particular barrier is access to healthcare with many of them finding it hard to adjust to differences from the systems in place in their country of origin. How widespread is this problem, and how is it being tackled?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>The County Council has provided a comprehensive package of resettlement support to refugees coming to the county. This follows the government's strategy. The Home Office has recognised Norfolk as providing the "gold standard" in resettlement support for refugees. The county council also has asylum seekers placed by the Home Office under the provisions of Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. Norfolk and Waveney ICB commission the county council to provide healthcare outreach and support, enabling these individuals to access mainstream healthcare services and overcome barriers. The work of the team addresses healthcare inequalities, but all patients face problems accessing certain types of healthcare, for example NHS dentists, but this problem is not unique to asylum seekers and refugees.</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Councillor Steffan Aquarone</p> <p>Concerning the Sheringham Household Waste Recycling Centre, why is the County Council proposing to build on the site, concrete over an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), then charge itself £20,000 per annum for the use of the site?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>Following a review of the overall Norfolk Recycling Centre service provision it was identified that the existing Sheringham Recycling Centre could not provide a modern and efficient service required by residents. A number of options were investigated including extending the existing site, and re-locating operations where potential alternative sites in the area were considered. The proposed site, and its improved junction with the A148 Cromer Road, has been designed to modern standards, with a great deal of consideration to its visual and environmental impact to the local area. The new recycling centre, which received positive public consultation, creates a considerable biodiversity net gain based on the current land use and condition. The</p>

	<p>new facility will also have the capacity for the recycling of additional materials in addition to a reuse shop, creating income for the council, funding for charity partners, and reducing residual waste disposal costs compared with the existing location.</p> <p>The new recycling centre will also not have to close to the public for safety reasons when containers are exchanged, unlike the existing site. This will improve the recycling experience for customers and the efficiency of the operation.</p> <p>Upon transferring operations to the new recycling facility, the existing site will be cleared of its infrastructure and, as well as a redundant section of the existing access layby, will be returned to native woodland in line with its surroundings.</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell King's Lynn residents will have been alarmed and inconvenienced by the serious road flood on 27th August. Can the Cabinet member give an assurance that contractors will look again at the South Wootton drainage system, and that taxpayers' money will not be used to foot the bill (given that the road was closed for three weeks over the summer) to apparently solve 20-year-old problem costing thousands?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Following the receipt of reports of serious flooding, a Council officer attended the site later that afternoon. Whilst on site, they were informed by an adjacent resident that the standing water had dissipated, soaking away reasonably quickly and within an hour.</p> <p>Upon further investigations, it has been identified that the newly installed 450mm perforated soakaway system is functioning as designed, but on that particular rainfall event was over-whelmed by the storm conditions.</p> <p>The local Highways team will closely monitor how the new system performs over the coming months to ensure it continues to operate as designed under more typical rainfall events and conditions.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Rob Colwell As the residents of Norfolk get ready to queue for the over-subscribed and inadequate seven weeks of hazardous household waste disposal, what reassurances can be given that further additional dates over and above the current number, will be provided in future years to enable safe disposal of paints and oils etc, to protect the environment?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste We hold hazardous waste days annually. The hazardous waste days are located around the county and the length of the events are designed to meet demand in each area whilst keeping best value for taxpayers in mind.</p> <p>Additional dates could be considered in future, however sufficient demand, impact on other site users and cost implications would be part of these considerations. The tonnage of hazardous waste collected at annual hazardous waste events peaked in 2020 during the pandemic, but it has since dropped below pre-pandemic levels. We continue to monitor hazardous waste tonnage and demand each year. Helpful advice on how to deal with materials such as paint is provided on the County Councils website.</p>

7.9	<p>Question from Cllr David Sayers None of the Liberal Democrat councillors representing the area of King's Lynn Town were approached or consulted about the appointment of Councillor Stuart Dark, member for Dersingham, as the County Council's representative on the King's Lynn Town Deal Board. Appointing an individual from outside King's Lynn, especially without transparent consultation, only perpetuates a perception of favouritism and undermines the principles of equitable governance. Does the Leader believe that this appointment of Councillor Dark is reflective of a transparent and equitable decision-making process?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance I welcome the Government announcement that King's Lynn will benefit from the £3.6bn Towns Fund, which will help drive economic regeneration, providing new opportunities for local skills and jobs, growing innovative businesses and enhancing King's Lynn's existing cultural assets to ensure wider levels of access for all residents of the borough, not just those living in King's Lynn itself.</p> <p>This is very much in line with the ambitions we've laid out in Better Together for Norfolk, particularly to achieve a vibrant and sustainable economy, so I'm extremely pleased that King's Lynn, along with the wider borough, will be a part of this.</p> <p>As you're aware, Cllr Dark was until very recently the Leader of the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, presiding over the delivery of sound and balanced budgets, even through the once in a multi generation pandemic, for the residents of the whole borough, including King's Lynn, along with ensuring vital services were delivered at the most efficient cost to the tax payers, including those that promoted many of the aims of this Town Fund.</p> <p>This means he is uniquely placed to be our representative on the King's Lynn Town Deal Board, as his skill set and experience will ensure the best outcomes for the residents of the whole borough, as all borough residents will benefit from this Government funding.</p> <p>Cllr Dark isn't the only elected representative on the Board, the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk provide three representatives covering areas including from outside the immediate King's Lynn town area, which provides equitable balance and governance.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr David Sayers Transparency, accountability and care are essential for our healthcare. Given the report on 'watered down' NHS trust deaths data, residents deserve answers. How will Norfolk County Council respond to report revelations on editing, and address concerns from patients and families relying on Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust services, especially amid allegations of undercounting deaths and critical information?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing Thank you for your question. As you would have seen in a recent press statement this issue will be addressed at the Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee next month. I have sent a copy of the specific questions you raise to the Committee Chairperson.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby Refusing to reveal what items have been stolen from museums prevents Norfolk residents being reassured that our valuable artifacts are secure and gives confidence</p>

	<p>to any thieves that what they steal won't be publicised. That makes stolen items more difficult to recover and must leave doubts in the minds of anybody thinking of donating items to museum collections.</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships reverse this position and reveal the truth as keeping this secret gives the impression of things being rather shady? If there is a serious problem then the public need to know. If there isn't there is no reason not to publish the evidence.</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships</p> <p>A recent FOI request relating to the security of museum artefacts was received by our press office and was referred to our FOI team as per the Council's information protocols. The Council's consideration of this matter within the requirements of the statutory FOI process is still ongoing and will be responded to in due course.</p> <p>It is our policy to be as open as possible with any enquiry and we have previously provided information through enquiries and through the FOI process, including information relating to museum thefts and accidental damage to collections. In common with other museums and public institutions, we are constrained from providing information in certain circumstances, for example giving out details of the monetary value of collections, providing details which may make collections more vulnerable to theft, particular circumstances such as live investigations, or where providing such information may make a terrorist act or other form of deliberate interference more likely.</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb</p> <p>Money is being spent keeping the old Angel Road school shuttered and secure as every day it becomes an eyesore and reminder it is a wasted opportunity. We know it will soon be returned to the County Council, so preparation work could begin now for repairs, upgrades and commissioning work to transform it into a further desperately needed SEND school. It could be ready long before the welcome new ones announced for Downham Market and Great Yarmouth are complete to help meet the considerable unmet need for education opportunities for young people with SEND. Will the Cabinet Member for Children's Services instruct officers to begin this work without further delay?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>I was asked a similar question within the previous Cabinet meeting and at that time was able to confirm that, '...as part of the process for any vacated property we consider the potential use of such assets for Children's Service. This will involve how this building could support our Local First Inclusion Programme and will therefore be considered as part of the SEND Sufficiency and Capital workstream'. I am not able to provide any further update at this time. However, I believe all councillors are aware that SEND developments remain a priority for this council and that Officers continue to work hard to move these developments forward and I will be happy to provide an update when the next stage of the process has concluded.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Maxine Webb</p> <p>Does the Cabinet Member for Children's Services agree that the £750,000 the Council spent last year on legal costs fighting SEND tribunal appeals would be better spent on improved communication with families and on funding the support disabled children need?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p>

	<p>I do agree that we should continually seek to target the council's resources, financial and human, on those aspects of our SEND responsibilities that have the greatest possible impact for children, young people and their families. It is apparent that the council's record investment in SEND over the past 5 years and our improvements to services, that were acknowledged by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, is proof of this. However, the national statutory framework for SEND does provide the right to parents to lodge appeals to the Tribunal when they disagree with local policy/decisions regarding their children and the council has to fund officer time respond to these. I would like to reassure Cllr Webb that the Service are continuing to work hard to use alternative ways to reconcile differences between ourselves and families and I hope that during the coming 12 months we will be able to increase confidence of families in our decision making, providing them with new specialist placements they seek, as well as additional support in mainstream settings, and in turn reduce our costs on tribunals.</p>
7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Alision Birmingham As the chair of TfN failed to call a meeting of the committee, members have not had any opportunity to discuss the delivery of the Heartsease roundabout scheme. Can he explain for incredulous residents, businesses and councillors how it can take 8 months with all the loss and disruption especially during the Christmas period?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The works to improve the safety and operation of the Heartsease Roundabout are significant in their scope and there is limited road space in which to operate during the construction phase. All works are being planned to minimise disruption, but also to ensure the safety of the construction operatives and the highway users. Every effort will be made to complete the works as soon as possible.</p> <p>Consideration was given to breaking the scheme into 2 parts to avoid the Christmas trading period, but this would have significantly lengthened the duration of the works, incurred additional costs and was thought to be more disruptive to local people with several changes to the traffic management in the area. Access to all the local businesses will be maintained at all times.</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett Given Newsnight and attempted cover-up of deaths data to remove criticism of leadership and governance in addition to the original catastrophic failing of losing count of deaths, does the Leader, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing or Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care have confidence in NSFT leadership as partners they can work with in good faith?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing Thank you for your question. As you would have seen in a recent press statement this issue with the NHS Foundation Trust will be addressed at the Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee next month. I have sent a copy of the specific questions you raise to the Committee Chairperson.</p>
7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare Parents continue to tell us how difficult it is to find dentists for their children. Even if urgent action were taken now to address the backlog the dental health of many children has already been adversely affected. What does the Cabinet Member for</p>

	<p>Public Health and Wellbeing think the long-term consequences for health and costs to the NHS will be of the lack of adequate dental care for children?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing Thank you for your question although Norfolk County Council does not have responsibility for the provision of dental health services, as Cabinet Member for Public Health, I fully support access to local dentistry services for all of Norfolk's residents. Oral Health and the prevention of tooth decay in children are important in terms of ensuring every child has the best start in life. Poor oral health can impact on quality of life, such as eating and speaking and can impact on the child's ability to learn at school.</p> <p>As you are already aware and whilst having regular checks with a dentist is important, there are also other effective things we can do to ensure good childhood oral health. Reducing the amount of sugary food and drinks (like sweets and fizzy drinks), and supervising children to brush their teeth twice a day with a fluoride-based toothpaste, are two other important measures we can take to keep teeth and mouths healthy.</p> <p>Our Norfolk Healthy Child Programme has really useful information for all parents on how to support good oral health for their children. Teeth and Toothbrushing (justonenorfolk.nhs.uk)</p>
7.15	<p>Question from Cllr Steve Morpew Cabinet is being asked to agree a deal that accepts a bad debt caused by a failure to properly manage the financial relationship between the county council and NHS. I assume there is an audit report or an audit underway, so will she confirm that and give a date when the report will be published and agree it will inform future proposals to council to strengthen the scrutiny of the complex relationship between NHS bodies and Norfolk County Council to give reassurance to the public that never again will we see a write off of £2.4m to a partner body?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Thank you for your question. For the avoidance of doubt those who required our help and support received ahead of resolving which organisation needed to pay for it. The report to Cabinet today sets out clearly the huge volume and complexity of financial transactions which lie behind providing the right joined-up care for people who need it. Our finance team have gone through line-by-line hundreds of individual transactions and are now working with counterparts in the ICB to set up robust processes and systems to ensure future arrangements are subject to regular oversight. These new arrangements will be subject to internal audit, and regular monitoring to give transparency and assurance about fair apportionment of costs across health and social care.</p>
7.16	<p>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy In a reply to my question about the Big Norfolk Holiday Fun scheme at the 7th August 2023 Cabinet Meeting, it was stated that Children Services staff would be undertaking a series of quality assurance visits to providers across the county over the summer holidays.</p> <p>I'd be grateful if you could confirm how many visits took place and whether any issues were identified from those visits?</p>

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

At least 70 QA visits are planned to take place over the summer period. As the holiday period and activities are still running, the final number of QA visits undertaken and logged by the HAF team is still being collated.

To date, within the visits already logged, there is evidence that all providers visited have been compliant with DfE requirements for receiving HAF grant funding. Visits have provided a positive opportunity to encourage providers to increase hot food provision and include more nutritional education within activity sessions, to generally raise awareness about safeguarding and the support and training needed for younger staff, the importance of appropriate signage at venues, providing a differentiated programme where there is a wide age range, and the provider's role to contact families to encourage attendance.

Given the HAF team and providers are committed to the continual improvement of the programme, it is positive that the overall picture from the visits so far is encouraging and there is evidence of progress in these areas compared to previous holiday periods.

Second Question from Cllr Terry Jermy

2,765 places were available for children in Thetford as part of this year's Big Norfolk Holiday Fun (HAF) scheme. Could you confirm how many of these places were taken up?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Providers have until 10 September to provide their returns to the HAF team. We will not have the final data on actual take up of sessions until after the summer holiday.

Whilst not all providers use the Every Move booking system as some have their own booking platform, the HAF team's monitoring of Every Move bookings throughout the holidays has given no cause for concern on the level of bookings being made by families for HAF activities in Thetford.

Anecdotally, early indications are that take up has been good, but this can only be confirmed once all returns have been received from providers and collated by the HAF team.