

Cabinet
6 June 2022
Public & Local Member Questions

Public Question Time	
6.1	<p>Question from Patrick West</p> <p>We have seen significant increases in footfall in and around the Town of Cromer. Our Schools also have a larger number on the roll than in previously as the population has grown.</p> <p>However, It has now been 19 years since we have seen any investment in improvements for pedestrian access, active transport, or congestion relief, despite these increasing pressures.</p> <p>We wish to see some investment on schemes focussed particularly on safer pedestrian access in various locations, but the cost of these works will be beyond Local Members Fund and or Parish Partnership Funding alone. Would you commit to working with us to secure external funding in to address these issues?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Whilst in many respects the matters you raise are positive, in that they show that Cromer is one of Norfolk’s many thriving market towns, I appreciate that increased footfall can bring issues of congestion and there is a need to make sure people can move around the town on foot or bicycle. The county council is keen to work with local councils and others to improve places and to make sure that towns like Cromer can continue to thrive, especially to ensure planned future growth promotes healthy lifestyles and is as sustainable as possible.</p> <p>I will therefore ask officers to make contact with you to discuss the matters you raise and see how we can work together on these issues.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Jonathan Dunning</p> <p>Regarding item 10 on today’s agenda; I am sure Cabinet will recognise that low pay is a factor in poor comparative standards of adult social care in Norfolk so would Cabinet support the payment of the Real Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation, as a minimum for all those working on NCC adult care contract</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention</p> <p>Thank you for your question. As you are aware pay rates are determined by the employers as they seek to attract staff, which means they vary across the county. The Council has consistently supported the care market with above inflation increases (including a 6% increase last year) in the rates that it pays for care, an element of which supports maintaining the National Living Wage (currently £9.50). Some providers have told the Council that they already pay above the Real Living Wage (currently £9.90). Further detail re pay rates will be seen when home care and older adult residential care providers submit their data as part of the Government’s “fair cost review”, which is required to be completed this year (a 1p increase in pay rates is a cost of c£200,000 to the Council). It is important to remember that pay is not the only factor impacting on recruitment and retention of staff, career progression and job satisfaction are also factors. The Council, in partnership with the European Social Fund, provides free training for staff working in the sector to support development of staff skills and competencies and to provide opportunities for career development. The Council has also invested heavily in supporting provider recruitment and has funded a range of initiatives to support a greater understanding of the wider career opportunities available to people in social care and health sectors. The Council has established a Norfolk Care</p>

	<p>Academy which supports the on-boarding of applicants, supporting them to be work ready and matching them with provider vacancies. Our Norfolk Care Careers website provides a free platform for providers to advertise their jobs as all local advertising signposts applicants to this website.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Mary Curson Norfolk County Council are developing a Climate Action Plan. Good practice is to engage with local community groups and other interested parties as part of the development process. Will the responsible Councillor and appropriate Council Officers enter into a dialogue with, for example, Norwich Friends of the Earth, to help formulate a robust Climate Action Plan?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste The County Council's Climate Action Plan, following on from the adoption of our new Environmental Policy, will be developed over the coming months in partnership with key organisations including our District Councils, primarily through the Council's role within the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP).</p> <p>In order to create a robust Climate Change Action Plan, officers will engage with a wide group of stakeholders and appropriate experts. Elected Members will continue to engage with this vital work through the County Council's committee structures and through the Environmental Member Oversight Group, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Mary Curson No constituent should have to trawl through pages of documents, across various policies, to establish what climate action is being taken. Will Norfolk County Council's Climate Action Plan be fully budgeted, timed and accessible, with a dedicated net-zero date, not only for the Council's Estate but also the County of Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Norfolk County Council has committed to developing a new Climate Action Plan which will set out our goals, ambitions and targets in a clear and accessible format, including those areas where we will work with other stakeholders and partners across the County, as distinct from our own estate.</p>

**Cabinet
6 June 2022
Local Member Questions**

	Local Member Issues/Questions
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp The QEH Management have written to the Leader, asking him to write a letter to the Govt, as Leader of this Council, in support of their Strategic Outline Business Case and have offered to brief him, but have not yet had a reply. Has the Leader written to the Govt in strong support of the SOBC? There is no Plan B for King's Lynn beyond 2030, if Government does not fund the rebuild of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Parts of our hospital could have to close. Last May, this Council unanimously agreed my cross-party Motion to support the QEH in every way possible.</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance Thank you for your question. A letter in response to the Strategic Outline Business Case was sent on 24 05 22.</p>
7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell I've heard from residents angry at the lack of walking and cycling routes out of King's Lynn to the east, with the A149 needing an over or under route to allow people to safely explore the beautiful West Norfolk Countryside. Will Councillor Wilby not only meet with me when he is next in the west to see first hand the problem, but reassure residents that this scheme will get the priority and funding it deserves?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport In partnership with the Borough Council we have recently developed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for King's Lynn. This has highlighted the need for improved crossing facilities over the A149, particularly to the north near Knights Hill and in the south nearer to Hardwick roundabout where we are keen to provide good Active Travel (walking and cycling) routes into the town from the West Winch growth area.</p> <p>We are also keen to update the Kings Lynn Transport Strategy, adopted in spring 2020, to incorporate the LCWIP measures and provide an updated Implementation Plan to guide investment. Subject to an internal growth bid we could commence this work next year.</p> <p>In the longer term, we have a strategic priority to improve the A149. To get government funding for this, the scheme must include extensive public transport and Active Travel aspects and these, of necessity, will include measures to assist pedestrians and cyclists crossing the road</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Rob Colwell With the County Council only receiving £955,000 out of the £2,465,000 it bid for to get funding from tranche 3 of the Government's Active Travel Funding (for walking and cycling schemes) will you now publicise a new list that updates the original proposed schemes showing which ones have now been lost and which ones will go ahead?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p>

	<p>As this news has only recently been announced, we will provide an update on the County Council website shortly.</p>
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Saul Penfold Now that the government policies on discharging patients from hospital into care homes at the onset of the pandemic have been declared "unlawful" can you tell us how many deaths resulted from this in Norfolk and would you like to take the opportunity to apologise to all those who lost loved ones?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. I view every Covid related death during this pandemic as a tragedy and I am sure that you do as well. As you yourself state, the policy in question was not made or decided by Norfolk County Council, it is a matter of record that there were 713 Covid related deaths in care homes in Norfolk, it is not possible to know the route of introduction of infections of Covid into a specific setting once we had the levels of community infection we had during the pandemic, infections could come from any route. Care homes are part of Norfolk's communities and infections could come from visitors, staff or other admissions of residents.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins The Chairman of the Office for Budget Responsibility has said that the impact of Brexit on the UK economy will be worse in the long run than that of the coronavirus pandemic. Would you accept that the problems caused by Brexit to the economy will be more long lasting and severe than people were led to believe during the referendum?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy Thank you for your question. I do not agree with your assessment. I think that for those who promised immediate economic collapse following the leave vote, which did not happen, there are very few strings to grasp on to now and this question is one.</p> <p>Global finances face a myriad of pressures, not least the war in Ukraine. The UK economy remains strong and is enjoying better rates of growth than many of those who remain within the European Union.</p> <p>Second Question from Cllr Brian Watkins We are all aware that there was a sharp increase in scams during the pandemic, with many older and vulnerable people being put at particular risk. Many will now face cold calling from criminals asking for bank details so that they can illegally obtain the £150 energy rebate, and further Government cost-of-living hardship payments. What help and advice can the Council provide to help protect people against this type of criminal activity?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships The council chairs the Norfolk Against Scams Partnership (NASP), Partners including the police, councils, voluntary organisations and businesses, work together to support residents and businesses in Norfolk to help protect them from scams, doorstep crime and fraud. The partners are committed to work together to raise awareness of scams.</p>

	<p>Together they take a stand against scams by assisting people to protect themselves, helping prevent people from being targeted by criminals; and identifying and supporting any victims of scams. The aims of the partnership are captured in the NASP charter.</p> <p>Criminals are quick to adapt, taking advantage of confusion over financial offers. The Trading Standards service issues scam alerts to both consumers and businesses on a weekly basis and people can sign up to receive a weekly email, detailing the latest scams, via the council website at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/scams . Trading Standards, along with other NASP partners will also continue to use media (including social media) opportunities to promote scam awareness and avoidance.</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Lucy Shires What do you think about people struggling so much with the cost of living crisis that they are having to go to the library to stay warm?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy The county's libraries have always provided a safe and welcoming space for residents in need. Where people arrive and have additional worries and financial concern the library teams are able to connect them to wider support offers such as the Norfolk Assistance Scheme. The recent Household Support Fund scheme has allocated £2.2m to specifically support people aged over 65 which should help a significant number of our residents</p>
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Sharon Blundell Norfolk's Assistance Scheme says "If you have adequate savings to meet your basic living needs, unfortunately your application will be refused." How much in savings is considered adequate?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy Norfolk's Assistance Scheme will disregard up to £1,000 in savings. However, discretion may be applied in certain circumstances. For example, an elderly client with specific savings for a funeral.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Sharon Blundell Can you tell us how people will be able to access the food hubs within the Nourishing Norfolk Network if they can't afford to drive there?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The food hubs which we have helped to fund, and are developed by the voluntary sector in conjunction with Norfolk Community Foundation, have been located in places where they provide the easiest access for residents in need. In the case of the Breckland bus, there is mobile provision to help reach a wider range of customers. The number of hubs is due to increase over the course of this year with 15 planned to open by the end of 2022.</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Dan Roper What is the council's current credit rating?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</p>

	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Like most local authorities, the County Council does not have nor require a credit rating as most of its borrowing is from the Public Works Loan Board. A few local authorities have obtained a credit rating when seeking to raise funding from the capital markets. This is a requirement for a bond issue when tend to be for a minimum of £250m. There is a cost to obtaining and maintaining a credit rating.</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Tim Adams Can the cabinet member confirm we have the lowest ever levels of roadworks and that there are significant delays in delivering repairs. Are there issues with this contract that we as Councillors need to be aware of?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport. Work on the highway is carried out by a wide range of organisations. For example, gas, water or broadband companies undertaking repairs or laying new apparatus. The recent extensive works on Sweetbriar Road in Norwich were the responsibility of Anglian Water. The County Council does undertake various repairs or improvements, via a range of contracts for the purposes of maintaining and improving the road network.</p> <p>The Highway Capital Programme was approved at Cabinet on 7 March 2022. This detailed the budget for 2022/23 and the next 2 years.</p> <p>We have a large highway capital programme which currently includes major expenditure on the Third River Crossing in Great Yarmouth</p> <p>The recent highway capital programme financial out-turns were; - 2019-20 £69,198,338 2020-21 £96,942,350 2021-22 £103,521,716</p> <p>These figures include a capital maintenance spend of 2019-20 £30,263,759.91 2020-21 £55,314,218.12 2021-22 £45,867,140</p> <p>Capital maintenance funding was boosted in 2020-21 by additional Government grants during the Covid Pandemic.</p> <p>In the last 12 months (June 2021 to May 2022), 97.2% of the highest priority defects (Priority A & Priority B) have been completed within the required timescales. 88.1% of the less urgent defects (Priority C and D) have been completed within timescales.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Tim Adams What will be the impact of the removal of the £100m Government Weight Management (public health grant) on Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention.</p>

	<p>Thank you for your question. The grant was announced as a one-off fund in 2021/2022 and in Norfolk we focused the investment on meeting the needs of BAME communities, people with Severe Mental Health conditions, and in supporting men to manage their weight. These remain key priority groups for the Council and as a result I am delighted to confirm that for the financial year 2022/2023 Norfolk County Council is able continue to fund these services from its core Public Health Grant. Our routinely commissioned T2 Weight Management Service at Slimming World also continues unaffected.</p> <p>In the interests of clarity, it should be noted that the Government's announcement of 1 April 2022 in relation to the additional funding for local authority commissioned adult tier two behavioural weight management services was that this would "not be available in the financial year 2022-23". We do not know the Government's intention in relation to funding in future years.</p>
7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham In respect of the decision to close Woodside Nursery, can the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services confirm where and when was the decision to close was taken, what alternatives were considered and how will the reduction in places affect the overall provision?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Our sufficiency analysis indicates there is no shortage of childcare in the local area for September.</p> <p>The nursery has been in financial deficit for a number of years, which meant that this was an unsustainable position.</p> <p>Senior officers reviewed all options in the Spring Term. The council has considered other options to enable the nursery to stay open. These have included increasing income by increasing fees, reducing expenditure, and closing the baby room permanently in February this year to make the best use of the remaining staff. Consideration has also been given to transferring the nursery to another provider, but as there is already a surplus of childcare places locally and a relatively small number of places at Woodside, the best approach for continuity of childcare for families, support for local providers and financial viability was closure. The final decision to pursue closure was made by the Learning and Inclusion Leadership Team on April 22nd 2022.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Alison Birmingham What steps are being made to assist children to move and settle into new nurseries and what plans are there for the site, which will incur costs even if left empty?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The nursery is not planned to close until 31st August and we expect to maintain provision until this date.</p> <p>Families have been signposted to the Family Information Service who have an up to date detailed list of childcare capacity in the local area. Any parents who make enquires should contact them via 0344 8008020 or email fis@norfolk.gov.uk. Our sufficiency analysis indicates there is no shortage of childcare in the local area.</p>

	<p>The building will be in use until the end of August when the council will consider the options regarding future use.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Brenda Jones Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention confirm what provisions are written into contracts with private sector care providers to ensure that care staff actually receive all the money paid by the council to improve their terms and conditions and how is this monitored?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. As you have said in your question care providers are independent companies and therefore rates of pay are set by them for their employees and will vary from firm to firm across the county. The calculation of the amount the council pays for care will be made up of numerous elements that any company would expect to incur and comes to Cabinet for a decision every year. The specific Covid grants that related to workforce support required a signed return from the provider to confirm that it was spent in line with the conditions of each specific grant. The recent report to the Scrutiny Meeting on May 18th on these Covid related grants contains a significant amount of detail if you require more information.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Brenda Jones What provisions are written into contracts with private sector care providers to ensure that care staff are adequately trained and how is this monitored?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention The Council's framework agreements have a clause: "The provider must ensure that the number and skills of staff are enough to meet the needs of the residents presently residing in the care (service)". Further clauses go on to reference planned induction, development and training (including specialist training, where required) and effective supervision.</p> <p>The Council's Integrated Quality Service monitor compliance with the contract via comprehensive Provider Assurance and Market Management Solution (PAMMS) audits and focussed Quality Monitoring Visits. From a combination of review of training matrices, interviews with staff and observing practice, evidence is gathered to inform our published reports. Providers are supported to improve and held to account in accordance with our Improvement and Escalation Policy. This exactly replicates the statutory duty imposed on all registered care services under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 which is monitored by the Care Quality Commission.</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention confirm how many patient on patient assaults have been reported to Norfolk County Council Safeguarding between May 2019 and May 2022 relating to NSFT in-patient wards in Norfolk, or Norfolk patients placed by NSFT in out of Trust or Out of Area beds?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. The information is not collated in the form that has been asked for in the question and it is therefore difficult to respond in the timeframe</p>

	<p>available. Patient upon patient safeguarding concerns cannot be easily deciphered from the overall NHS NSFT safeguarding referrals received. However the Safeguarding Team is able to examine in depth the NHS NSFT referrals and site locations and feed back to you at a later date.</p>
7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby Can the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships confirm the approach she will take in engaging and providing a response to the recently published Government White Paper “Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service”?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships I will be meeting with the Chief Fire Officer and the Assistant Director of Performance & Governance on 08 June to discuss the approach that will be taken in engaging over, and providing a response to, the “Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service” White Paper. We will discuss the correct forum for dissemination of response after this.</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn Community energy has the potential to power 2.2 million homes by 2030 and help increase energy security, reduce fuel bills, create local jobs, and reduce carbon emissions. Yet current licensing rules make it virtually impossible for local community energy schemes to get off the ground. The Local Energy Bill which is before Parliament and is backed by over 100 local authorities and over 300 MPs. Will Norfolk County Council add its backing to this bill?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste We are supportive of any initiative that will help increase energy security, reduce fuel bills, create local jobs, and reduce carbon emissions. Norfolk County Council will consider fully the implications arising from any new Government legislation relating to local community energy, including through our Committees, at the Environmental Member Oversight Group (MOG), and through the Net Zero Board, chaired by the Head of Paid Service.</p> <p>On a practical level, Norfolk County Council has commissioned a LEAR (a Local Energy Asset Representation). This is a modelling tool that creates a baseline of energy assets within a local area to help understand energy constraints such as - energy demand, generation, storage and distribution assets, energy network constraints, and social factors like fuel poverty We hope to use this to help develop local energy projects.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Jamie Osborn How are Norfolk County Council working with Evolution Academy Trust to ensure that the site at Angel Road continues as a site of community value?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services We are working with Evolution Academy Trust and the Department for Education to secure the return of the site to Norfolk County Council, when future use will be considered in line with policy.</p>
7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price Over the past year, opposition councillors have asked why there was no carbon assessment in the LTP4 that councillors were asked to vote on in November. We were repeatedly assured that details would be provided in the LTP4 Implementation</p>

	<p>Plan. The plan that is now published contains no quantified detail on how carbon targets are to be met.</p> <p>Does the Committee agree that in order to fulfil the mandate set by the vote in November, the quantifiable carbon reduction associated with actions in the implementation plan should be set out in detail?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The Local Transport Plan has been prepared taking into account government guidance and sets out a target for carbon reduction together with a range of actions showing how the target will be met including reducing travel, mode shift to active travel and public transport, and a shift to clean fuels such as a switch to electric vehicles. We still await guidance on local transport plans and, as has been consistently stated, this will be given due consideration and any action considered necessary as a result taken. Until guidance is published, we do not know what it might say. It is considered better to move forward to adoption of an up to date plan rather than face a delay of what is likely to be over a year and potentially significantly longer.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Ben Price The Climate Change Committee states that at least a 12% reduction in total vehicle miles is needed, even with electrification, to meet carbon reduction targets. Why does the Implementation Plan not set quantifiable targets for reductions in total vehicle mileage?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport A range of actions will be needed in order to meet carbon reduction targets, not just a reduction in vehicle mileage. Progress against the pathway outlined in the plan for carbon reduction will be monitored and this will allow the range of actions to be tailored to take account of progress against meeting the target.</p>
7.15	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale Following the murder of Bobbi-Anne McLeod, Plymouth Council has established a commission on violence against women and girls and is implementing a training programme across schools, businesses, and social settings such as sports clubs to train men and boys to recognise and challenge misogynistic and inappropriate behaviour targeting women and girls. Will the Cabinet Member explore setting up a similar commission for Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy Thank you for your question. It raises some very important issues. I am working with the new Leader of Plymouth Council for the LGA and I will be happy discuss that with him and see if something similar for Norfolk is appropriate.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Paul Neale Fuel bills are set to rise another £800 in October. Other county and unitary local authorities are collaborating with partners in establishing retrofit advice units to help with insulating homes to permanently bring down fuel bills. Will Norfolk County Council commit to the same to reduce the impact of the price rises?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p>

	We will pick this matter up at the next Environment Policy Member Oversight Group and agree how to address this.
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