

Cabinet
8 June 2020
Public & Local Member Questions

Agenda Local Member Issues/Questions
item 7

Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp.

Putting West Norfolk Economy's First: – West Winch Bypass

Does Norfolk County Council understand how much damage it risks to the West Norfolk economy, by increasing the severe, continuous congestion on the A10, if it allows a new housing estate of 350 new houses, and 700 extra cars, to decant onto West Winch Road, before West Winch Bypass is built?

NCC's SOBC report acknowledges the current extra operating costs to business with delays. 3-5km tailbacks. Unreliable Journey Times. Longer commutes. Extra operating costs. The impact on productivity. NCC should not make this worse.

NCC's report says the A10 through West Winch, busier than the A47, is not fit for purpose.

Response:

Supporting the local economy and delivering much-needed housing often requires a careful consideration of competing and conflicting aspects. Norfolk County Council has prioritised the West Winch Housing Access Road (WWHAR) as essential infrastructure to support the delivery of committed growth and the overall prosperity of the area. The figure of 350 new homes is an indicative one used in the business case to lever in DfT funding for the road. The impact of any new housing before the road is built will need to be demonstrated by the developer and be acceptable to the Local Planning Authority taking account of recommendations from the County Council.

The business case highlights the impact current travel conditions are having on businesses as this is a material consideration in the argument for funding the road. Be assured we are doing all we can to press on with the work to secure planning permission and funding to hopefully open the road before much of the early phase of houses are built.

Question 1 from Cllr Mick Castle

Cllr John Fisher in a reply to my questions at the April 2020 meeting of Cabinet stated that County would invest in the early development of language and communication – and early reading – to better support boys' progress.

Despite the difficulties presented to schools by the Coronavirus epidemic, will the Cabinet member now pledge his support for pilots in selected Norfolk Primary Schools in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years with a view to developing effective new strategies to elicit improved engagement and achievement by Boys?

Response:

Engagement and achievement remains high on our agenda, particularly at this time when many pupils are not attending school. We continue to develop our approach to carry out our role in monitoring the effectiveness of local authority maintained schools and multi-

academy trusts. We do not lead the system in terms of school improvement as that responsibility is statutorily delegated to Governing bodies of LA maintained schools and Trust Boards for Academies. Our monitoring and evaluation of achievement focuses on all groups of pupils, including gender. We are very keen to continue to engage with schools and trusts to identify common issues (which may locally include gender differences in engagement and achievement) and promote local support mechanisms to raise achievement.

We were in the process of establishing a Norfolk Commissioning Hub that will bring together heads in a district who will take issues from the data and identify the common causes and possible solutions. We will then work with all support providers (such as teaching schools and the English and maths hubs) and our own teams to design local solutions to issues. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 crisis did stall these plans, but we are keen to get this work back on track in the Autumn term with school leaders.

Question 2 from Cllr Mick Castle

Before the Coronavirus “lockdown” the publication of Ofsted’s report on Key Stage 2 results in Norfolk Primary Schools in 2019 revealed that two in five primary school pupils were struggling to meet standards in English and Maths.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that results also revealed a significant underperformance by Boys in relation to Girls – with a gap which widened by the end of the Primary phase?

Response:

In terms of outcomes in primary school, Norfolk girls are now leaving reception classes at age 5 achieving standards 2 percentage points higher than girls nationally, Norfolk boys leave reception achieving standards in line with their peers. By the end of Key Stage 2, we are all well aware that the percentage of primary school pupils in Norfolk, meeting expected standards in reading, writing and maths is lower than the national average. This is the key priority for improvement. There is no difference in attainment in mathematics between boys and girls, by the age of 11. However, we acknowledge that Norfolk boys do achieve less well than Norfolk girls in reading and writing, as they do nationally. The difference in attainment between boys and girls at Key Stage 2 is slightly narrower in Norfolk than nationally which is positive, but not good enough. Schools are challenged by the local authority, the Regional Schools Commissioner and Ofsted to further improve outcomes across Key Stage 2, for all groups of pupils.

Question 1. From Councillor David Harrison

What will be the main contribution of Norfolk County Council in promoting economic development and recovery in the Broadland district in the next two months?

Response:

NCC is focused on supporting the re-starting of business across the County and is continually working to provide assistance to business in collaboration with the District

Council, New Anglia LEP, The Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Business.

The priorities to date have focused on the sourcing a [local supply chain of PPE](#) and other equipment such as screens to enable businesses to equip their premises to comply with Social Distancing requirements. Workforce has also been a priority and a [website](#) has been set up to enable business to secure staff if they need them or swop staff between business where possible. This has proven a popular site. The Council is supporting the local district implement their re-starting high street schemes and looking to introduce measures to cycling and walking

Finally NCC is collaborating with the District Council Recovery Plan under the umbrella of the a New Anglia Recovery Plan and will play a full role in developing effective responses to the emerging issues as the impact of the pandemic on the economy becomes clearer.

Question 2 from Cllr David Harrison:

What specific economic development activities are Norfolk County Council planning to lead in Broadland district and what will be the expected outcomes by Norfolk Day on Monday 27th July?

Response:

NCC will respond across its economic development function to the emerging issues in the District as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic and take appropriate action where it can in support of the priorities that come out of the Recovery plans.

Question 1 from Councillor John Timewell

What will be the main contribution of Norfolk County Council in promoting economic development and recovery in the North Norfolk district in the next two months?

Response:

NCC is focused on supporting the re-starting of business across the County and is continually working to provide assistance to business in collaboration with the District Council, New Anglia LEP, The Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Business.

The priorities to date have focused on the sourcing a [local supply chain of PPE](#) and other equipment such as screens to enable businesses to equip their premises to comply with Social Distancing requirements. Workforce has also been a priority and a [website](#) has been set up to enable business to secure staff if they need them or swop staff between business where possible. This has proven a popular site. The Council is supporting the local district implement their re-starting high street schemes and looking to introduce measures to cycling and walking

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Question 2 from Cllr John Timewell

What specific economic development activities are Norfolk County Council planning to lead in North Norfolk district and what will be the expected outcomes by Norfolk Day on Monday 27th July?

Response:

NCC will respond across its economic development function to the emerging issues in the District as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic and take appropriate action where it can in support of the priorities that come out of the Recovery plans.

Question 1 from Cllr Brian Watkins

What will be the main contribution of Norfolk County Council in promoting economic development and recovery in the Norwich City district in the next two months?

Response:

NCC is focused on supporting the re-starting of business across the County and is continually working to provide assistance to business in collaboration with the District Council, New Anglia LEP, The Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Business.

The priorities to date have focused on the sourcing a [local supply chain of PPE](#) and other equipment such as screens to enable businesses to equip their premises to comply with Social Distancing requirements. Workforce has also been a priority and a [website](#) has been set up to enable business to secure staff if they need them or swop staff between business where possible. This has proven a popular site. The Council is supporting the local district implement their re-starting high street schemes and looking to introduce measures to cycling and walking

Finally NCC is collaborating with the District Council Recovery Plan under the umbrella of the a New Anglia Recovery Plan and will play a full role in developing effective responses to the emerging issues as the impact of the pandemic on the economy becomes clearer.

Question 2 from Cllr Brian Watkins

What specific economic development activities are Norfolk County Council planning to lead in Norwich City and what will be the expected outcomes by Norfolk Day on Monday 27th July?

Response:

NCC will respond across its economic development function to the emerging issues in the District as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic and take appropriate action where it can in support of the priorities that come out of the Recovery plans.

Question 1 from Councillor Tim East

What will be the main contribution of Norfolk County Council in promoting economic development and recovery in the South Norfolk district in the next two months?

Response:

NCC is focused on supporting the re-starting of business across the County and is continually working to provide assistance to business in collaboration with the District Council, New Anglia LEP, The Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Business.

The priorities to date have focused on the sourcing a [local supply chain of PPE](#) and other equipment such as screens to enable businesses to equip their premises to comply with Social Distancing requirements. Workforce has also been a priority and a [website](#) has been set up to enable business to secure staff if they need them or swop staff between business where possible. This has proven a popular site. The Council is supporting the local district implement their re-starting high street schemes and looking to introduce measures to cycling and walking

Finally NCC is collaborating with the District Council Recovery Plan under the umbrella of the a New Anglia Recovery Plan and will play a full role in developing effective responses to the emerging issues as the impact of the pandemic on the economy becomes clearer

Question 2 from Cllr Tim East

What specific economic development activities are Norfolk County Council planning to lead in South Norfolk district and what will be the expected outcomes by Norfolk Day on Monday 27th July?

Response:

NCC will respond across its economic development function to the emerging issues in the District as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic and take appropriate action where it can in support of the priorities that come out of the Recovery plans.

Question 1 from Cllr Dan Roper

What will be the main contribution of Norfolk County Council in promoting economic development and recovery in the districts of Breckland, Kings Lynn & West Norfolk and Great Yarmouth in the next two months?

Response:

NCC is focused on supporting the re-starting of business across the County and is continually working to provide assistance to business in collaboration with the District Council, New Anglia LEP, The Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Business.

The priorities to date have focused on the sourcing a [local supply chain of PPE](#) and other equipment such as screens to enable businesses to equip their premises to comply with Social Distancing requirements. Workforce has also been a priority and a [website](#) has been set up to enable business to secure staff if they need them or swop staff between business where possible. This has proven a popular site. The Council is supporting the local district implement their re-starting high street schemes and looking to introduce measures to cycling and walking

Finally NCC is collaborating with the District Council Recovery Plan under the umbrella of the a New Anglia Recovery Plan and will play a full role in developing effective responses to the emerging issues as the impact of the pandemic on the economy becomes clearer

Question 2 from Cllr Dan Roper

What specific economic development activities are Norfolk County Council planning to lead in the districts of Breckland, Kings Lynn & West Norfolk and Great Yarmouth and what will be the expected outcomes by Norfolk Day on Monday 27th July?

Response:

NCC will respond across its economic development function to the emerging issues in the District as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic and take appropriate action where it can in support of the priorities that come out of the Recovery plans.

Question 1 from Cllr Steffan Aquarone:

Could the cabinet member provide available data on the percentage of children in years one, six and reception who have physically attended school since June 1st.

Response:

At the time of writing, no data has been made available by the Department of Education, an assurance has been given that data will be made available by June 9th. In agreement with the Department for Education we collect data on a weekly basis so that schools prioritise the daily return to the DFE.

Question 2 from Cllr Steffan Aquarone:

Could he further highlight whether there are any significant differences in attendance between districts and what levels of attendance does he anticipate achieving by the end of the summer term?

Response:

At the time of writing, no data has been made available by the Department of Education, an assurance has been given that data will be made available by June 9th. In agreement with the Department for Education we collect data on a weekly basis so that schools prioritise the daily return to the DFE.

Question from Cllr Steve Morpew

The confusing messages and damaging behaviour of senior government figures has led to growing cynicism and a breakdown in the community spirit that brought so many heroic achievements during the hardship of the lockdown. Despite this the Executive Leader of the council has been virtually silent. A key responsibility of the Leader is to provide leadership to the Norfolk community. Will he now exercise that responsibility and give residents in my division and across Norfolk clear messages we can unite behind, and champion standards we can respect and trust?

Response:

As Leader I have spoken regularly, throughout the pandemic, about the county council's leading role in supporting Norfolk to get through Covid 19 and its work with partners to support our communities and now working to restart the economy. This includes interviews with BBC Look East, BBC Radio Norfolk and the EDP and the latest, digital edition of Your Norfolk magazine. That and the report to Cabinet on 11 May showed the exceptional work done by all – a team response and a team effort. The Deputy Leader and I have a daily meeting with the Head of Paid Service and the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance.

I have and continue to have daily meetings with the Communications Team, which sits within my portfolio, to shape and approve messaging to ensure that the residents of Norfolk have up-to date, accessible information from trusted and accurate sources. I have driven the central and consistent message of Protect Ourselves Protect Norfolk, working closely with the District Councils and the Norfolk MPs.

Question from Cllr Brenda Jones:

In response to my question to the last cabinet meeting the cabinet member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention avoided answering what he had done to find out the experiences and needs of adults with disabilities during the lockdown and the experiences of carers, instead referring to the work of officers. Can I give him the opportunity to answer the question I asked last month together with setting out what he has personally engaged in for the other areas of his responsibility in Adult social care, Support for carers, Protection for vulnerable adults, Supporting people, Public Health, including Drug and Alcohol Commissioning, Health and equalities strategies?

Response:

I am glad that you have asked this question because I believe that it is a very important part of the role of the Cabinet Member to make sure that the service's the County Council provides keep the service user in the forefront of their mind. This is done through a variety of forums and boards such as the Older People's Strategic Partnership, Carers Voice, the Learning Disability Partnership Board, the Autism Partnership Board, Making it Real group, Direct Payment user group. On top of this, social care teams feed back experiences from individuals which shapes the direction of services. I have regular meetings with officers monitoring this feedback. Also as I have said in my previous reply to you; over the last few weeks Adult Services have been in regular contact with those individuals or their carers contacted by the initial emergency care planning work for C-19. This identified over 7000 service users and carers who required a range of assistance in developing an emergency plan regarding the loss of care or carer/s and plans to mitigate this loss. From this cohort, a significant number are being called weekly or less regularly depending on

their situation. This is based on the initial risk assessment and their own requirements for contact. These calls are both to ascertain current care and support needs/circumstances, wider concerns which includes safeguarding, shopping and financial welfare. It also allows a space for a service user/carers to speak directly to a social worker and to be advised on care and respite services or receive advice. Another cohort of service users and carers are being contacted regularly both by Adult Services and Day Service providers. These service users are those who attended day care which has been suspended. A similar intervention process is in place via weekly calls or less if not required, to these service users and their carer's. This process is assisted by particular Day Care providers via telephone contact. Other interventions are occurring such as planned conversations/meetings with voluntary sector partners and service user representatives via team managers and more senior management staff. This information is being collated to provide background evidence and direction to assist in the consideration of how Adult Services will work within the new C-19 environment or 'new normal' with our service users and carers

Question from Chrissie Rumsby

I asked this question last month which was not answered 'Emergency plans included no provisions for either food supply or distribution during a crisis. Can the Leader reassure the residents of my division that plans for food sourcing and distribution will continue until the end of this epidemic and that emergency plans for future crisis of all sorts will include providing and distributing food to those who need it?' The response was that learning would be captured but what I want to know is that Norfolk residents can be sure there will be food for them in this and future emergencies. Can I have that answer now please?

Response:

As I said previously in response to your question, public authorities, voluntary and community groups in Norfolk have worked together to put arrangements in place to support Norfolk communities, particularly those who are the most vulnerable. The County Council has also contributed £100,000 to the Community Response Fund to support local charities working hard on the ground to keep vulnerable people safe.

This support for communities will continue as part of our emergency response for as long as it is needed.

For future emergencies, we will continue to put in place emergency arrangements to ensure communities can access the support they need. If there is a need in any future emergency to source and distribute food supplies, we will of course do so. The multi-agency response to Covid-19 demonstrates that we are able to put arrangements like this in place when they are needed.

Question from Cllr George Nobbs

In response to my question last month it was confirmed cabinet members have no role in the work of the NRF. I note and welcome that the government has provided a role for elected members in the oversight of the track, trace and isolate scheme. Does the Leader share my view it is time elected councillors took steps to exercise their responsibility as community leaders supported by the best professional advice so they can be accountable to Norfolk for actions taken in our name?

Response:

To confirm what I said in my previous response, Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) is a multi-agency group made up of senior officers from Norfolk local authorities, emergency services, NHS and other agencies. The NRF brings together all relevant bodies in one place to enable Norfolk's approach and response to be jointly planned, co-ordinated and any risks managed. The NRF is not a legal entity. Any decisions are for individual authorities/agencies to make. It does not replace existing decision making or accountability.

During Covid-19, all decisions have been and will continue to be made within the provision set out in the County Council's Constitution. Details of all decisions continue to be published on the County Council's website in the usual way.

I agree that elected councillors have a role in community leadership. This was the case prior to Covid-19 and has not changed. I know of many councillors who are practicing this leadership on the ground and are working hard to continue to support communities in their division..

Question from Cllr Emma Corlett

The Care Homes plan required by the government is a classic example of acting after the horse has bolted. It exemplifies the vacuum in social care policy and inadequacy of funding. Without a single point of responsibility, the transaction costs and lack of a comprehensive strategy, the care homes plan is another short term distraction from underlying structural incapacity. Given we own NorseCare that is the country's leading care provider, how can the Leader justify putting the quality and reliability of the care so many rely on at risk when an expansion of NorseCare could provide the standards and direct accountability urgently needed while the long term solution is awaited?

Response:

Norfolk County Council will continue to work with the care market as a whole to develop and deliver the services that the people of Norfolk need now and in the future. Norse care is an important part of that market and we already work with them to identify opportunities for growth linked to joint priorities. As an example Norse are involved in a new Extra care development in Acle and I'm sure there will be other developments in the future

Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare

The vouchers scheme for children has been a mess. What steps has the cabinet member for Children's services taken to ensure that children whose families have decided they should not return when schools open more places and all children during the summer holiday, have enough to eat? Parents are confused and need clear and explicit information.

Response:

The voucher system has been led nationally and initially there were some frustrations in terms of delays as the whole country worked with the national provider. Since then it has been our experience that most vouchers have made their way to families in a timely way. Schools have worked hard at ensuring that they order in good time and have supported families in accessing them. As more supermarkets have been added to the national

scheme in the last few weeks the process has been ever more smoothly for families. Schools had the option to continue with their own schemes, and about a quarter of Norfolk schools did so, and they are being reimbursed nationally at the same rate as the national scheme.

The vouchers are for children not attending school, and continue, whilst not all year groups have returned and whilst attendance remains voluntary. The DfE have so far advised that the National Voucher Scheme is not available during the school summer holiday, and the current national guidance refers only to the Easter Break and May Half Term. It is therefore the position currently that schools cannot order vouchers from the end of the school term to cover the holiday period, and this will not change unless the government guidance does so.

Question from Cllr Chris Jones

I am unclear which cabinet member was answering my question last month but it was responded to, not clearly answered. Here it is again 'Will the cabinet ensure proper advice is available to those volunteer groups that continue their work once the emergency passes and will they ensure future emergency planning includes advice that can be issued to volunteers setting up groups to help their community?' The previous response was about advice during the emergency but the question is what happens afterwards.

Response:

To reiterate from my previous response, Officers have been working closely with Voluntary Norfolk to co-ordinate the formal volunteering effort, which extends across the whole county and includes various roles. Officers have also sought to provide the best advice possible to voluntary and community groups.

Outside emergencies, we will continue to work with Voluntary Norfolk, and other community groups. Part of Voluntary Norfolk's core purpose is to work with other organisations and promote the work of the voluntary and community sector, and therefore they are well placed to provide this type of advice.

Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton

Further to my question last month which was only answered by reference to government definition of key workers which I assume is those here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision> what steps does the Leader of the council intend to take and promote to ensure those recognised as critical workers continue to be valued for their work for our community and as part of the economic wellbeing of our county outside the emergency in order that they should not be forgotten and allowed to become overlooked until they are next deemed vital to us?

Response:

Throughout this pandemic, which is still going on, all key workers have played a crucial and incredible role across the whole of Norfolk and will, especially in the care sector, play a vital role in helping us through transition into the next stage of economic recovery.

As we move forward we will continue to support key workers throughout all of Norfolk's communities by providing the employment and training opportunities and infrastructure, whilst encouraging people who want to live and work in Norfolk to be able to. We know there is a lot of work to do, particularly with the care industry, and we will work with our partners to make that happen.

Question from Cllr Colleen Walker

Last month I asked this question which was responded to but not answered 'Will the Cabinet member for Economic growth insist this changes and the care sector now gets the recognition in Norfolk that it deserves as a crucial part of the Norfolk economy?' Has he taken any steps to get the care sector accepted as a key economic driver in the LEP strategy where it is singularly and inexplicably not recognised?

Response:

The impact of the coronavirus on the Care Sector has been significant and I can assure Cllr Walker that the Care Sector will be a key sector focus of the emerging Economic Recovery Plan due to be produced by the end of June.

Question from Cllr Mike Sands

In responding to but not answering my question last month about small shops and small businesses that have supported communities like mine and many other divisions, the cabinet member failed to respond to the invitation to join me in congratulating and thanking them. Would he care to rectify that and instead of rehearsing the general help for available for small business tell me what specific support is being planned for those businesses that have proved to be crucial to communities in Norfolk during the lockdown?

Response:

I would wholeheartedly support Cllr Sands in his praise of the many small and micro businesses that have been a lifeline to local communities across the County. Various of them, because of the excellent response they have made, have seen their business grow and taken on new staff which is encouraging.

NCC is working alongside its partners, which include the Federation of Small Business, to support the emerging needs not only of those business who have provided great service during the Pandemic but those who are looking to restart in the short term. This includes supporting their needs for safe operation due to Social Distancing, any workforce needs they may have and any general business advice they need. We are also working on an Economic Recovery Plan that supports short to medium term needs and looking at what we can do in the longer term to help as many business service this crisis as possible.

Question from Cllr Jess Barnard.

In his response to my question about support for charities last month the cabinet member for adult services referred me to a council web page that only refers to the Norfolk Community Foundation links for help. Given the damage the pandemic has done to the voluntary and community sector on which we have been shown to rely so heavily is the £100k contribution and referring organisations elsewhere the best we can manage to help keep them going?

Response:

The Council's contribution to Norfolk Community Foundation's emergency fund forms part of an impressive £1.2 million received in wider donations, which have been quickly distributed to both grassroots community organisations as well as larger strategic initiatives by some of the larger organisations.

We have engaged with the Voluntary Sector throughout this pandemic and we aim to continue to do so through the Working Together Partnership, which we remain committed to. At the beginning of the pandemic, Norfolk County Council confirmed that organisations working under existing contracts who adapted their delivery and utilised their resources to support our local resilience approach would continue to be paid as if they had continued service delivery as normal. Norfolk County Council value the efforts of all our local VCSE partners in responding to the pandemic challenge.

Question from Cllr Terry Jermy

What work has been commissioned to establish how the long term impact this emergency can be used to influence modal shift away from cars and does he intend to use this opportunity to divert funds from schemes that encourage car use to those that encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking?

Response:

Work is already underway to promote proposals such as cycle lanes or footway widening. Some measures have already been implemented and we will continue to implement measures over the coming weeks.

It is important to gather an understanding of how people have changed their transport habits through the Covid19 pandemic, and how this can be used as basis to develop an informed future strategy. As such a travel survey was launched in early May and promoted through social media and other outlets. This is due to conclude on 7 June. We are also gathering evidence on changes in people's travel patterns more widely and working with businesses and business representatives to understand their needs.

Question from Cllr Danny Douglas.

In response to a question on returning to school last month I was told 'we are working closely with Children's Services and transport operators to ensure the necessary transport can be delivered safely when and where it is needed'. Will the cabinet member give an update and publish the results?

Response:

We continue to support all our school transport operators and we are currently delivering all required school transport within government guidelines for safe transport operation. As numbers of students increase, we have been assured by transport operators that they can respond within the resources that were previously contracted with them."

Question from Cllr David Rowntree

Drug and Alcohol service providers across the UK have reported soaring demand for support and treatment since lockdown began, but in Norfolk frontline workers being expected to do more for less. Does the cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Protection agree that investing properly in drugs and alcohol services now will mean lower costs in the longer term, fewer people being left to live chaotic lives and less impact on other residents from ASB and drug dealing on their streets?

Response:

Here in Norfolk we have not seen an increase in the number of referrals received in the months of March through to May 2020 when compared to the same period last year. Even in lockdown, the service has been able to support new clients needing help and the provider has been working with us to ensure robust plans are in place to best assist those who need help as lockdown eases.

I believe that drug and alcohol treatment and support services have benefits for both individuals struggling with addiction and for our communities as a whole, which is why we continue to invest in these services.