

Cabinet
7 March 2022
Public & Local Member Questions

Agenda item 6	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from Eleanor Laming In 2023 130 zero emission double decker buses will be added to the existing electric bus fleet with the aim of making Coventry the UK's first all-electric bus city. The target is to have 297 zero emission buses by 2025 and funding has been secured.</p> <p>In contrast Norfolk still has no electric buses at all running on its roads. Bids have been made, but delivery of buses is dependent on these being successful and are for lower vehicle numbers.</p> <p>What further actions will NCC take to make Norfolk a zero emission bus county and what target date has been set to achieve this?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The County Council has submitted an application to the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) fund for 15 electric buses to be introduced in Norwich in partnership with First Bus. We hope to hear the outcome of this application before the end of March 2022, which could see these buses in service by March 2024. A successful funding award through ZEBRA provides the opportunity to act as a springboard for further deployment of zero emission buses in Norwich and across Norfolk.</p> <p>We also published the Norfolk Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in 2021, which sets out a joint aspiration between the County Council and all Norfolk-based bus operators to decarbonise the bus fleet by introducing 100 zero emission buses in Norfolk by 2027. Government funding will be required for the additional cost of buying a zero emission bus compared to a modern diesel bus, as zero emission buses are likely to still attract a premium price that cannot be fully recovered through operating cost savings. Funding will also be required for the installation of suitable charging infrastructure (for battery electric buses) or fuelling infrastructure (for hydrogen fuel cell buses). In total, we have asked Government for £21m through the Norfolk BSIP to fund this ambitious zero emission bus programme. Delivery of the Norfolk BSIP will be closely monitored so that appropriate targets can then be set for the remainder of buses in Norfolk to transition to zero emission beyond these initial funding timescales.</p> <p>Through the delivery of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) programme in Greater Norwich, First Bus has also committed to investment of £18m in the delivery of new and refurbished buses in Norwich, as well as the roll-out of next-stop audio and visual announcements on all buses, along with service frequency enhancements. First Bus has made a clear commitment to identify appropriate opportunities to invest these funds in zero emission vehicles where possible.</p> <p>The cost of zero emission buses and supporting infrastructure are the main challenges and there is a strong reliance on government funding to support the transition to zero emission. So far, Government has provided funding to support the delivery of circa 900 zero emission buses out of their target of getting 4,000 zero emission buses in operation by 2025. We remain in close dialogue with all bus operators so that we are in a good position to move forward together in the delivery of zero emission buses when opportunities arise.</p>

6.2	<p>Question from John Martin Please will you tell me how you reconcile the second sentence of the opening paragraph of the Council's published flyer entitled "Paying for your social care after leaving hospital" with paragraph 6.14 of the Government's policy document published on 19 October last entitled "Hospital Discharge and Community Support: Policy and Operating Model.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question.</p> <p>This is quite straightforward, the Government's policy document includes information about how services for people discharged from hospital will be funded. As described in paragraph 6.3, the Government has agreed to fund up to four weeks of care for new or additional needs of an individual on discharge from hospital. This is funded via the national NHS hospital discharge budget, and only available for a time limited period, relating to care delivered up to and including 31 March 2022. Paragraph 6.14 says that from week five, the national hospital discharge budget cannot fund services for people discharged from hospital. This means that after that time, the usual charging arrangements apply, and people may be liable to pay for their care. This is in line with what it set out in the Council's leaflet.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Phil Garnham The residents of Seething have had to endure the unlawful operation and associated traffic of Whites Recycling for 3 years. As a result of the decision of the Planning Committee made on the 4th February 2022 to refuse the retrospective planning application FUL/2019/0031 by Whites Recycling, will Mr Grant now move quickly towards enforcement measures to ensure the current activities being undertaken at Whites recycling site are stopped?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Thank you for your inquiry. Undertaking development without the benefit of planning permission is not an offence, and as the operations has been authorised by the Environment Agency it is not unlawful.</p> <p>However, following the decision by members to refuse the application on highways grounds, the planning service has engaged with the site operator in order to address the alleged breaches of planning control.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Phil Garnham Can he confirm that any enforcement / inspection officers sent to the site, will be representatives of NCC rather than SNDC to ensure that no allegations can be made of conflict of interest overriding enforcement due to the site being owned by South Norfolk Leader, Mr John Fuller?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste As the matters relate to the management of waste, I can confirm that in this case the county council is the relevant planning authority. The officers dealing with this alleged breach of planning control will come from the County's Planning Service.</p>
6.4	<p>Question from Gaye de Leiros Work has started on a new road system which will mean the closure of Thorpe Road</p>

to incoming traffic to the city. Little or no attention was paid to the very deep public concern which was expressed about the increase in traffic that will result, particularly on Rosary Road, St Leonard's Road and Telegraph Lane East. Temporary diversions have shown that these roads are inadequate to serve the more long-term increase in traffic that these changes will bring about. Can you outline what measures you will now introduce to mitigate the impact of increased traffic in these residential areas?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

At present, Riverside Road (inbound) and Thorpe Road (outbound) are closed during the construction work, which will be having a temporary impact on the local road network. There is signage directing drivers to use appropriate diversion routes and advising drivers not to use smaller local roads. The Council has listened carefully to concerns raised about changes in traffic flows and extensive traffic surveys were undertaken in this area ahead of the scheme starting and further surveys are being undertaken both now and more will be undertaken following scheme completion. The roads being monitored include Telegraph Lane East, Rosary Road, Quebec Road, St Leonards Road and St Matthews Road.

It is important to note that the current temporary restrictions on Riverside Road (inbound) and Thorpe Road (outbound) that are influencing traffic flows in this area at the moment, will be removed following completion of the works, leaving the inbound closure of Thorpe Road in place as a permanent arrangement.

We are aware that your local Councillor has been in dialogue with local residents and business, which included a local survey, and we are working with Cllr Price to identify appropriate measures to address local concerns about speeding and rat running. It has always been the intention of the rail station scheme to look at a wider 20mph zone in this area following the completion of the Thorpe Road bus gate, and funding has been set aside to achieve this. Further engagement with local residents will take place prior to any mitigating measures being provided.

Supplementary question from Gaye de Leiros

There was an agreement at the Cabinet meeting September 2020 to introduce a 20-mph limit on Wolfe Road and Quebec Road. Implementation is inexplicably long overdue and public consultation has not even taken place. In the light of the impact of the closure of Thorpe Road can this now be expanded to include, Telegraph Lane East, St Leonard's Road and Rosary Road, together with additional traffic calming measures including speed bumps at key locations?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

We are aware of the impact of Thorpe Road and are working with Cllr Price to identify appropriate measures to address local concerns about speeding and rat running. As previously outlined, it has always been the intention of the rail station scheme to look at a wider 20mph zone in this area following the completion of the Thorpe Road bus gate, and funding has been set aside to achieve this. Wolfe Road, Quebec Road, Telegraph Lane East, St Leonards Road and Rosary Road will be picked up as part of this assessment. Consideration will be given to the most appropriate form of traffic calming measures to introduce.

6.5	<p>Question from Sally Hook Regarding the scoring of a child, how can you possibly quantify a child's needs when you don't know them?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Social workers are fully trained in assessing the needs of children and there are 6 monthly reviews of the assessment. For any children who have been Looked After for a period of time, their needs will be well known through regular updated assessment. The social worker for the child and the supervising social worker will work together to ensure the assessment of need is accurate and the care needs of the child are well understood.</p>
6.6	<p>Question from Lucille Omurcan Is it ok in this day and age to label a young person and this to sit on their records? This is what will happen in the proposal for foster carers pay. Also detriment to young person as they won't get the activities due to finances being dropped- activities are needed for continued therapeutic care for our looked after young people</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The assessment of children's needs using the valuing care tool is work that is routinely undertaken by social workers. It is completed when a new placement is required and reviewed each time there is a Looked After Child Review. The valuing care tool is designed to consider what children need as opposed to focusing on risks or behaviour as was the basis for assessment previously. As such, the records for children will remain exactly as they are now. We would hope that foster carers continue to utilise the full basic maintenance allowance to provide for the children they care for – this is set at a level that ensures children receive what they need.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Lucille Omurcan Have the Norfolk in care council had a voice in this? Usually they are consulted in things that involve them, ultimately this does as it sits on their record.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We really value the input of our In Care Council but we didn't think it would be fair or appropriate to consult young people on what their carers should be paid.</p>
6.7	<p>Question from Darrell Roper The approach of disproportionately affecting level 5s is short sighted...Have you assessed the cost to the NCC of having to pay higher fees to IFAs when a large portion of FCs leave NCC and sign up with them? And in the worse scenario, NCC having to approach IFAs as FCs resign due to the proposed lower allowances</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services NCC has a clear and consistent approach to family-based placements irrespective of whether they are provided by in-house foster carers or Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), including capping fees for foster placements with IFAs to ensure the fees paid to carers are consistent. The approach with IFAs also focuses on ensuring the quality of placements is the same irrespective of whether foster carers are registered with the Norfolk Fostering Service or an IFA.</p>
6.8	<p>Question from Lucy Jones Could the cabinet explain how they will tell children in a way that builds their self</p>

	<p>esteem and self worth rather than re-traumatizes them, that their cooperate parent thinks they are best described standard or complex and the financial implications of this label rather than a unique and loved individual?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The categories for fostering payments are not discussed with children. We share their valuing care assessment with them, but fees paid to foster carers are not something appropriate to talk to children about.</p>
6.9	<p>Question from Rosie Wright Could the council explain why carers who stated in supervision to their supervising social worker that they had lost confidence in the county council were informed that if this was recorded that it was likely the children would be removed from their care?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We are not aware this has been said to any foster carers and would not condone it. If it has, we would strongly urge them to speak to their supervising social worker's manager or the Head of Fostering.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Rosie Wright Does the council accept this is a bullying tactic designed to stop carers speaking out?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Again, this is not something that should ever be said to a foster carer. We would urge the foster carer to speak to a manager so that it can be addressed with the individual social worker.</p>
6.10	<p>Question from Rachel Howard EDP council quote, "Whilst we have a high proportion of foster carers on level five, many of them are caring for children with significant additional needs or are caring for more than one child." Does the council have any statistics to support this, specifically the number of level five carers who are being recognized as caring for those children and young people who would be considered as enhanced or complex given that at the date that on the date this question was submitted scaling for current children placed with carers has not been released?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We do have this data, although it is based on a fixed point in time. The data is from the start of the consultation period, 25th January 2022, which evidences that more than one third (approx. 35%) of Level 5 carers will receive payments based on enhanced or complex needs.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Rachel Howard How does the council intend to ensure the dehumanizing grading of children is done with the child's needs at the heart of the process rather than budgetary needs of childrens services and isn't used as a tool by childrens services to control and penalize carers who advocate for the needs of very vulnerable children in their care but may disagree with social workers as they spend significantly more time with the children in their care.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The social workers for the children, who will complete the valuing care tool, will</p>

	<p>assess accurately and carefully according to the needs of the child. They are not involved in payments to carers and will not be considering this when they complete the assessment. The assessments are overseen by the Team Manager for the child as well as the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), both of whom will be considering the accuracy and needs led nature of the assessment. The IRO is an advocate for the child and would not be factoring in the cost of the placement in forming their professional view as to their best interest.</p>
6.11	<p>Question from Thomas Howard Can the council clarify where the specialist support provision that is being implemented is being recruited for; that it is not people already in role; that it is not social workers who have existing duties being given a training course but not being allocated the time to perform the dual roles and how many new full time employees is this the equivalent of?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We can confirm that the posts are new roles. All recruitment opportunities are shared on our website with existing and new applicants welcomed. These are not roles that require someone to be a qualified social worker.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Thomas Howard How many, or what proportion of children in Norfolk's care will have access to these services given that the proposal document indicates that it is specialists working with CWD and post adoption rather than the majority.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The Supporting Resilience Team will be available to all foster carers when support is needed. It is the Occupational Therapist Assistant Practitioner who will in the main work with Children with Disabilities. The Post Adoption Support Team is a wholly separate team in another part of the service and not in scope within the considerations for support to foster carers.</p>
6.12	<p>Question from Sharon Donoghue Would the councillors like to apologise to the most vulnerable children in Norfolk for the distress and anxiety this consultation has caused?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We do not believe that children have been distressed as a result of the proposals as we have urged foster carers not to discuss this with the children they look after as it would be inappropriate to do so. We would want to know if that is the case so support could be offered to the child as required.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Sharon Donoghue Will the council apologise for the additional stress to the bereaved friends and families of two families who were end of life when this process was brought in?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The proposals were not designed to cause additional stress to any foster carers. We apologise if this has caused additional stress to the families you speak of and would welcome these instances being highlighted with the Head of Fostering who will respond to them directly to offer support and condolences.</p>

6.13	<p>Question from Barbara Dickins Can the Council explain which is more important – matching a young person to the most suitable carers, who able to meet their needs, or adding another young person to a fostering family because they have a spare bed? If matching is the most important factor, then the new pay structure is pointless. It is possible to match a child without giving them a score. If it is adding a child to fill a vacancy, rather than it being the best match, why has matching suddenly been discarded? Matching is considered the most important factor in preventing family breakdown.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Matching remains the highest priority. All foster carers have their own valuing care score which supports matching. The fostering allowances proposal is not linked to matching in any way, it is a way of determining the fee paid only.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Barbara Dickins Does Council agree that carers are skilled and experienced people, who do exceptionally challenging work and that they deserve to be rewarded for this, not expected to take a cut in income? After many years of service this makes many carers feel completely devalued.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Foster carers are highly valued and provide high quality care and support to many of Norfolk’s Looked After Children. We very much appreciate the work that they do and want them paid fairly. At the moment, we know that some carers who look after children with the greatest needs are not being paid at the higher levels. We also want to work with carers so that they don’t see a reduction in allowances. Our Level 5 carers are highly skilled and can be supported to care for children with additional and/or complex needs or take additional placements they have been approved for to avoid any reduction in income.</p>
6.14	<p>Question from Jason Donoghue Could the committee explain why the consultation started on 17th January, but it was not shared with carers until 26th January?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services It is not clear where the date of 17th January came from. The proposal was shared with the Fostering Advisory Partnership on 18th January to seek their views, which were taken into account when writing the engagement document and sent on 25th January 2022.</p>
6.15	<p>Question from Andy Oakley Could the committee explain why carers were asked to discuss the consultation with their support social workers and their support managers, but these practitioners had no information on the consultation and could not give information on how the consultation would impact families?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The consultation document and the proposal were shared with the entire service, both verbally in a whole service meeting prior to the consultation commencing, and then in writing when the consultation document was shared with foster carers on 25th January 2022.</p>

	<p>Supplementary question from Andy Oakley Could the council explain why the consultation was sent out with no co-production with carers, or their supporting network, who understand the role and needs of the children best?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The idea of changes to the accreditation matrix and related fees was raised with the task and finish subgroup of the Fostering Advisory Partnership, chaired and attended by foster carers, throughout 2021. However, the steer from the group, captured in the meeting minutes, was that this should be a task for Children's Services as a department, rather than the group. We therefore worked up a proposal for comment by carers.</p>
6.16	<p>Question from Laura Oakley Can the council state how much money they will be saving by asking carers to complete life story work with children, this was previously seen a professional role undertaken by specific social work teams?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services All within a child's network are responsible for supporting children to understand their life story, and it is the expectation that social workers and other professionals support the conversation. However, children themselves told us they would like to complete at least some of their life story work with their foster carers, and the network will be supported in doing so by the new Support for Success service.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Laura Oakley Can the council clarify where the 'specialist support provision' is being recruited from? And that it is not people already in role; and that is it not social workers who have existing duties being given a training course but not being allocated capacity to perform the dual roles.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see response given to first question at 6.11</p>
6.17	<p>Question from Yvonne Green How many foster carers does the council expect to lose due to these changes and do they have a plan for the shortfall?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We do not expect to see many foster carers leave us unless that was already their plan, as both the support and remuneration they receive will be highly competitive. However, we have put in place an effective approach with Independent Fostering Agencies, and we are renewing our own recruitment strategy to ensure we have sufficient foster carers.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Yvonne Green Is the recruitment and training of replacement carers built into the £700,000.00 increase in budget?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services No, the £700,000 is only the additional payments we will be making to the foster carers. The recruitment and training budget is separate from this.</p>

6.18	<p>Question from Ben Foster If this new structure is implemented many carers will need to return to paid employment so their houses are not repossessed and they can pay utility bills, in order to carry on fostering. Can the council outline their plan to offer training, statutory meetings and family time supervised by carers out of working hours, Can the council further state that they will pay for child care so carers can attend these meetings that currently happen in school hours?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services There is currently no policy preventing foster carers from working in addition to being foster carers, and we know many foster carers do work as well as foster children. Any child care arrangements would need to be approved by the child’s social worker and would need to be funded by the carer, unless agreed based on individual circumstances of the carer and child.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Ben Foster Can the council explain why they are investing 50 million pounds into private profit-making independent fostering agencies but are removing £100 per week from their own experienced carers?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services We are not investing any money in Independent Fostering Agencies. The contract referred to is a re-tendering process for Independent Fostering Agencies, which has a value of approximately a fifth of that stated. The re-tendering process is being completed to ensure that we have the same payments and expectations for both In-House and IFA carers.</p>
6.19	<p>Question from Rosie Smith The consultation states that placements are likely to breakdown when the child reaches 14. Can the council explain the finding of any audit or Independent research they have completed in the last 3 years into why these Norfolk placements have broken down and therefore why they think they won’t breakdown in the future when children receive a voucher for a one off day out as described in the proposal?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The factors identified in respect of placements breaking down are wide ranging, relating to earlier planning, better training and support for carers and recognition of those carers who are caring for adolescents. As such, we have implemented a number of new policies to support placement stability for this cohort. This includes the introduction of the Placement Planning Review Meetings; new, more in-depth support and training for foster carers; training for supervising social workers; and the recognition scheme. These are all in addition to the existing policies, such as Signs of Stability Meetings and Placement Reflection and Learning Meetings. The recognition scheme is described in full in the paper to Cabinet, which comprises of a voucher up to £100 for a family activity 3 months after the placement starts (or 3 months after a young person reaches their 14th birthday), as well as annual payments of £500 for those who continue to care for children aged 14 and over.</p>
6.20	<p>Question from Susan Mayhew Can the council explain why they are investing 50 million pounds into private profit-making independent fostering agencies but are removing £100 per week from their own experienced carers?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see the response given to the supplementary question at 6.18</p>
6.21	<p>Question from Lisa Mackenzie Can the council explain if the consultation is not about saving money then why is it going to be 18 months before level 3 kinship carers will be receiving an enhanced package?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Whilst it is something that was considered, recommending that those who will receive an increase in payments do so from April 2022, would incur substantial additional costs (not savings) of approx. £2,250,000. This is because the payments to Level 5 carers are being protected for 18 months.</p>
6.22	<p>Question from Jo Hacon Could the council explain why the Norfolk in care council were not aware of this consultation over a week after it opened?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see the response given to the supplementary question at 6.6</p>
6.23	<p>Question from Elizabeth Martin Can the council state exactly what they are doing to recruit carers to offer respite to other families to ensure carers do not suffer compassion fatigue and risk placement breakdown. Carers have been told if they asked for respite support so they can say goodbye to a terminally ill family member the placement would be brought to an end. This would mean children who have lived with families for over 3 years losing their home, family and move school for the sake of a few days help. Can the council explain why as a corporate parent this could ever be acceptable practice or in the best interests of the child?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We have a recruitment strategy for foster carers which we continue to review and update to maximise efficacy. We are unaware of the individual situation you raise but would urge you to raise this with the Head of Fostering so that it can be properly investigated.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Elizabeth Martin Does the council accept that with the significant increases in cost of living and an equally significant reduction in allowances children will be put at detriment despite Norfolk having a duty of care for them?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The amount paid to foster carers in respect of meeting the needs of the children in their care (basic maintenance allowance) has been uprated for some children (those aged 0 – 4 and 11 – 15) and remains the same for those aged 5-10 and 16/17. The expectation is that foster carers use the basic maintenance allowance to meet the needs of the children in their care. We want to offer foster carers choice regarding the children they look after and will be supporting them to develop their ability to care for children with additional needs.</p>

6.24	<p>Question from Kathy Burnett Does the council accept that most children in care have their needs met using at least some of the foster carers professional fee and as such cutting that element significantly means that Norfolk is directly putting the children it has a duty of care for at detriment?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services It is the decision of foster carers how they use the 'fee' element of the allowances paid to them.</p>
6.25	<p>Question from Paul Hammond Can the council explain what new therapeutic support will be in place for children? Will this be similar to the disastrous support for success team which has been found to delay referrals to CAMHS by gatekeeping social workers ability to make referrals. The impact of this has caused more distress to children and stopping CAMHS from being able to support children at an early intervention level, leaving children to deteriorate to a point that they need crisis intervention.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Support for Success has been widely seen as a positive and helpful service, with evidence suggesting it is promoting positive outcomes for children. Delays in CAMHS support are unrelated to Support for Success. The Supporting Resilience Service however is wholly for supporting foster carers in their role and not linked to CAMHS or the emotional wellbeing of children.</p>
6.26	<p>Question from Elisa Hammond Can the council state what they are doing to recruit carers to offer respite to other families to ensure carers don't suffer compassion fatigue and risk placement breakdown. We have numerous examples of carers who were told if they requested respite support so they can say goodbye to a terminally ill family member the placement would be ended. This would mean children who have lived with families for over 3-years would lose their home, family and probably have to move school for the sake of a few days help. Can the council explain why as corporate parent this could ever be acceptable practice or in the best interests of children?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see response given to first question at 6.23</p>
6.27	<p>Question from Debbie Burrell NCC are quoted in the Eastern Daily Press on 23rd February 2022 as saying that level five carers will also have the choice to take on additional children or children with greater needs, which would also lead to an increase in payments. Can the council explain why they are suggesting that carers end existing placements and cause more trauma to children so they can get more money taking on 'children with greater needs'? How does this align with the council's other statements that they are not putting a price on a child's head or that the proposal will stop placements breaking down?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services This was not in any way a suggestion for carers to end existing placements, but a statement about their choice and opportunity moving forward. We remain committed to supporting carers who will experience genuine financial hardship on a case-by-</p>

	<p>case basis.</p>
<p>6.28</p>	<p>Question from Martin Dickins Can I ask council if they have considered how a young person might feel when they become eighteen years old and gain access to their records? They will be able to read their scores, agreed at statutory reviews, held twice a year. These amount to someone making a subjective judgement about them as they grow up, and recording this score. I wonder how many cabinet members would like that. Do council accept reading their life story is already likely to be a traumatic experience for a young person.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Young people are aware that their valuing care assessment is routinely updated for and at their review as it is part of the Combined Assessment and Progress Report submitted to the meeting. This has been the case since 2019.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Martin Dickins Does council agree that scoring a child at their review is not the best way to ascertain a foster carer's pay? The child and their birth family are often present at reviews. A young person's meeting should be focused on the child's wishes and feelings and not become a foster carer's pay review.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Valuing care assessments are routine assessments completed when a placement is required for a child and updated before every Looked After Child Review.</p>
<p>6.29</p>	<p>Question from Jackie Venables Do you know how much money was spent on external consultation with Impower and why children services didn't use their own experienced, knowledgeable members of staff or foster carers, as lots of the staff do not know anything about this?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services IMPOWER has not been directly involved in valuing care in Norfolk since it was established as a core way of working in 2019. The assessment tool is well embedded in practice and continues to be a highly effective way of understanding the care needs of children in care.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Jackie Venables Have the In Care Council members been consulted?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services In consultation with the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, participation of and consultation with children and young people regarding what foster carers should be paid was deemed inappropriate</p>
<p>6.30</p>	<p>Question from Annette Clarke Can the council clarify why the retention, experience and skills of a social worker are worth paying for via golden handshakes amounting to £2,500, relocation payoff upto £10,000 and a loyalty payment paid in stages over three years totaling £12,000.... yet foster carers should not have their skills, experience and loyalty recognized and in fact should be financially penalized for those same values?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The recruitment and retention of social workers is a separate issue from the payments we make to foster carers and are only made specifically to those in the Family Assessment and Safeguarding Teams due to the ongoing challenges with recruitment and retention in that area, mirroring a national picture.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Annette Clarke Clarify why Norfolk is budgeting above £50m for IFA's which undoubtedly includes profit margin for those agencies but will not fairly recognise that Norfolk's own inhouse carers care for more children than IFA's for a fraction of cost even at higher (more appropriate) allowances. How can Norfolk justify cutting their own carers allowances when this will cause many to move to IFA's costing more to fund the same people to care for the same placements?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services We are not budgeting £50m for Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). The amount paid to IFAs is substantially less - approximately a fifth of that stated - and it is expected to reduce over the next 3 years as advised within the paper to Cabinet. This reduction is expected due to the same principles being applied to IFA placements as those to in-house foster placements</p>
6.31	<p>Question from Beccy Emptage Does the council accept that most children in care have their needs met using at least some of the foster carers professional fee and as such cutting that element significantly means that Norfolk is directly putting the children it has a duty of care for at detriment?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The amount paid to foster carers in respect of meeting the needs of the children in their care (basic maintenance allowance) has been uprated for some children (those aged 0 – 4 and 11 – 15) and remains the same for those aged 5-10 and 16/17. The expectation is that foster carers use the basic maintenance allowance to meet the needs of the children in their care. It is the decision of foster carers how they use the ‘fee’ element of the allowances paid to them.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Beccy Emptage Does the reduction/levelling of fees take into account the mandatory savings or will carers be expected to pay this too on the reduced fee?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The mandatory savings should be taken from the basic maintenance allowance.</p>
6.32	<p>Question from Leanne Roper Does the council accept that losing over 100 caring households in a year (450 reduced to 352) is a significant reduction in carers prepared to work for the council?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services We are unaware of the numbers quoted within this question. We currently have 368 fostering households. The number of fostering households remains relatively static, with only small changes from year to year. Whilst we have 368 fostering households now, in March 2021 we had 358 and in March 2020 we had 378.</p>

6.33	<p>Question from Mark Emptage Can the council state exactly what they are doing to recruit carers for respite, to ensure carers do not suffer compassion fatigue and risk placement breakdown? We have numerous examples of carers who were told if they asked for respite support so that they can say goodbye to a terminally ill family member the placement would be brought to an end. To be very clear this would mean children who have lived with families for up to and over three years would lose their home, family and probably have to move school for the sake of a few days help.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see response given to first question at 6.23</p> <p>Supplementary question from Mark Emptage Can the council explain why as a corporate parent this could ever be acceptable practice or in the best interests of the child?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see response given to first question at 6.23</p>
6.34	<p>Question from Michael Jones Could the officer responsible explain what plans are in place to apologise and mend relationships with experienced carers following this damaging consultation or has the numbers of experienced and dedicated carers who will have to make the heartbreaking decision to leave the profession been written off in order to save face for the council and the assistant director just to get the proposal through?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We hope that no foster carers will leave Norfolk Fostering Service as we remain dedicated to supporting them in continuing to provide excellent care to children in Norfolk. We want to continue to engage and work with carers and have offered to meet individually with those who want to discuss the proposals</p> <p>Supplementary question from Michael Jones Could the officer state exactly how much of the £700, 000.00 investment will be wasted on recruiting new carers urgently, rather than valuing the committed service current carers provide and how they can justify the additional damage this will cause to the already vulnerable young people in the care of the council as their corporate parents ?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The £700,000 represents the increased allowances paid to foster carers only. We have a separate budget to support our recruitment strategy for foster carers.</p>
6.35	<p>Question from Sarah Butterfield Quote from Communitycare.co.uk 25/02/2022. Article- Call for 'serious reform' to reduce number of children placed out of area. "To address this, the APPG called for a national recruitment, skills and retention strategy for the workforce, including foster carers, to tackle current shortages, reduce turnover and improve career progression."</p> <p>How does Norfolk feel it's transformation plans reflect the strategy of the APPG who are looking at the best needs of looked after children in this context?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The transformation of Norfolk Fostering Service and the proposal in respect of fostering allowances are part of a wider Norfolk strategy to support children to being placed in family based care close to their families and communities.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Sarah Butterfield Do the new proposed allowances include holiday, birthday and Christmas elements or will these be paid separately or alternatively stopped completely?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services These will continue to be paid as they are now, with no changes proposed.</p>
6.36	<p>Question from Julie Pyatt Does the Council accept that losing over 100 foster caring Norfolk households in the last year (450 reduced to 352) is haemorrhaging carers prepared to work for the council and this will have a detrimental impact in matching carers who have the right skills and experience to care for children coming into care, furthermore this will lead to more frequent moves for children which is documented to be detrimental to children's future outcomes?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We are unaware of the numbers quoted within this question. We currently have 368 fostering households. We are aware that the number of fostering households remains relatively static, with only small changes from year to year. Whilst we have 368 fostering households now, in March 2021 we had 358 and in March 2020 we had 378.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Julie Pyatt Is this the reason that advertising for new carers has been changed to include the term "urgently needed" in the advertising description for new carers, would it not be a better option for the council to offer carers a co-produced and balanced proposal which is better in order to encourage them to stay thereby allowing Norfolk children to be cared for by experienced carers rather than new inexperienced ones?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We already know that we need more foster carers over the coming years due to the age profile of our current fostering household cohort. We also know that more children nationally are in care (15% increase), and as such, we are seeking to recruit more foster carers and continue to review our strategy for recruitment.</p>
6.37	<p>Question from Sarah Mayes Can the council explain if the consultation is not about saving money then why is it going to be 18 months before level 3 kinship carers will be receiving an enhanced package? I am in Norfolk</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Whilst it is something that was considered, recommending that those who will receive an increase in payments do so from April 2022, would incur substantial additional costs (not savings) of approx. £2,250,000. This is because the payments to Level 5 carers are being protected for 18 months.</p>

	<p>Supplementary question from Sarah Mayes Does the council accept that increasing the number of children in a foster family due to a child being labeled as "standard" can reduce stability and increase placement breakdowns?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The assessment of need for each child is completed individually, considering only that child. Matching is also considered on an individual basis to support stability of the placement. Additional support will be available to any foster carer experiencing challenges that may lead to breakdown of placement, and will be fully explored, including early planning via the Placement Planning Review and Signs of Stability meetings. Additional support is available should there be any concerns regarding stability from the Support for Success and Supporting Resilience services, both of which have clinical oversight.</p>
6.38	<p>Question from Susan Madden In view of the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on children in care and care leavers recommendations on children being placed within 20 miles of home, continuity of placements/reduction in placement moves, recruitment and retention of the workforce including foster carers how do you the council members as corporate parents plan to implement suggestions when the current proposals are not valuing the expertise and experience of Norfolk LA foster carers and appears to encourage them to either leave the profession (resulting in placement breakdowns) or move to agencies at an increased cost to NCC ?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We very much value the care provided by Norfolk foster carers. We aim to always place a child within 20 miles from home when it is in the child's best interests. However, this does not always necessarily mean a placement in the county of Norfolk, as it depends on where the parents live. As we know, some living in the West and East of the county would be closer to Suffolk or Cambridgeshire/Lincolnshire, and others no longer live in Norfolk.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Susan Madden Given that Ofsted will not award good or outstanding marks to any council that is not completing high standard work on life story work for looked after children why are you changing from life story work being completed by fully trained social workers to foster carers?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see response given to first question at 6.16</p>
6.39	<p>Question from David Hughes Surely it is in the best interest of the child to have stable placements. These require a stable home, which in turn require a stable income, linked to inflation. Therefore how can the Council justify the proposed continual uncertainty for carers of their fostering income, particularly using a tool which by their own admission (recent NCC-sponsored article in "Community Care") can give quite different results from one social worker's assessment to another's?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The purpose of the 6 monthly review is to consider the needs of the child and how</p>

	<p>they impact on the placement as well as the support that is needed. We anticipate that in the main, needs will increase. However, we will closely monitor the prevalence of decreasing need and impact on carers and make adjustments accordingly. Social workers are skilled in completing assessments for children and the valuing care tool has been embedded in practice for the past three years. There is significant oversight of the valuing care assessment from professionals within the child's network to ensure that the assessment is accurate.</p>
6.40	<p>Question from Emma Stannard The council is quoted as saying "other level 5 carers will also have the choice to take on additional children or children with greater needs, which would also lead to an increase in payments." Is the council encouraging carers to end placements, to take on more complex children, so as not to be at financial detriment?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services This was not in any way a suggestion for carers to end existing placements, but a statement about their choice and opportunity moving forward. We remain committed to supporting carers who will experience genuine financial hardship on a case-by-case basis.</p>
6.41	<p>Question from Clare Gasson NCC are quoted in the Eastern Daily Press on 23rd February 2022, as saying that level five carers will also have the choice to take on additional children or children with greater needs, which would also lead to an increase in payments. Can the council explain why they are suggesting that carers end existing placements and cause more trauma to children so they can get more money taking on "children with greater needs"?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Please see response given to question at 6.40</p> <p>Supplementary question from Clare Gasson How does this align with the council's other statements that they are not putting a price on a child's head, or that the proposal will stop placements breaking down?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We are not encouraging carers to give notice on existing placements. The fees paid to carers are focused on the needs of the child and the impact of those needs on foster carers who are looking after them</p>
6.42	<p>Question from Martyn Stannard How has the £700,000 invested into fostering been calculated? Does it include the recruitment and retainment packages for social workers? If the investment includes fostering allowances, how has this been calculated, when at the date this question is submitted, NCC has not yet scaled the children in its care, to establish what level of care each child fits within?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The £700,000 represents the increased allowances paid to foster carers only. We have a separate budget to support our recruitment strategy for foster carers. The calculations are included in the proposal to Cabinet and can be accessed on the norfolk.gov.uk website. All children in care have a valuing care assessment as one is</p>

	required prior to a child being placed in care.
6.43	<p>Question from Roni Kingston-miles Has the council taken into consideration the impact this is going to have on children and young people, when 82% of their carers are level 5 and this decrease in the allowance's means that we aren't going to be able to support these young people in the way that they deserve to be. Many fostering families have children of their own and to give experiences to the young people that they have missed out on, involves a family trip out, which we won't have the money to do. Basic things like going to the cinema, swimming.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Currently, 73% of foster carers are level 5 carers. We pay a basic maintenance allowance for children and would expect that this is used in its entirety to meet the needs of the child in placement.</p>
6.44	<p>Question from Chris Smith The consultation states that placements are likely to break down when the child reaches 14. Can the council explain the finding of any audit or independent research they have completed in the 3 years into why these Norfolk placements have broken down and therefore why they think they won't breakdown in the future when children receive a voucher for a one off day out as described in the consultation?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The factors identified in respect of placements breaking down are wide ranging, relating to earlier planning, better training and support for carers and recognition of those carers who are caring for adolescents. As such, we have implemented a number of new policies to support placement stability for this cohort. This includes the introduction of the Placement Planning Review Meetings; new, more in-depth support and training for foster carers; training for supervising social workers; and the recognition scheme. These are all in addition to the existing policies, such as Signs of Stability Meetings and Placement Reflection and Learning Meetings. The recognition scheme is described in full in the paper to Cabinet, which comprises of a voucher up to £100 for a family activity 3 months after the placement starts (or 3 months after a young person reaches their 14th birthday), as well as annual payments of £500 for those who continue to care for children aged 14 and over.</p>
6.45	<p>Question from Desiree Pennington As a foster carer, my relationship with social workers is characterised by open communication around the child. The proposal changes this relationship, as the social workers become an integral part of the financial machinery. This will create resentment when a foster carer's own assessment of their child's banding differs with their social worker's assessment. What research evidence do you have that the resulting tension will not lead to more broken placements rather than the optimistic reliance on foster carer goodwill cited at Para 9.3?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The proposal will be reliant on the open communication with social workers that you refer to. This approach will be needed to ensure that the scoring is reflective of the needs of the child, and both the child's social worker and the supervising social worker will work with the foster carer around the scoring. We know that both social workers and the foster carers will focus on the best interests of the young person,</p>

	<p>and we hope that this will take precedence over any resentment.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Desiree Pennington Building on the theme of goodwill, your proposal states that foster carers are driven by goodwill, and not motivated by financial reward. What research evidence, therefore, leads you to believe that changing the remuneration structure will unlock un-used fostering placement bedrooms, when the fostering household has decided that their limit has been reached?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The role of the supervising social worker will be to support foster carers to consider their situation where they are approved for more placements than they currently have. Where foster carers are of the view that they do not want to offer placements according to their approval, the matter will be addressed within their annual review via Panel. We have reviewed the annual reviews for foster carers over the past year and we have seen a number of foster carers respond to this reviewing process in this matter.</p>
6.46	<p>Question from Samantha Adcock Can you explain why some foster carers are being told another placement is not possible along their current foster child placement due to their needs, but then the current child is classed as a standard placement?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services It is not possible to discuss individual cases, however, where this is the case, we would urge you to speak to your supervising social worker and/or their manager to establish what the reasons are. This will ensure that there is an open conversation, and any financial implications can be discussed too.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Samantha Adcock This would then mean a lower payment to foster carers or possibly meaning a breakdown in that current placement- how is that right?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services It is not possible to discuss individual circumstances. Sometimes there is a request that children have time to settle in placement before another child is matched, or sometimes it is due to the needs of the child a placement is being sought for. Similarly, it can be due to the specific skill set of that carer. However, where there is a genuine need for a child to remain the only child in placement, the fostering service will consider the financial implications of this.</p>
6.47	<p>Question from Dawn Prideaux Can the council account, for why they are intending to reduce the child's maintenance for 5-10 year olds and 16-18 year olds in this proposal?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services This is not a reduction of basic maintenance allowance (BMA) for those age groups. We have extended the BMA to include children aged 0-4 and 11-15 respectively.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Dawn Prideaux Does the council accept that even with more than one child in a carers home, a level five carer will still be at a financial loss compared to before the transformation?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services This will depend on the assessed needs of the children in placement.</p>
6.48	<p>Question from Natasha Potter The papers submitted to cabinet state that the allowances are equivalent to a salary of 27kpa for a single "standard" child under 10. Normally a salary can be spent on whatever the person who earned it sees fit. The council appears to have included the child maintenance element in what it called the equivalent of a 27kpa salary. does the council understand that the child maintenance element has to be spent on certain thing which are dictated to us; and that the fee element is equivalent to £11,900 per annum (gross) in a normal role which, I think, the council has to agree is substantially differently to the proposals claim.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The financial statement within the Cabinet paper that is referred to was designed to explain the impact of the tax and National Insurance relief.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Natasha Potter Proposal documents state: 75% of children will be "standard", 20% will be "enhanced" and 5% will be "complex" no complex will be under 11yrs old. Can the council accept that it's impossible to know the needs of children coming into care and that to fit these proposed figures and budgets it's highly likely that children will be inaccurately scaled to fit within budget rather than focusing on the needs of the child and good matching?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The paper sets out that there is only one allowance paid to carers irrespective of the age of the child, not that there are no children under the age of 11 with complex needs</p>
6.49	<p>Question from Francis Pennington Para 3.2.6 in the proposal indicates a change in fee from £27,832 to £22,100. Once we strip out the basic maintenance allowance for the child - (approx. £10,000 per year), the skills payment for a foster carer reduces from £17,832 to £12,100. A 32% reduction, which is to be considered every six months. This is a huge change in income. It is also a perverse incentive for foster carers whose therapeutic dedication has helped achieve the outcome. Payment could increase but decreases matter more to household budgets. What research evidence, therefore, is there that "we will see an increase in the number of potential foster carers coming forward?" Para 9.2</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services This statement is based on the payments we are proposing for foster carers who join Norfolk Fostering Service. We know that we will be one of the highest paying Local Authorities, both in terms of our minimum and maximum payments, and is competitive with many Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). This was established through researching fostering allowances paid by other Local Authorities and IFAs.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Francis Pennington Does the Cabinet believe that the foster carer fee of £12,000 - approx £250/week - which will apply to 75% of the children in care - adequately reflects the skills, knowledge and attitude required by Norfolk foster carers?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The fostering allowances set within the proposal are designed to be competitive when compared with other Local Authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies.</p>
6.50	<p>Question from Hannah Roach The proposal document shows improved figures for allowances after feedback but the proposal does not recommend the improved figures to be approved. Can the council clarify why the stability of placements and the retention of carers is so worthless that the improved offer would not cost out or be recommended given that the proposal itself states that this improved figure would make the council comparable to the highest paying IFA's, surely this is the minimum allowance to ensure that carers transfer from IFA's rather than to them?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services The cost of the increases suggested are prohibitive in these challenging financial times and it has not been possible to mitigate within the Children's Services budget the additional £0.5m it would cost each year. However, the increase in allowances paid to children with additional needs (Enhanced) has been recommended so that it matches the current Level 5 accreditation.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Hannah Roach The documents submitted say that the council will support carers facing financial hardship with advice on claiming benefits. Does this mean that the council openly admits that it is forcing carers, and by default, children in care into poverty to save money on their budgets?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We said that those carers who are unable to increase their income due to personal circumstances would be supported, both in terms of available universal payments and in terms of financial support from the Local Authority.</p>
6.51	<p>Question from Sean Collins The council has claimed the WLR will reduce CO2 emission by 450,000 tCO2, (7,500 tCO2 per year). It does not include the CO2 emissions caused by the construction of the road, the loss of natural carbon capture (destruction on the woodlands) or the increased road usage. The NDR had caused an increase in CO2.</p> <p>It is claimed that it will increase and improve natural habitats and biodiversity. Building a road through a diversity rich natural habitat will clearly not do that. The Council have to mitigate the vast amount of ecological destruction that will be caused by this road.</p> <p>Will the council stop spreading these falsehoods.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The June 2021 Cabinet report set out details that confirmed the relevant guidance in relation to carbon calculation is being followed for the project. That report also set out that "Significant levels of planting, included as part of the project's environmental mitigation and enhancement aims, will also help to offset carbon emissions. Overall, when considering both construction and operation, it is anticipated the Norwich Western Link will be beneficial in achieving reductions in carbon emissions, again</p>

	<p>supporting national and regional policy. Details will be provided in the Environmental Statement submitted as part of the planning application.”</p> <p>The Council has been very clear that it is taking its environmental responsibilities seriously and the principle of achieving Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on all applicable habitats was adopted some time ago for the Norwich Western Link project. BNG has now also been included within the Environment Act 2021. Government metrics developed by Defra will be followed to ensure the project meets the targets set out within the new Act for all applicable habitats.</p> <p>Details were provided in the June 2021 Cabinet report, which also set out that “The impacts of the NWL on biodiversity and climate, along with other environmental topics, will be robustly assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment. Surveys are being carried out to establish a robust baseline and the Contractor’s design will be used to inform the assessment of likely scheme impacts. The findings of the assessment will be reported in the Environmental Statement submitted as part of the planning application and will be subject to public scrutiny as part of the planning application process.”</p> <p>There are no grounds to assume that building the NDR has led to emissions increase. Government figures published last year show carbon emissions from transport at a district level between 2005 and 2019. There is no data relating to individual roads. From this dataset, it is not possible to say with any degree of certainty that the changes in Broadland or elsewhere are due to the opening of the NDR or due to other factors.</p> <p>There are no falsehoods; the Norwich Western Link is being developed based on evidence and following all applicable guidance, which will be able to be reviewed and tested through the forthcoming planning process.</p>
6.52	<p>Question from Alex Catt</p> <p>Following the news that Angel Road Junior School is to be permanently closed and both schools are to be housed on the Infant School site by September 2022, there has been public outcry about the future of the junior school building and a lack of confidence in plans for investment in the infant school site. Pupils, parents and residents are seeking clarity and information. Will the cabinet member explain the process and rationale behind the decision to accommodate both schools on a single site?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services:</p> <p>Angel Road Infant and Junior school transferred from being maintained schools by the Local Authority to become Academies, four years ago, in April 2018. As a result the Trust received any Capital funding to support the school buildings and the Local Authority did not. Up until then the school had been part of the Local Authority Building Maintenance Programme. Academy Trusts take over the responsibility for this maintenance and liaise directly with the Education Schools Funding Agency for their Capital funding. We have worked closely to support the Chief Executive Officer of the Trust in her efforts to resolve the buildings issues for the Junior School, with the relevant national bodies. The decision, to move both schools to the one site is the Academy Trust decision, which we understand and support.</p> <p>Most importantly Angel Road Junior has not closed. The school is being moved to</p>

the Infant School site. To understand further the rationale for this decision it will be necessary for the school community to ask the Academy Trust, if it has not yet been made clear. The Local Authority has no role in the process or decision making for Academies in this context. As Cabinet Member I have taken a personal interest and am reassured that the decisions taken by the Trust will continue to secure the good education for children at Angel Road Junior School.

Supplementary question from Alex Catt

Given the lack of confidence in plans for the infant school and the outcry about the future of the junior school site, will the cabinet member commit to opening a community consultation on the future of the junior school site and inform local parents of the steps being taken to make up for the deterioration in the educational experience of junior school children?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

We will carefully consider the opportunities for future use of this site, considering the quality of the buildings, location and need for education provision. We recognise the strong community interest. We believe Evolution Academy Trust are pro-actively sharing their plans for the future of both schools with stakeholders. If local parents are concerned about the quality of the education of pupils, then this should be raised with the school leadership team. The staff remain the same, they are located in different classrooms. I know from senior officers they remain totally committed to providing a high- quality education to all the children in Angel Road Junior School.

6.53

Question from Caroline Sykes

As a parent of a disabled child affected by Norfolk County Council's immoral policy to halve her speech therapy, despite children and young people with SEND having been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, I'm shocked by the excuse given to the press that the policy "was always intended as a short-term plan...." This council should not be advocating unlawful policies, particularly against those children with the most need.

Why did Norfolk County Council choose to quietly implement this unlawful policy without informing families rather than investing more funding to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic as other councils have done, in order to address the waiting list?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The decision to reduce provision for speech therapy for a period of time was taken with the overall aim of meeting the needs of the largest number of children possible. We agreed that it was morally right to address the backlog of cases and so we took a pragmatic decision to ensure as many children and young people could benefit from speech and language therapy as possible, as soon as possible. The decision was made as a result of the shortage of therapists available nationally and locally, compared to the significant number of children awaiting assessment and support, and for no other reason.

The reference to a 'short term' plan to address those waiting for provision, was made in reference to the two-term arrangement within a 5-year contract with the provider.

It was by no means an excuse, but an explanation of the decision that was taken on moral grounds to speed up more children's access to assessment and support. Had we been able to do so in any other way, we would not have taken this decision. We

	<p>saw within one term of this short-term approach a halving of the list of those waiting. Clearly following the challenge from those families who have been in receipt of this service to date we have not been able to continue with that strategy and the shortage of therapists remains locally and nationally.</p> <p>We did inform parent/carer groups and schools regarding this plan, and parents as individual children whose programme of support was temporarily affected to enable more children to be assessed. We published the information on relevant websites having made the decision with the best interest of many children in mind. We had been transparent and in no way were we trying to do this 'quietly'. The fact that we had published this plan led to the legal challenge recently reported.</p>
6.54	<p>Question from Dennis English</p> <p>In January last year, the cost of the Norwich Western Link was £153million. Within months, the cost shot up to £196million. The delay to the project caused by the realignment will cause more cost increases. At what point does this road become too expensive to proceed with?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The Cabinet report sets out the importance of the Norwich Western Link and the benefits it will provide. It also sets out that work is continuing and further details relating to the programme and budget are planned to be reported to Cabinet in June 2022.</p> <p>Our current work to refine the route and develop mitigation is necessary to deliver the project in an environmentally responsible way and taking the time to do this is the right thing to do. We are striking the right balance in providing much-needed infrastructure for Norfolk's residents and businesses while also continuing to make protecting the environment a key priority.</p>

**Cabinet
7 March 2022
Local Member Questions**

Agenda item 7	Local Member Issues/Questions
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale Last year opposition councillors asked for the council to provide details of the legal advice sought in relation to the NWL’s impact on wildlife. The council refused on multiple occasions to provide that information. Given that there has now been an enforced change that will result in further delays and costs, it is clearly in the public interest to provide assurance that potential legal pitfalls are being considered. Will the Cabinet Member provide that assurance by revealing details of the legal advice received by the council regarding the impact on habitats?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The Cabinet report sets out the reason for the work now being undertaken to refine the alignment of the project. It is in response to additional survey data obtained in 2021 and doesn’t therefore relate to any changes in advice from the project legal advisors. As stated in June 2021 to similar questions raised at that Cabinet meeting, the Council has appointed external legal representatives to provide ongoing legal support in relation to its emerging planning and statutory order proposals for the NWL project. The Council does not routinely publish the legal advice it receives.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Paul Neale Brighton and Hove council have already committed to welcome Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion of their country. What is Norfolk County Council committing to do in support of Ukrainian refugees?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy Thank you for your question. We’ve all been shocked by events in Ukraine, and I know many people in Norfolk are already helping the innocent victims of this war in many different ways. Central government has already committed to sincere and immediate support for those fleeing the conflict and Norfolk will certainly play its part. In the meantime donations of money and other assistance is best channelled through the Red Cross, UNICEF and Save the Children and DEC.</p>
7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price The Cabinet papers quote a DfT letter of 18 January 2022 which states “it is likely that we will not have sufficient funding to continue to fund all the schemes currently in the programme to the current scale or timing” and recommends that scheme promoters reconsider their schemes. How is Norfolk County Council preparing for the likely eventuality that the DfT will not fully fund the NWL?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport To place this question in context, the letter referred to is within the Highways Capital Programme report to Cabinet (at paragraph 1.2.7 of agenda item 10). This letter, sent by DfT to all sub-national transport bodies sets out that they should review their</p>

	<p>listed project priorities and confirm these to DfT. The County Council has therefore been working with Transport East to support them in their response to DfT. There is currently no reason to believe that the support for the NWL to remain part of their recommended projects, alongside other important infrastructure projects within Norfolk, has changed.</p>
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn In 2019, a warning that the proposed NWL would harm barbastelles was removed from the NDR bat monitoring report at the insistence of the council. In 2021, expert bat ecologist Dr Packman warned the council that the NWL “as proposed cannot be delivered in compliance with wildlife laws” due to the “significant and long-term damage” it would cause to barbastelles. Dr Packman offered a summary of evidence to the council and offered to meet them to provide more detailed information, but the council rejected this. Can the Cabinet Member explain why the council chose to ignore the evidence presented again and again over three years and what has changed now?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The details that were within the draft version of the NDR monitoring report referred to were removed on the basis that they were not relevant to the monitoring of the NDR project. However, the details that were removed from that report were made available to the NWL project team. The Council has consistently requested the evidence that supports the details provided by Dr Packman, however for reasons that they have set out (and that were referenced in the June 2021 Cabinet report), the evidence has not been provided to the Council or published. The Council has been clear throughout that the project is being progressed based on evidence and that it takes its environmental responsibilities seriously. The response to this latest evidence from our own surveys completed during 2021 has clearly demonstrated this commitment.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Alexandra Kemp Hopkins Homes' revised planning application for 1100 new homes in West Winch shows the pressure from the traffic on the Hardwick Roundabout slip roads will run at 125% capacity, and the serious effect on the hospital roundabout of at least 10 second delays per vehicle in the tea time rush hour. Hopkins failed to complete an assessment on the A10 Junctions in West Winch. There is no funding for walking and cycling improvements along the A10 or for the bypass. The Steering Group for West Norfolk meets behind closed doors and publishes no minutes. Where is Norfolk County Council's strategic highways infrastructure plan for West Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The County Council continues to work collaboratively with the Borough Council, developers and the local community to ensure the planned growth appropriately mitigates its impacts whilst also delivering significant benefits.</p> <p>The West Winch Housing Access Road (WWHAR) is an integral part of the allocated West Winch housing growth area and will reduce traffic levels on the existing A10 through West Winch. This will enable traffic calming, together with walking and cycling improvements to be implemented with developer funding from the individual</p>

	<p>housing sites that comprise the growth area. Scheme development and business case work over the last 4 years, representing a significant investment by NCC, has enabled us to submit a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to the Department for Transport (DfT) to secure funding to accelerate the delivery of the WWHAR. We are optimistic that after submitting further details to DfT outlining the Councils' commitment to bus priority and active travel measures, the SOBC will be agreed and DfT will provide funding towards the Outline Business Case (OBC), which is vital to secure scheme funding. The joint member West Norfolk Transport and Infrastructure Steering Group (WNT&ISG) is updated on all relevant infrastructure projects in the Borough and provides a useful steer to officers taking these projects forward. Collectively these infrastructure projects comprise a strategic highways infrastructure plan for the Borough.</p> <p>The County Council in its role as highway statutory consultee in the planning process is currently reviewing the information supplied by applicant with its application to ensure the development complies with the National Planning Framework. The applicant not only proposes significant financial contributions to walking and cycling improvements but is also offering a sustainable transport contribution which will help deliver a travel plan and enhanced bus services.</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Brenda Jones</p> <p>The situation in Adult Social Care is concerning. I note there is no mention of the risks to the services we deliver from the current situation. Providers continue to fail or withdraw from the market, staff shortages and recruitment difficulties get worse and worse, and demand continues to rise</p> <p>What does the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention consider to be the biggest current threats to services and how are these being monitored and managed, both for the people we serve and the Social Care staff who provide the care?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention</p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The backlogs of work caused by the Covid Pandemic are a significant concern because they represent people waiting for support longer than they should have to. Our social work teams constantly risk assess and triage people to ensure the most urgent get support. At the same time, the Care Market is still experiencing the impact of continued cases of Covid, with staff absences and limited capacity to take on new people.</p> <p>I refer you to the Cabinet paper today which sets out ideas about how our teams can make in-roads into the backlogs, in the short-term. To do this we may need to extend temporary teams who were brought in to support the winter pressures, and a continued focus on recruiting, retaining and supporting staff wellbeing remains crucial. The senior officer team in Adults is leading and managing the recovery planning; the People Select Committee and the Adults Performance Review Panel will provide oversight and monitoring.</p>

7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare How many Norfolk Foster Carers has the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services personally spoken to either before or during the proposed transformation consultation?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services I have spoken to many foster carers and also received a number of emails from them regarding the proposals, as well as speak to social workers and retired social workers associated with fostering and representatives from the fostering panel. These communications have been predominately in favour of the proposals, and in general the response has been that an overhaul of the system has been long overdue.</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett Can the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport confirm who will bear the additional cost of the variation of route to the Western Link road – Norfolk County Council or the contractor, Ferrovial Construction?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The design development for the Norwich Western Link is part of the design and build contract awarded to Ferrovial Construction. The latest alignment refinement is part of the design process and has been instructed by the Council and therefore the cost of this work rests with the Council under the terms of the contract as it is a change to the original contract proposals. As set out in the Cabinet report, the design work is ongoing and further details, including implications to programme and budget are planned to be provided in a further report to Cabinet in June 2022.</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb It has been 45 days since Norfolk County Council was found to have unlawfully cut Speech and Language Therapy services for children. Can the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services confirm how many children were affected by this cruel and illegal change in policy and how many have been contacted since 24th January 2022?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services I am happy to provide an update on this important matter and in particular the opportunity to correct misunderstandings that have occurred due to national and local press coverage of this issue in recent days.</p> <p>Firstly, I take issue with the emotive language stating that this was a cruel decision. No-one in Children’s Services takes any action that is cruel. The decision taken was a pragmatic one intended to be the exact opposite of cruel, it was intended to respond rapidly to a backlog of speech therapy referrals which if left would have meant 1500 children in Norfolk would not have had an assessment and would not have started to receive support. Due to the decision that we took that waiting list reduced to 800 after just 1 term of action and was on target to reduce even further by the end of the current spring term.</p> <p>I do acknowledge that the interim plan, to address the waiting list backlog, was not in line with our statutory duties for EHCP. However, the plan was a short term plan – 2 terms duration within a new 5 year contract with the new provider – and was due to cease at Easter 2022. The legal challenge that we have accepted in full required a</p>

	<p>change of that interim plan and this has been responded to. Since then we have been working with our provider to ensure that we can reinstate provision fully for children that had been receiving a reduced level of support whilst also continuing to address the remaining waiting list as best we can, given the shortages of therapists across the country. We have put further funding in to support speech and language, and we continue to work hard to identify the capacity to ensure more children get their assessment and provision. If the workforce is not there, this can be a major challenge.</p> <p>The new provider have confirmed that 2216 families have been in direct contact with them since the end of January this year, this includes contact such as telephone discussion, face to face appointment or letter/report.</p>
7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy Given the significant changes to the Norwich Western Link project since the Outline Business Case was submitted, how confident is the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport that the Outline Business Case for the Norwich Western Link is still fit for purpose and does he think it will be rejected outright by the Department for Transport given the lack of consideration given to the climate and environmental impact of the project?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport There will be some changes to the indicative project timescales referenced in the outline business case (OBC) which will be discussed with the Department for Transport (DfT) but we don't anticipate that there will be a need to resubmit the OBC. Continuing to develop the design of the road and its associated measures in response to evidence is a normal and expected part of the process for an infrastructure project and it is possible that further changes may be needed in response to our upcoming pre-planning application public consultation.</p> <p>The Council remains in dialogue with the Department for Transport (DfT) to close out their appraisal of the OBC. Project changes are something that the funding approval process takes account of, which is why, following resolution of the statutory approvals processes for projects, a full business case will also need to be submitted to DfT. The council remains committed to delivering this project in an environmentally responsible way. Issues of climate and environmental impact are primarily dealt with by the planning approval processes and full details of these will be provided within the planning application submission.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins The Chief Executive of Norfolk County Council owned Norse Group left the company at the end of November. Can you let us know when a new Chief Executive will be appointed?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy Thank you for your question. We have appointed an interim Chief Executive from the existing leadership team, to lead Norse at this time. Andy Wood has recently been appointed as the new Chair of the Group, and he is working with the Council and the Norse Board to bring in a new Chief executive to take the company forward. The</p>

	recruitment campaign is already under way.
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Sharon Blundell The new NHS programme for low calorie diet treatment for people who are overweight and living with type 2 diabetes is being piloted in 10 areas with a further 11 to come on stream. Norfolk is not one of the areas chosen. Why is this?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question.</p> <p>This is a specialist clinical programme delivered by the NHS, not the responsibility of the Norfolk County Council. There is however a range of support that is available to everyone in Norfolk that is designed to help identify people that may be at risk of diabetes including weight management services delivered by Slimming World and NHS Health Checks.</p>
7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Tim Adams How many people are using the Council's Adult Social Services compared to this date 4 years ago?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question.</p> <p>In 2017/18 we had 25,162 requests for support. In 2020/21 (latest full year information), we had 41,412 requests for support. In 2017/8 we had 2203 new requests for short-term reablement support. In 2020/21 (latest full year information) we had 6705 new requests for short-term reablement support. In 2017/18 we had 16,817 people accessing long-term support. In 2020/21 (latest full year information) we had 15,612 people accessing long-term support.</p> <p>In line with the national data requirements, we do not routinely capture the overall number of people accessing adult social care at any one point, instead we collect and report the types of service people are using.</p> <p>Second Question from Cllr Tim Adams If you agreed with Tim Farron MP that the Government could follow the lead of the Welsh Government and give councils the power to increase council tax by up to 100% on second homes in the worst-affected communities how much would that raise in additional council tax across Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance The County Council has a track record of working with District Councils in partnership to remove the discounts historically provided to second homes.</p> <p>It is difficult to estimate with certainty how much a second homes council tax premium might raise as it would depend upon a number of factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• District Councils agreeing to charge a premium, and at what rate (evidence)

	<p>from the application of a premium in Wales is that this has not been applied universally at 100%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What definition of “worst affected” areas were to be applied (although it is likely that the ability to charge a premium would be universal across England).• Whether the introduction of a premium would result in behaviour change (i.e. a reduction in the number of second homes).• Whether any second homes were eligible for other discounts or exemptions which would reduce their liability to pay council tax. <p>Of more practical use in the short term is the work that the Member for Finance has undertaken with James Wild MP to support his campaign to address the issue of second homes being transferred to the business rates list. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gove-closes-tax-loophole-on-second-homes Work continues in this area.</p> <p>However, 2021 council tax statistics indicate that there are 11,607 Band D equivalent properties identified as second homes in Norfolk. This equates to approximately 3.8% of the total Norfolk tax base. Assuming a universal 100% premium, no behaviour change, and no other discounts applying, this would result in a (theoretical) increase in council tax income of approximately £17.6m based on the 2022-23 Band D rate of £1,516.95. The actual additional income achieved would be likely to be substantially lower than this for the reasons given</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone As you are also Chair of the Health and Well Being Board can you tell us what urgent work is being done to ensure that the NHS dental contracts for Fakenham and Thetford are filled before July 1st?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. For your information it is possible to submit questions directly to the Health and Wellbeing Board.</p> <p>Access to dental services is currently being investigated by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). Public Health officials have assisted HOSC in facilitating joint working with the regional dental Public Health specialist, to jointly undertake a data needs assessment which will be reported at the next HOSC meeting.</p> <p>As you are aware commissioning of dental services is the responsibility of the regional NHS England office. The regional commissioners have agreed to attend HOSC and give evidence on the current issues in procuring sufficient NHS dental services. This evidence should include their plans to secure emergency dental access for areas that were not successfully covered in the recent competitive tender process for these services – including Thetford and Fakenham. They will also include evidence on securing routine dental access across the county.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone Can you tell us how many new affordable homes have been constructed across Norfolk in the last three years to include the percentage of those that have been built by Repton property developments?</p>

	<p>Response from Commercial Services and Asset Management The number of affordable homes built in Norfolk is set by the local planning authority through their planning policy and they hold the most up to date data.</p> <p>Repton entered its delivery phase in December (2021) with 5 sites gaining planning permission, of which 2 (Acle and Hopton) are in the construction phase.</p> <p>In terms of affordable housing, both schemes are delivering over and above the number required by the local planning policy. Acle will provide 68 affordable homes (23 more than the policy requirement) and Hopton will provide 60 affordable homes (40 more homes than the policy requirement).</p> <p>The scheme due to start in Attleborough in June 2022 will be wholly affordable with 48 homes (36 more than the policy requirement).</p>
7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Saul Penfold I note from your proposed motion to full council (that we still have not had a chance to debate) that it says – “Recognises the need for some of these projects to make landfall and grid connection in various parts of the county, involving cable routes and new sub-stations”. Can you tell us how many homes and how much wildlife would be in the locality of these cable routes and would be affected by their construction?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy Members will be aware that the County Council as a statutory consultee has responded to a number of consultations on offshore wind farms and the associated onshore infrastructure in recent years.</p> <p>The onshore cable routes have been specially designed to minimise both impacts on local communities and the environment. All the consented schemes have been through a rigorous Development Consent Order (DCO) process associated with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). This has involved County Council officers working closely with the various developers and attending expert technical groups covering ecology and other matters.</p> <p>There are a number of recently consented wind farms off the Norfolk coast comprising:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hornsea Project Three (Orsted) – which was granted consent by the Secretary of State in December 2020. This will make landfall at Weybourne with a 53 km buried cable route making grid connection at Norwich Main and requiring a new sub-station;2. Norfolk Vanguard (Vattenfall) – re-determined by the Secretary of State in February 2022. This will make landfall near Happisburgh with a 60 km buried cable route to Necton where it will make grid connect at a new sub-station;3. Norfolk Boreas (Vattenfall) – determined by Secretary of State in December 2021. This project shares most of its onshore infrastructure with the Vanguard project above. <p>In addition the County Council has responded to pre-application consultations on the Sheringham Shoal and Dudgeon Wind Farm Extensions (Summer 2021). This</p>

	<p>project will make landfall at Weybourne, with a 60 km buried cable route to Norwich Main where a new sub-station will need to be built.</p> <p>Officers have contacted the developers of the above schemes to gather further information on the precise number of households and environments affected by their projects and this information will be shared with members when received.</p> <p>With regard to any further offshore windfarm projects potentially affecting Norfolk, the County Council is not aware of any at this time. However, given the Government's ambitious target of Net Zero by 2050 and the expectation that 40 GW of electricity will be generated from offshore wind by 2030, it is likely that further offshore wind farms will need to make grid connection in Norfolk.</p>
7.15	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell</p> <p>With the upsetting and devastating developments in Ukraine, and the UNHCR estimating a worst case scenario of 5 million refugees, please can you provide details of what preparations and provision Norfolk County Council is making for the urgent care of future Ukrainian refugees?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy</p> <p>Thank you for the question. As per my answer to a previous question we've all been shocked by events in Ukraine, and I know many people in Norfolk are already helping the innocent victims of this war in many different ways. Central government has already committed to sincere and immediate support for those fleeing the conflict and Norfolk will certainly play its part. In the meantime donations of money and other assistance is best channelled through the Red Cross, UNICEF and Save the Children and DEC.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Rob Colwell</p> <p>Norfolk has a proud history of helping desperate and vulnerable refugees. Please can the 4th flag pole of County Hall (currently unused) fly the Ukrainian flag as a show of support to our European friends and that we stand with Ukraine.</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy</p> <p>Thank you for your question. I am glad to say that this important display of support for Ukraine was already in train last week and after awaiting delivery the flag has been flying on the roof of County Hall</p>
7.16	<p>Question from Cllr Lucy Shires</p> <p>How much exposure does the County Council have due to treasury investments in Russia and Belarus?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>The UK government has condemned the Russian government's unprovoked and premeditated war against Ukraine. The Council welcomes the tough, united and effective measures that democracies are taking against dictatorial aggression. Ukrainians have shown us why it is so important to remain proud of our nation, our institutions and our liberal democracy in the face of autocratic thuggery.</p> <p>The County Council has no direct exposure within its treasury investments as there are no Russian or Belarussian banks on the Council's approved counterparty list and at present there is no exposure indirectly through the Council's investments in Money</p>

Market Funds. In light of the current situation, the County Council will not invest directly in Russia or Belarus.

While the question does not include the Pension Fund, the issue of Russian exposure was discussed and considered by the Pensions Committee on 1 March 2022. Other than UK Government debt and a small number of direct property holdings, all of the investments of the Fund are managed through pooled investment vehicles that are the ultimate holder of the assets in question. Given that Russia is an Emerging Market and has always presented some investment challenges, overall the exposures are very small in the wider context of the Norfolk Pension Fund. At the end of the last year the total value of the Fund was around £5 billion and the total direct exposure to Russia on public markets was circa 0.2% of total Fund assets at that point. In addition there is a small exposure to Belarusian Sovereign Debt (around 0.01% of the total fund at 31 December 2021). The Fund has identified no real estate, infrastructure or timberland assets in Russia. The Fund's private equity managers are currently conducting look through analysis on their portfolios. The nature of the investments means that this is more time consuming but the geographic focus of the Fund's mandates on developed markets means that any exposure is likely to be negligible. Private equity is itself a smaller component of the overall investment strategy

Second question from Cllr Lucy Shires

I have two residents in my division who are in critical need of a social care assessment before they can get the support they need. What should I say to them and other people in similar circumstances about when they can be treated with the dignity they deserve and receive a social care assessment?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention

Thank you for your question.

The advice for people with urgent needs has not changed. They should ring 0344 800 8020 and choose option 1. This will ensure they get to speak to someone swiftly who can then advise and support them. They can directly contact our Swifts and Night Owls service on this number if they have unplanned care needs.