

Cabinet
12 January 2022
Public & Local Member Questions

Agenda item 6	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from Paul Andell</p> <p>Gas Hill is a unique topographical feature of Norwich, the average gradient is 10.7% and it is popular with walkers, cyclists and joggers. Due to it's steep gradient it is avoided by many vehicles but those that do use it need to negotiate an awkward narrow junction with St Leonard's Road at the summit. Would Cabinet consider the closure of Gas Hill from the junction with William Kett Close to all but essential service and emergency vehicles. This would allow for the development of a "green corridor" linking Riverside and potentially Kett's Heights where proposals are being considered to re-open a pathway via the escarpment to William Kett Close.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>It is agreed that the gradient and road width from William Kett Close to St Leonard's Road is such that some drivers may choose to avoid using Gas Hill. The suggestion to close this section has some merit, although as drivers are already choosing to avoid Gas Hill, an enhanced environment already exists for active travel. As such closing the upper section of Gas Hill by means of a Traffic Regulation Order would have limited impact.</p> <p>In terms of the injury accident history at St Leonard's Road junction, there has been one slight injury accident in the last five years. On this basis alone it would not be a priority to investigate further.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Paul Andell</p> <p>Norfolk's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan encourages active travel (walking and cycling) to promote healthier lifestyles and improve the environment. An objective of the plan is to identify and prioritise improvements to facilitate active travel. Does Cabinet agree, that by restricting motorised traffic to Gas Hill active travel would be encouraged and improved to part of the Broads Circular Leisure cycle route.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The Broads Circular Leisure cycle route is part of our promoted leisure routes on the Norwich Cycle Map using existing quiet routes. Any closure of the route for motorised vehicles would need to be assessed for its network impact and it is currently not on our priority Active Travel interventions for Norwich.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Kate King</p> <p>As the decision makers of Norfolk County Council are taking forward their Environmental Strategy please can cabinet tell me whether they have enlisted the support of other ambitious local government leaders by signing up to the UK100 Clean Energy Pledge? They will of course be aware that, while up to 40% of the UK's carbon emissions are from domestic heating, other forward thinking councils are looking at the extremely complex challenge of retrofitting existing housing stock to alleviate this problem and are beginning to implement some far reaching schemes.</p>

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Norfolk County Council's current priority is to collaborate with other Local Authorities in Norfolk as a member of the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership. Joint working and information exchange is already progressing extremely well through this officer group, but it is acknowledged that membership of UK100 could add a very useful national dimension to our efforts to tackle climate change. For this reason, this matter will be presented to the next Environmental Policy cross-party Member Oversight Group, Chaired by Councillor Andy Grant and due to be held in February, for those Elected Members to consider.

Supplementary question from Kate King

Given the complexity of retrofitting compared with installation at the build stage, can the council assure me that all new planning applications take this into account by making renewable energy heating systems mandatory in all new-build schemes, wherever it is within their range of scope to do?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Responsibility for planning applications relating to housing sits within the remit of District authorities.

**Cabinet
12 January 2022
Local Member Questions**

Agenda item 7	Local Member Issues/Questions
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp To the Leader. I sent you the All-Parliamentary Group on Air Pollution's report calling for a moratorium on new incinerators, because of risks to public health and the food chain.</p> <p>Recent research shows matter from incinerators found in children's toenails, associated with childhood leukaemia. Dioxins from incinerators have been found in eggs 10 km away. The Secretary of State has just refused a new incinerator in Kent. The Welsh Govt has a moratorium on incinerators in Wales. Will NCC join all other host authorities, King's Lynn, Fenland and Cambridgeshire, and say it is against MVV's proposed incinerator on the West Norfolk border?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy Thank you for your Question. As Cllr Kemp will understand we do not set Council policy in responses to questions to Cabinet. This will be done at the right time, in the right place with the right information.</p> <p>Although the proposed site is in Cambridgeshire you are correct in that Norfolk County Council is one of the four 'host' local authorities that will make comments on the DCO as a planning authority.</p> <p>There is a large amount of very detailed information, that the applicant will have to put forward at that . This includes environmental impact assessment; biodiversity; landscape; flood & water management; human health through a full Health Impact Assessment; traffic and transport to name but some.</p> <p>Norfolk County Council haven't had that information yet as the planning application process is not yet under way and so it would be premature and possibly fetter NCC's role in the planning process to do as you ask at this stage.</p> <p>Ultimately it will be for the relevant Minister to take the decision on whether or not it should go ahead, assuming an application is actually made, not the local authorities.</p> <p>When we have all this information and detail then the County Council will be in a position to make its views known.</p> <p>Whilst we wait for the appropriate time for NCC to take part in the planning process it should be noted that in December 2021 7 London Borough Council's awarded contracts to construct an energy from waste facility in the North of London, so we should not take former positions of Government (Kent) as an indication of future intentions.</p>

7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins Can you tell us how many school classes have had to be cancelled due to staff absences this week due to Covid?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services We are not aware of any classes cancelled. However, here is no requirement for schools to notify the local authority as they have plans in place through the contingency framework to move seamlessly to remote learning if necessary</p>
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Tim Adams What level of staff absences due to Covid are there in Norfolk's social care system at the moment?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Thank you for your question. As you are aware most social care staff are not employed by Norfolk County Council.</p> <p>In Norfolk's social care system the data shows that 7.8% of nurses are absent with 0.6% due to COVID and 9.2% of social care workers are absent with 1.7% due to COVID. The accuracy of this data is dependent upon the quality and timeliness of completion of the tracker by individual care organisations.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Cllr Tim Adams Can you please detail the current availability (with a comparison to other authorities in the East of England) of the level of respite care that is available for carers set against the demand from carers for that care?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention Norfolk County Council commissions both planned respite which can be booked in advance, and unplanned respite which is arranged in an emergency situation when informal care breaks down.</p> <p>It is worth remembering that respite takes a number of forms and is not always in a care home or other care setting, but can instead be a break for a carer, such as a sitting service so they can have time to themselves for social or other activities.</p> <p>In terms of bed-based respite for older people, there are 12 dedicated respite beds at the following places across Norfolk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lydia Eva Court, Great Yarmouth (2 Enhanced Respite beds) ▪ Ellacombe, Norwich (3 Enhanced Respite beds) ▪ Bishop Herbert House, Norwich (2 Physical Disabilities Respite beds) ▪ Barley Court, Norwich Housing with Care scheme (1 Standard Respite bed) ▪ Weavers Court, Diss Housing with Care scheme (1 Standard Respite bed) ▪ St Edmunds, Attleborough (1 Standard Respite bed) ▪ Munhaven, North Norfolk (1 Enhanced Respite bed) ▪ High Haven, West Norfolk (1 Enhanced planned bed for West locality use only) <p>It is important to note that as well as these facilities many people chose to organise</p>

	<p>their respite through a direct payment, making their own independent arrangements.</p> <p>For people with learning disabilities, we currently have 28 places available through 9 providers. In December there were 775 nights available and 316 nights were booked (an occupancy of 41%). This is an increase in occupancy based on previous months.</p> <p>Respite, like the rest of the health and social care system, has been affected by COVID. Planned respite for older people was paused originally from April 20 in response to Covid. It was reinstated in Oct 20 for a few weeks and then paused again, until we reinstated all available planned respite provision from July 21. The availability of planned respite beds continues to be impacted, where certain homes are closed due to a COVID outbreak. Some planned breaks for people with learning disabilities were cancelled in December 21 – this was either because people using respite and / or staff have tested positive for COVID and because of ‘emergency’ respite demands over the Christmas period.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell</p> <p>Following national government cuts to the Environment Agency meaning they are drastically scaling back river quality testing for Norfolk Rivers like the precious chalk river Gaywood, will NCC commit to financially supporting individual river catchment plans and habitat restoration with other key stakeholders?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>As per NCC’s Environmental Policy we fully support any measures which improve the quality of water systems in Norfolk. We have demonstrated this support by supporting local projects via the Norfolk Coast Partnership such as the 9 Chalk Rivers Project which provided over £1million of habitat restoration to important chalk rivers in Norfolk, and more recently the project ‘Norfolk’s Two Chalk Rivers – Restored, Revitalised, Resilient’ which has recently been approved for funding. Water, rivers and their catchments and the associated habitats are recognised as vital natural assets for the county and, as such, are included in our work on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Norfolk which is being developed over the next 2 years. Through this approach, we are committed to working with stakeholders on improving these essential natural assets as part of the County’s overall natural environment.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Rob Colwell</p> <p>Can you tell us how many people there are on the unmet care needs list and for what reasons they are on the list?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention</p> <p>Thank you for your question. I assume you mean the “Interim Care List”. There are around 860 people on the Interim Care list, the list is dynamic and changes each day.</p> <p>People are on this list for a variety of specific reasons which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals who are either being supported by families, carers or our in-

	<p>house Norfolk First Support, while we work to arrange longer term homecare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in residential care who want to return home • People who are waiting for a different pattern of call times, or who want to change their provider. • People who are temporarily in hospital but with an open care package (but it does not include people who are in hospital and ready for discharge). <p>The Council has set up a dedicated central team to take action to get the right care for people on the transfer of care list.</p> <p>Since the outbreak of COVID the number of people in this situation is much higher than pre-pandemic, when we would typically have seen around 150 people in this situation. This is despite the commissioning of thousands of extra hours of home care, and many additional places in home care. The system is experiencing the impact of the current surge in demand, the staffing and sickness issues in the health and social care sector due to COVID.</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby</p> <p>Does the Leader agree Norfolk residents have a right to food no matter what their circumstances?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy</p> <p>The UK has a welfare state to make sure that people are supported. To complement that I am glad to say that in Norfolk we have run an outstanding Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS) as part of the Household Support Fund to support residents throughout the pandemic with food packages and supporting school children with meal vouchers outside of term time.</p> <p>The NAS already provides hardship support to Norfolk residents who are struggling with their living costs. The type of support that NAS provides is tailored to the individual needs of each household. It can include food vouchers, help with buying school uniforms and gas or electricity meter pre-payments.</p> <p>We have also invested in additional advice capacity that NAS can refer to. This means that as well as one-off financial support, people struggling with their finances will find it easier to access debt and welfare advice and support to find longer term solutions.</p> <p>Using the important relationships we have built up to deliver Covid support, Norfolk County Council has worked with district councils and the VCSE sector to put together a strong support offer using this one-off funding from the Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £2.4m for free school meals - those eligible received £55 in vouchers for the Christmas period (a top-up on the usual £15 per week) and will receive £15 for the February half-term break. • £1.2m for Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS) – an extension of the county council’s existing scheme to provide emergency financial help, essential household goods and advice and support. • £1.4m to district councils for community support

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1m of support targeted to voluntary and community groups, via Norfolk Community Foundation. Norfolk's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations as well as town and parish councils and faith groups, will be able to apply for £50 vouchers for groceries / household essentials to distribute to those in need. • £500,000 –for local support with food.
7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett</p> <p>The Norwich Western Link is losing support, increasingly recognised as too damaging and too expensive. If, as I hope, it doesn't go ahead people need to get around without damaging the environment and those communities blighted by rat running still need relief. Can the Leader confirm what plan B is?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy</p> <p>The Norwich Western Link continues to have wide support and there is no evidence that it is losing support.</p> <p>We are in agreement that there are significant traffic congestion issues in communities to the west of Norwich and, with population and job growth in Greater Norwich, they will continue to worsen unless we take action.</p> <p>Early in the project, we sought input from representatives of those affected communities to identify objectives which any solution to address these traffic issues should address. We then went through a very thorough options assessment process in 2018 and this process is documented in a report published on our website. This found that non-road-based solutions, such as additional bus services, would be less likely to be successful at achieving these objectives than a road-based link. So we have taken, and will continue to take, an evidence-based approach to this project to deliver the best all-round solution for the Norwich Western Link, including its environmental mitigation proposals.</p> <p>It's important to mention that I and my cabinet colleagues fully appreciate the positive difference the Norwich Western Link will make to so many people in Norfolk. Removing traffic congestion from small unsuitable roads and reducing journey times are the direct benefits but there are many more benefits too. These include helping ambulances and other blue light services reach people more quickly in emergency situations, helping to improve road safety and air quality close to people's homes by taking traffic out of residential areas, supporting our businesses by making journeys more efficient, reducing transport costs and making it easier for customers to reach them, and enabling people living in areas currently blighted by traffic to walk and cycle and generally have a better quality of life.</p> <p>I would add that the new link road gives us opportunities to maximise the benefits it will create through other sustainable transport measures, both close to the route in rural communities as well as in suburban and urban areas of Norwich. This is something that we are planning to deliver as part of the Norwich Western Link project but also through the development of measures under the recently agreed Transport for Norwich Strategy.</p>

7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Brenda Jones</p> <p>The People and Communities Select Committee and the Adult Services review panel exist to help develop new policy. Yet today's agenda includes a report on the future of Adult Social Care that has not been to either, nor have the public or partners had the chance to comment. Why not?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention</p> <p>Thank you for your question. As you are aware Adult Social Services has had a very clear vision and direction for a number of years, which is widely known and supported. The report to Cabinet today is not a new policy but an operational project which affirms that strategy and highlights areas of focus which are not new and have been considered and influenced in many ways – including through People Select Committee, through feedback from people who use services, through research and engagement, and underpinned by data and evidence.</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb</p> <p>At November's Infrastructure and Development Select Committee meeting the Director of Active Norfolk committed to remove and replace the inaccurate statement about children aged 5-16 with a disability and long-term health condition "activity levels of those young people are the same as those without one" which appears on page 9 of the Active Norfolk strategy. To date this has not happened; could the Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships please confirm when this will be rectified?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships</p> <p>Whilst the statement is not materially inaccurate, we accept that it could be misleading. This has now been removed from the Active Norfolk strategy, pending a review of its presentation.</p>
7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</p> <p>Norwich City council has withdrawn its support for the NWL after it requested evidence of five criteria being met but that evidence was not provided. The criteria included air quality, decongestion, investment in public transport, cycling and walking, and mitigation of wildlife and landscape impacts. Does the Cabinet Member acknowledge that the county council has been unable to provide the required evidence regarding these impacts of the road?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The City Council's position was set out in the June 2021 reporting to the County Council's Cabinet. All of the criteria that have been set out by the City Council will be either included in the planning application for the NWL or in the action plan that will be developed for the recently approved Transport for Norwich Strategy (TfNS) - see Cabinet report for December 2021. Ahead of the planning application being submitted we will be completing a consultation on our proposals, and I would therefore encourage the City Council to review its position when the details for these are available. The Action Plan for the TfNS will be finalised later in the year and we will continue to work closely with the City Council on its development, as we have already for the adopted TfNS.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</p>

	<p>Millions of people around the country will have seen BBC Countryfile's exposé of the failure of wildlife "mitigation" measures installed around the NDR. The council's response that more surveys are needed was contradicted by the evidence of expert ecologists. Does the Cabinet Member now acknowledge that the council's road-building kills bats and that the "mitigation" measures installed are a vast waste of money?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>All of the measures installed along the NDR (Broadland Northway) were agreed with the statutory environmental bodies and the project was the subject of a very thorough and independent examination in public prior to the necessary orders being approved. The Development Consent Order for the NDR includes provisions for up to 15 years of monitoring of some of the environmental mitigation features for the project. The early monitoring completed to date since opening the NDR is published on the County Councils website and it can be seen within those reports that further monitoring is required to assess the success or otherwise of the features introduced. You will see in the reporting that the mitigation measures are being used by wildlife, so it is incorrect to suggest that they are a waste of money or that the road is responsible for killing bats.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy</p> <p>It has been suggested to me that Cllr Peck is not counting the numbers of cars parked on the new county hall car park site because he is embarrassed at the lack of use and waste of scarce resources. Can he tell me how he measures value for money for this scheme in the business case prepared under paragraph 6.7 of the Financial Regulations?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management</p> <p>As Cllr Jermy will be aware, not least from responses to similar questions, there has been a global pandemic underway. Which has meant that all offices (including ours) have either been following the Prime Minister's instruction to 'work from home where you can' or following national health and safety guidance operating with a significant reduction in usable desk space. As we emerge from the pandemic, following the successful vaccination programme; nationally we will start to see a slow return back to previous usage patterns – whether that be on the train network, footfall in our major cities, and indeed the use of County Hall.</p> <p>I make no bones that our offices (and indeed car parks) have been quieter than usual, but there is a good public health rationale.</p> <p>In terms of Value for Money – we have and will continue to consolidate offices and functions onto the County Hall estate, providing a more efficient and lower cost estate, whilst delivering environmental benefits from this key recently refurbished building. We are clear that we will need parking, alongside other modes of transport, to support the staff, visitors and partners who use County Hall. This is not something to be embarrassed about – but is delivering real savings for the taxpayer</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</p> <p>Our adult social care system is in meltdown because of inadequate funding from the government to recruit and maintain dedicated skilled staff to run it. The</p>

Government has recently given Norfolk County Council a one off payment of £600,000 to prop up our crumbling adult social care services. NCC's cabinet member is quoted as saying that he is really pleased the government has taken on board our requests for extra support yet he should be pressing the government for what is needed not praising them.

Is the cabinet member actually aware of how much we need long term to give adult social care that is fit for purpose?

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

Thank you for your question. As you would expect the case for extra resources is being continually made by Norfolk County Council because the pressures on the social care system are immense due to the current wave of Omicron infections.

We have been met with some success recently with the extra £5.2 million pounds Workforce Grant and the £600k Omicron Grant which we have put straight out into the Care Market and I make no apology for praising both our own staff and those in the wider care sector for the way they are continuing to support people.

At the same time we have, and will continue to take every opportunity to set out for Government the urgent need for long-term sustainable funding for the sector, and particularly the need for parity of investment with the NHS. COVID has clearly demonstrated the critical role that social care plays in the wider health and social care system.

Second Question from Cllr Paul Neale

As the council has recently lost two judicial review cases, incurring high public costs, will the Cabinet commit to make the adjustments to the LTP4 requested by Leigh Day Solicitors in its letter to the Council dated on 21 December, and also undertake to not in the meantime hold the plan out to any third party as a completed and fully adopted plan?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The council has adopted a revised Local Transport Plan (LTP) strategy and committed to the development of an implementation plan. Until the implementation plan is adopted the current LTP remains LTP3 and by virtue of s108(3b) of the Transport Act 2000 the council is required to have regard to LTP3 in complying with its duty under s108(b).

That does not negate the need for the council also to 'carry out their functions so as to implement' the policies contained within LTP4 in accordance with s108(1)(b), this is because LTP4 contains policies which have been developed under s108(1)(a) of the Transport Act 2000. As such an appropriate level of weight will be given to the LTP4 strategy in decision-making by the council.

In development of the implementation plan the council will give due consideration of, and review and where appropriate revise, LTP4 Strategy to ensure that our legal duties are met and that the documents therein are consistent.

7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Steff Aquarone Can the Leader of the Council explain why he has not made a statement despite the repeated requests from the Eastern Daily Press on the claims that Councillor Borrett twice struck a horse during a hunt over Christmas?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy I accept that the media enjoy harassing politicians as they see that as part of their role. There is little point in commenting on an allegation that has no substance, which has been demonstrated by the relevant bodies taking no action.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Steff Aquarone Can the Cabinet Member confirm what impact the successful achievement of NCC's stated net zero ambitions will have on Norfolk's carbon emissions?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste NCC has made a public commitment to reducing its estate emissions to net zero by 2030. This commitment is an important signal that NCC recognises and seeks to be part of the national effort for the UK to be net zero by 2050. Gross emissions falling under the scope of NCC's net zero target were around 7,200 tCO₂e for the year ending March 2021 (down from over 12,800 tCO₂e in 2016/17). This represents around 7.5% of total public sector estate emissions in the county (including hospitals, schools etc). Furthermore, the contribution of public sector estate emissions Norfolk's territorial emissions is estimated to be around 2%.</p> <p>Therefore, we appreciate that NCC is only directly responsible for a small part of Norfolk's overall emissions. Nevertheless, we believe that setting and delivering on our estate net zero target sets an important example. The October Cabinet paper on Environmental Policy set out an ambition to go further through influencing our supply chain, through working in partnership with other public sector organisations in Norfolk and through helping Norfolk residents to reduce their transport emissions through supporting better passenger transport, active travel and the transition to electric vehicles.</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price Recently, some councils have committed to leading the effort to become "deforestation-free" by trying to eliminate use of products that contain palm oil linked to deforestation. Chester and Oxford councils are working with schools and businesses to help them reduce the use of harmful palm oil. Will Norfolk do the same, including via wholly-owned companies such as Norse?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste We are aware of the impacts of palm oil production on tropical forests, and how it has become a key component in a range of products, with an estimated 50% of supermarket products containing it. It is widely acknowledged that the key issue isn't with the product itself, but where this crop has been planted. It is for this reason that the Defra set up the UK Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. As a result of this initiative, it is worth noting that the bulk of palm oil now imported into the UK is derived from certified sources (UK Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil Annual Report). However, NCC has committed to look at reducing the environmental impact of its supply chain wherever possible, and will continue to monitor this issue, and, in terms of school meals, Norse will continue to source good quality ingredients from sustainable sources, and locally wherever possible.</p>

Second Question from Cllr Ben Price

The role of adult services is to care for the welfare of our county's citizens. Does the cabinet member for Adult Social Services believe that empathy for the welfare of all living things is a prerequisite to be a fit and proper person to perform this role, and, in light of the recent claim by anti-hunt activists that he hit his horse twice with the handle of his hunting crop, while on a hunt, should he now tender his resignation?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance

Cllr Borrett has done and continues to do an excellent job as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention and he has my full confidence in that role. The allegation was purely that, it has not been substantiated and it was determined that no action was necessary by the relevant bodies.