

**Cabinet**  
**3 August 2020**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

**Agenda**  
**item 6**

**6.1**      **Public Question Time**  
**Question from Gary Blundell**

Why does Costessey seem to get the short end of the stick from Norfolk County Council on highways work? Examples of this are the danger to pedestrians crossing between Next and Sainsburys on William Frost Way and the 10 years of waiting for plans for a second exit from Queens Hills.

Money can always be found for improvements to places like Thickthorn yet improvements which have been at least 13 years in the making are yet to materialise for the Longwater roundabouts even with commuted sums of money from developers.

**Response:**

The County Council has completed work on a Longwater Strategy. This included an analysis of the issues and identification of various measures that could be taken forward to overcome these issues. A number of these measures have already been delivered including a free-flow slip road from William Frost Way to Dereham Road and extensive widening of Dereham Road to two-lanes in either direction. These measures have substantially improved traffic flows. There are elements of the strategy that have yet to be delivered and we will continue to look for suitable funding opportunities to bring these forward. We have already successfully secured commitment to further improvements that will be delivered by the developers of the new housing at Easton. This includes cycle / footway links across the A47 and a crossing on William Frost Way.

Thickthorn Junction is part of the trunk road network maintained and managed by Highways England who are directly funded by government. The proposed improvements at Thickthorn will therefore be delivered by Highways England, not Norfolk County Council We welcome these improvements and will work closely with Highways England on their continued development.

We have also made arrangements to undertake a pedestrian crossing assessment during the autumn and a following feasibility study into a pedestrian crossing on William Frost Way

**6.2**      **Question from Mr Richard Carter:**

Cabinet is respectfully asked to suspend their approval of a school site in Holt which would breach NCC policy guidelines

The consequences of Cabinet Approval would:

- increase the Council's debt burden by £6m as S106 funds are insufficient
- create 130 surplus school places leading to closure of Pilgrim Foundation Schools or support a Developer in his Appeal against a Local Planning Authority
- contribute to financial and infrastructure "damage" to NNDC whilst financially enriching a Developer
- support a Developer in his Appeal against a Local Planning Authority
- deny public access to Officer evidence underlying the above assumptions

**Response:**

Cabinet is asked to approve a capital programme based on the agreed Schools Local Growth and Investment Plan. There is agreement regarding the need for places and approval is based on site availability, which is a matter for the local planning process. In line with our policy we have been working over the last five years to identify suitable sites to relocate and expand Holt Primary School.

- increase the Council's debt burden by £6m as S106 funds are insufficient

As a Local Authority NCC has a duty to provide sufficient places. If school places are needed, they have to be funded regardless of the availability of funding sources such as government grants or S106 developer contributions.

- create 130 surplus school places leading to closure of Pilgrim Foundation Schools or support a Developer in his Appeal against a Local Planning Authority

There is no plan to close Pilgrim Foundation Schools and no evidence that we would be creating surplus places. We are pleased with the success of the Pilgrim Federation and its four good schools, which are serving local villages. We aim to provide places close to where children live to enable walking and cycling to school. We will be providing more places in Holt for children who live in Holt and who will live in the new developments. We will be building a 21st Century school to benefit the children who live in Holt.

- contribute to financial and infrastructure "damage" to NNDC whilst financially enriching a Developer.

This is for NNDC to comment.

- support a Developer in his Appeal against a Local Planning Authority.

We are not supporting a developer, the Local Planning Authority originally supported this development and in line with planning processes, NCC is seeking to fulfil its duty to provide sufficient places and to address condition issues of an old Victorian school.

- deny public access to Officer evidence underlying the above assumptions

Queries relating to the proposal for a new school building for Holt are currently being dealt with a Freedom of Information request as appropriate.

### 6.3 **Supplementary Question from Mr Richard Carter**

Will Cabinet suspend this recommendation and reassess the evidence ?

- NCC assessed its Education Contribution as £334,000
- The Developer assessed the benefit to NCC as £743,000, and charged this against District Council Planning Obligations.
- The £409,000 difference significantly increased Open Market Housing to the benefit of the Developer whilst reducing the Affordable Housing entitlement of the District

#### **Response:**

I cannot comment on the above. These are questions for NNDC as they relate to

the local planning process.

#### 6.4 **Question from Sue Catchpole**

As Norfolk has the highest percentage of Primary School age pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs in the East of England and indeed a higher percentage than England, what is the strategy that this council has implemented to ensure that these Norfolk children have received the support they have needed during the pandemic and for these children to adjust to the 'new normal' in September?

#### **Response:**

We have previously recognised our challenges to address a range of SEND in Norfolk and our SEND Strategy together with the SEND and AP Transformation Programme has been widely communicated. During the COVID-19 crisis we have been working with schools and providers to provide support for all children, including those with social, emotional and mental health needs. This included both bespoke support for individuals (details outlined below) and extensive transition support co-created with professionals.

The Transition Toolkit Recovery and Learning contains a wide range of resources including support for mental health (Aspect 7 of the toolkit). Schools and providers are pro-active in planning both their curriculum and support for children and young people when they return in September. We also work closely with our colleagues in the health sector, who have launched high quality resources such as 'JustOneNorfolk' ([www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk](http://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk)) and Kooth an app for young people to support mental well-being.

We will be working with schools as they take advantage of the National Tutoring programme and other measures to support learning and increase resilience.

#### Support during the pandemic

- Bespoke support, guidance and advice has been provided for many pupils, for pupils on school rolls and for pupils who the Local Authority has a direct responsibility for, to enable pupils to attend settings where deemed appropriate
- Additional support and capacity has been bolstered into teams providing this support including from specialist teams facilitated by a central triage system within Children's Services Learning and Inclusion 'Inclusion Team'
- Points of contacts for schools have been streamlined through one specialist team but additional methods of contacting the team have been developed so that advice and support can be accessed more quickly and easily. Children's Services teams across multiple departments have signposted to these to ensure professionals and schools know how to access support within NCC.
- The Norfolk STEPs team has been refocused to provide practical support and advice for families who are supporting pupils at home who have social, emotional and mental health needs. This has included providing practical parenting support to help prevent behaviours escalating to help create calmer, safer and more consistent family responses to children and young people. This support has been accessed by schools, settings, and professionals across Children's Services including High Needs SEND teams, social workers and Early Help practitioners - around 100 requests for support

- have been received and responded to and this is continuing over the summer break
- Some of the most vulnerable pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs have been prioritised for the most intensive support, including attendance at commissioned alternative provision settings

#### Transition Support

- Specific transition support, guidance and advice has been provided, based upon advice from the DfE, PHE and NCC H&S team, to support the return of pupils in September. This has been produced by a multi-disciplinary team across Children's Services.
- Existing commissioned emotional support is being focussed on supporting children and families who may find the return to school difficult where children may be experiencing attachment difficulties
- The inclusion and outreach services which support schools, settings and colleges are ready for a possible surge in requests for support in September: this includes ensuring points of contact continue and that the breadth of specialist services which have supported schools and settings will continue to be available to provide bespoke support, guidance and advice through the transition period back to school.

#### 6.5 **Question from Dr Andrew Boswell**

The Council has stated that it seeks to improve the environment with the Norwich Western Link, but codes concerning environmental issues are lacking in the tender notice. In particular, codes 71313000-5 (Environmental engineering consultancy services) and 71313400-9 (Environmental impact assessment for construction). Does this mean that there will be other tenders for the environmental impact assessment and environmental engineering related to the scheme?

#### **Response:**

CPV codes are a system of classification for public procurement which uses standardised vocabulary to help procurement personnel classify their contract notices consistently and to make it easier for suppliers and contracting authorities to find notices.

The main CPV code used in the OJEU Contract Notice was 45000000 Construction Work, because this is the core requirement for this procurement. Only a Contractor capable of constructing the Norwich Western Link will be able to bid. If they do not have the specialist skills (e.g. environmental engineering consultancy services) to meet the requirements in the contract documentation, they will be able to sub-contract to a company with those skills. The contract documentation clearly lays out the requirements for the environmental aspects the contractor will be required to deliver.

The additional CPV codes used include 71000000 (Architectural, construction, engineering and inspection services), which is the top level of the hierarchy and therefore includes 71313000-5 and 71313400-9

#### 6.6 **Question 1 from Bryan Robinson**

I am concerned at the limited number of CPV Codes in the Tender Contract Notice emphasising specialist works only. Is this likely to lead to a legal challenge as many elements of work particularly Code 45233000 (Construction, foundation and surface works for highways roads) are excluded?

**Response:**

The reasons for this are set out in the response to Dr Boswell's question at 6.5 above.

The main CPV code 45000000 and the additional CPV code 452000000 (Works for complete or part construction and civil engineering work) include CPV code 45233000 in their hierarchy. It is not necessary to list every single CPV code which may apply.

**6.7 Question 2 from Bryan Robinson**

The list also excludes any reference to relating to the landscaping for roads and motorways under Code 4511273000 which is a key environment issue. How is the Council going to ensure that the shortlisted contractors have this expertise and undertake the 3 year maintenance and replacement policy? I trust the omission does not indicate an intention to contract this work separately as the NDR with its failed performance issues.

**Response:**

Please see answer to 6.5 above.

The main CPV code 45000000 includes CPV code 451127300 in its hierarchy.

The contract for the Norwich Western Link consists of three stages, with the third stage being 3 years of landscape maintenance. This stage 3 of the contract has been included as it better allocates the risk of any planting attrition to the contractor.

**6.8 Question from Lucy Shires**

As the Council who spends the second lowest amount in the East of England and significantly less than the average National spend on Safeguarding children and young people's services, when will we see the impact report to fully understand the effect of this council's underinvestment in the safeguarding of our young people?

**Response:**

The 2019/20 Budget for Safeguarding Children and Young People's services as per the Section 251 published figures was £19.942m compared to £16.413m in 2018/19. An uplift of £3.529m, an increase of 21.5% Year on Year. The published figures are not yet available for 2020/21 however there has once again been significant additional growth and capacity in the service with new support services and a new social care operating model. The increased investment has improved performance in key areas, including evidence we are supporting children and families earlier.

**7.1 Question 1 from Cllr Steve Morpew.**

It is extremely important that Council contractors WSP do not trap bats when they are heavily pregnant or have young dependent pups, because of the potential harm this would do to the pups of this protected species. Why has the council proceeded with trapping barbastelle bats at a site to the south of the proposed Western Link Road?

**Response:**

It is important that we are able to gather data about this protected species in order to inform measures to protect and support bats as part of the Norwich Western Link project.

The County Council sought approval from Natural England, the Government's advisory body for the natural environment, through their licencing process. We will of course always follow the advice of key bodies like Natural England and throughout all stages we have arranged and carried out activities in accordance with the licence and conditions they have issued to us. We would not progress any surveys without their prior approval.

In this case, Natural England issued us with a licence to carry out these surveys. Natural England reportedly subsequently received evidence that the bats in this area of Norfolk have different mating habits than other populations nationally and issued an amended licence. We stopped the surveys originally planned and have made new arrangements that meet the requirements of the revised licence.

It is for Natural England to determine whether and when it is appropriate for surveys to be carried out.

**7.2 Question 2 from Cllr Steve Morpew**

How many pregnant or lactating barbastelle bats is it acceptable to the Council to trap during this process and how many have been trapped so far?

**Response:**

No pregnant or lactating bats have been trapped.

Surveyors working on our behalf had planned to start carrying out radiotracking surveys on private land on the evening of Friday 24 July, in accordance with the licence issued by Natural England. The selected location for the trapping was in a woodland on private land where we have the permission of the land owner.

However, at around 9.15pm, whilst setting up the nets, the surveyors were interrupted by a group of objectors who had trespassed onto the private land in order to confront our surveyors. The police and the landowner were called and eventually the group appeared to leave the immediate area, however the surveyors had ongoing concerns that the objectors had remained nearby. Shortly afterwards the survey was aborted as our surveyors felt bat and staff welfare could be compromised by continuing to work in these conditions.

It is unfortunate that our surveyors found themselves in this situation and that some campaigners felt it necessary to behave in this way. Staff were on site to carry out

legitimate and lawful surveys that have been licensed by Natural England. A condition in the Natural England licence for this work states:

*'Trapping must be suspended if heavily pregnant or suspected early lactating bats of any species are being caught in high single figures on any given survey night.'*

**7.3 Question from Cllr Emma Corlett**

The ability for children to safely play outdoors is more important than ever, yet of the 77 councils who support Play Streets, Norfolk is the only council who charges for road closures. Any charge is prohibitive to the most disadvantaged communities, including Town Close. Will the cabinet member therefore commit that there will be no charge to communities who wish to close their road for Car Free Day in September?

**Response:**

We have agreed to not only support Car Free Day in Norwich, but to roll it out across the county and encourage residents in all local communities to apply to close their road should they wish. There will obviously be certain restrictions on the types of roads that can be closed but you will be pleased to hear that we have agreed to waive fees on this day. We hope that this will help to make the initiative as accessible as possible and support our wider long term aims to build strong communities and reduce pollution across the county. Further details on this initiative will shortly be published

**7.4 Supplementary Question from Cllr Emma Corlett**

Will he further commit to explore permanently scrapping all charges for street play road closures?

**Response:**

We are looking at Car Free Day as the starting point but will be looking closely at what more we can do in terms of promoting street play road closures moving forward. So yes, I will certainly commit to exploring it.

**7.5 Question from Cllr Jess Barnard**

Following the comments made at People and Communities Select Committee by Conservative councillors regarding young people, will the cabinet member for children's services condemn the unfounded and sweeping accusations made against the young people of Norfolk, and thank our young people who throughout this pandemic have volunteered in covid response teams, raised money for local services, been essential workers, young carers and overwhelmingly taking precautions against covid to protect their communities?

**Response:**

Young people have had to cope with enormous changes to their lives during Covid. Such changes and sacrifices have impacted on their wellbeing, their relationships, their learning, activities and routines. Young people in Norfolk have undoubtedly made significant and invaluable contribution during this time. They have supported not only one another and their families, but also their communities. They have also helped NCC and our partners to plan and evaluate how we deliver our services

through the pandemic. During lockdown, young people have shaped our media campaigns around safeguarding, support for young carers, online safety, returning to school, young people's mental health and how we develop and reshape services and support for young people going forward.

While any community will have pockets of individuals, young and old who choose to ignore guidance, the vast majority of young people have joined with the collective effort to keep Norfolk safe and they should be recognised and thanked for that effort.

**7.6 Question from Cllr Colleen Walker**

What steps is the council taking to add to the numbers of laptops available to young learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in addition to the 1800 already distributed?

**Response:**

Through our work to distribute laptops to children with a social worker we have learned that about 60-65% of identified children required a device. A very small proportion of parents even returned their device. We already had a very successful scheme to provide devices for looked after children. For other disadvantaged children, schools are provided with Pupil Premium Funding and can consider how they utilise this, particularly as recent government guidance contains an expectation that schools deliver online and remote learning in the event of further localised lockdowns. Some schools are already using Pupil Premium funding to provide devices. In line with our role, we will support and challenge schools to have robust systems for online and remote learning for all children. Our Online Learning Toolkit was produced together with colleagues from schools and academies and includes a discussion of technology use.

**7.7 Supplementary Question from Cllr Colleen Walker**

What will the cabinet member do to ensure young people without access to technology do not fall behind with remote learning during possible future Covid spikes?

**Response:**

This response is answered within the main question.

**7.8 Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare**

Last month the children's cabinet member replied to a question 'It is not the place of schools, or Children's Services to feed all children, nor to monitor whether children arrive at school hungry, and therefore unable to learn effectively.' Whose responsibility is it to monitor whether children arrive at school hungry and therefore unable to learn effectively?

**Response:**

We recognise that whilst it is of course a parental responsibility to ensure that children have a nutritious breakfast and don't go hungry, some families may need support in the current crisis. Many schools do excellent work to support children and families by utilising the community offer available. We have provided a partner



resource pack (<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus/partner-support-pack>) to all schools, which details not only food related support, but also a much wider range of community and third sector offers to support families and children.

Where children arrive hungry and unable to learn, this can be part of a safeguarding concern. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. Schools and colleges and their staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating. Statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', clearly outlines the safeguarding responsibilities of all schools and colleges. School have safeguarding policies that outline this process.

**7.9 Question from Cllr Terry Jermy**

Further to the answer provided in May 2020, could the Cabinet Member for Assets provide an update in relation to the former Cosy Carpets building in Thetford and the legal case with Mr Nolan Guthrie referred to in response to my written question at the time, and confirm whether or not the case has now been resolved.

**Response:**

"All parties are working together to resolve the case in advance of reaching Land Tribunal. It is therefore inappropriate to discuss at this point"

Cllr Jermy has been previously briefed on this issue by officers and they are happy (subject to commercial confidentiality) to provide further updates, including once the case has been concluded.

**7.10 Question from Cllr Danny Douglas**

Can the County Council leader please re-examine the possibility of using a TRO to divert buses away from Magdalen Street leaving the street for more walking and cycling? The existing pavement space is not sufficient to allow social distancing at present.

**Response:**

To assist with social distancing, a one-way system has been set up as well as two metre markers put on the pavements on Magdalen Street.

Magdalen Street forms the main route in and out of the city centre from the north of the city for buses and Anglia Square is a busy bus interchange serving local shops and services. We are aware from feedback from businesses along Magdalen Street that access by public transport is very important to them.

There are currently no plans to remove bus services from Magdalen Street but will of course keep the existing arrangements under review. In the meantime, we continue to progress opportunities across the county to encourage and support cycling and walking, including through the significant Transforming Cities programme in Norwich.

**7.11 Supplementary Question from Cllr Danny Douglas**

Will the County Council leader join me in a request to Simon Bailey Chief Constable of the Norfolk Constabulary in requesting additional police resources to ensure the county councils scheme to promote licensed outdoor chairs and tables on St Benedict's and Exchange Street is a success without effecting the 10,000 residents of the city centre through anti-social behaviour?

**Response:**

The recently implemented emergency highway works on St Benedict's Street and Exchange Street were designed to allow more space for people to socially distance. Businesses who are interested in outdoor tables and chairs licenses are liaising with the City Council; it is unclear at this stage how many licenses will be requested and provided. At this stage, it is therefore not possible to ascertain what issue(s) may arise that require police intervention.

The question of how much police resource is required in these areas is something that Norfolk Constabulary are best placed to consider. I am sure that all public authorities across Norfolk will continue to work together to support communities across Norfolk to keep safe and well during Covid-19 recovery.

7.12 **Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby**

Last week the government made an announcement about tackling obesity. Given the motion brought to this council by the Labour group was to address food poverty and poor nutrition will the cabinet think again and review the way they perceive food poverty and take a more holistic approach to public health? Poverty and poor nutrition has a consequence and that often is obesity as cheapest food often has the worst nutritional value.

**Response:**

As you will already be aware the new approach to healthy living (or lifestyle behaviours) – which includes consumption of a poor diet as one of the key risk behaviours – was approved by Cabinet in October 2019. This approach, which was referred to as the Systems Approach, will aim to look wider than just commissioning services. It will include significant workforce development to upskill key workforces around behaviour change so that they can support people to address barriers to change. In addition, efforts to promote 'positive' health behaviours will be supported by communities. Looking at these issues more widely will start to address wider determinants such as food poverty and health literacy in ways that we have not been able to previously.

7.13 **Question from Cllr Mike Sands**

Holt Hall and Whitlingham Adventure Centre have supported children and young people though access to additional learning activities. Beneficiaries have included SEND learners. If these centres are closed what provision will fill the gap and what risks have been identified in not providing extended learning opportunities?

**Response:**

Our outdoor learning centres at Holt Hall and Whitlingham Adventure have been closed since March, in line with government guidance. Our review into the future of outdoor learning was also paused at that time, whilst we dealt with the ongoing emergency.

We have adapted the review, and this restarted on 17th July. We are asking schools, as the main users of these services, for their views on the future of outdoor learning in Norfolk. This engagement will enable us to consider any implications to Norfolk schools and Learners.

Press statement:

Holt Hall and Whitlingham Adventure have been closed since March, when the country went into lockdown. At that time, we had been reviewing our outdoor learning service because both centres were running at a loss and the buildings required significant maintenance. The financial situation is now even more challenging because Covid-19 has created a bigger funding gap for the council and the centres have been unable to operate or make any money.

Our review had been paused while we dealt with the emergency but will now continue. We are therefore asking schools for their views on how outdoor learning should look in the future. It might be that we provide more school-based support for outdoor learning, as schools make the most of their outdoor spaces, in light of the pandemic. No decisions have been made on the future of Holt Hall and Whitlingham Adventure and we are looking at a range of options, which include the possible closure of Holt Hall and the transfer of Whitlingham to a new provider.

**7.14 Question and supplementary question from Cllr David Collis**

What is happening to Norfolk's Music Service?

**Response:**

We are pleased to note that some of the provision offered by the Music Service will resume in September, as requested by schools. However, there will still be a need to consider how we can offer a cost-effective service, which can also be targeted to reach groups, including more disadvantaged children, who may not be able to afford individual instrumental tuition. As with many of our traded services we are considering the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the opportunities available in the future.

I was particularly pleased to witness an online concert organised by our Music Service during the recent lockdown.

**Supplementary Question from Cllr David Collis:**

Are cuts still being proposed?

**Response:**

This response is answered within the main question.

**7.15 Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp:**

This May, Cabinet set up a Public Sector Leaders' Board, of local government, health, police and Local Enterprise Partnership, to drive the local strategic agenda for Norfolk's recovery.

As the Local Member for Clenchwarton and King's Lynn South, I note the plethora of poor centrally-made strategic decisions (and omissions) affecting West Norfolk,

including -: unwanted incinerator contract; harmful traffic order to cannibalize the £5.3 million bus-and-cycle-only lane; economically damaging plan for an A10 roundabout before West Winch Bypass; and neglect of local health with the non-delivery of both the South Lynn Millennium Surgery and local hospital rebuild. What strategic decisions has the Board made to benefit West Norfolk?

**Response:**

The Norfolk Public Sector Leader Board is not due to meet for the first time until September 2020, therefore this Board has not made any decisions to date. A forward work plan for the Public Sector Leader's Board has been proposed at the Norfolk Leader's Group meeting on 31 July 2020 and that will be considered at the September meeting referred to.

7.16 **Question from Cllr Tim Adams**

How important are the agriculture and farming sectors to reviving Norfolk's economy following Covid and the challenges of Brexit?

**Response:**

Agriculture is a significant sector across Norfolk and is recognised as such, not least as one of the three key sectors outlined by the Local Industrial Strategy, alongside Clean Energy and Digital, as well as well as our Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy.

Supporting and lobbying for Norfolk farming is a key pillar of our Norfolk Rural Strategy and pivotal in time of change. As such, in the last week, we have responded to the DEFRA's consultation on a new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme, to ensure the programme attains the greatest possible participation by Norfolk farmers and land managers, with prompt and accessible payments for participants.

In the long term, water security will be vital for the continued strength of agriculture in Norfolk. We are board members of Water Resources East, together with a wide range of organisations with and interest in water resources and are building a strategy to achieve this. A current bid has been received into the Norfolk Strategic Fund to accelerate this development.

As well as supporting existing agriculture for the future, we are working hard to drive the industry up the value chain and see more of our produce prepared for market in the county; our Food Enterprise Park is part of one the first Food Enterprise Zones in the country and provides commercial space to encourage food production and processing.

The LEADER programme, administered by Norfolk County Council, with decisions made by community-based Local Action Groups, has demonstrated a high level of impact in rural areas – directing vital funds to support agri-tech projects and diversification. The programme has committed nearly £8.5m of grants for projects that include:

- increasing farm productivity
- supporting micro and small businesses and farm diversification
- boosting rural tourism

- increasing forestry productivity

**7.17 Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone**

What is the moral justification for trapping lactating barbastelle bats in the name of surveying in the proposed area of the Norwich Western Link, and why were contractors not wearing appropriate PPE?

**Response:**

These are legitimate and lawful surveys that have been licensed by Natural England for the purpose of gathering data about a protected species, in order to inform measures to protect and support bats as part of the Norwich Western Link project.

On Friday evening, the surveys were aborted while our surveyors were setting up their equipment after objectors had trespassed onto private land to confront our surveyors. They were aborted due to concerns that bat and staff welfare could be compromised by continuing work with trespassers present. Full PPE was present on site and would have been used for any bat handling activities as per guidelines for protecting bats, but was not being worn as the surveys had not started

**7.18 Supplementary Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone**

This is now the second time the council has made a mistake in trying to survey this land. Will he stake his cabinet position on there being no more?

**Response:**

I'm not clear what is being referred to here when Cllr Aquarone says 'This is now the second time the council has made a mistake in trying to survey this land'. The County Council sought approval from Natural England, the Government's advisory body for the natural environment, through their licencing process. We will of course always follow the advice of key bodies like Natural England and throughout all stages we have arranged and carried out activities in accordance with the licence and conditions they have issued to us.

I would like to categorically state that staff working on the project and our consultant and sub-contractor have conducted themselves professionally and with integrity at all times, in some very challenging circumstances. The actions taken by the group who confronted our surveyors on the evening of Friday 24 July are completely unacceptable.

**7.19 Question from Cllr Dan Roper**

Statistically Norfolk sees higher than national average excess winter deaths in our over 85s population (50.5% in 17/18 compared to 41.1% nationally), so what new approaches will the council take to reduce the levels of excess death amongst the 85s this winter?

**Response:**

Norfolk has a particular demographic profile with more retirees than other counties. As you would expect the County Council is already working closely with the Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group and other Health and Care system

partners. We are all planning for winter 2020/21 and drawing on the national report "Preparing for a challenging winter 2020/21" from the National Academy of Sciences, and taking into account the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. As well as reviewing the delivery of existing schemes to support winter planning, a number of new or enhanced initiatives are being developed. This includes strengthened work on flu vaccinations (including in care settings), step-down bed facilities to support people safely out of hospital, and a review of how we can ensure sufficient capacity in the community that keeps people safe and well. We will also continue to reinforce the important actions everyone can take to stay safe during the pandemic, including handwashing, social distancing, and self-isolating.

**7.20 Question from Cllr Tim East**

Will you give a guarantee that the council will not use the financial impact of Covid as a reason to reduce the future care packages for disabled people?

**Response:**

Norfolk County Council will not use the Covid-19 Pandemic to reduce any disabled persons package, this has been said before. Ensuring care packages are reviewed and 'right sized' is an ongoing part of the Care Act which is the legislative framework for the work of Adult Social Services. We continue to do this in line with our Promoting Independence strategy which seeks to reduce demand, re-able and build greater resilience in communities and families. Throughout the Pandemic the Council has done everything it can to protect those who rely on its services.

**7.21 Question from Cllr David Harrison**

During the pandemic and beyond, as a council with a greatly lower percentage of successful completions of drug treatments in non-opiate users than the rest of the region and indeed nationally; How have you taken the knowledge and instances of best practice from the other Councils in the East of England to improve the recovery rates for those people using the Council's services?

**Response:**

Although Norfolk has a lower percentage completion rate for non-opiate users than some other areas in the East of England, it is an improving picture. Throughout the pandemic, the County Councils drug behaviour change service provider, Change Grow Live (CGL), has remained open. They have continued to support all clients, positively contacting over 1800 clients per week through various digital platforms and via telephone. All CGL bases have remained open for people to access harm minimisation advice and equipment. New referrals have been managed based on support needs and those with high risk factors, including poor physical and mental health have been seen face to face by clinicians. Since April, CGL made the decision, supported by commissioners, not to discharge clients during lockdown, preferring to provide ongoing emotional wellbeing support and interventions during this very stressful time. However, as lockdown relaxes, clients who are ready are now being prepared for discharge with ongoing recovery support being in place.

We work very closely with colleagues in the East of England region and we have continued to meet as a region regularly over the last four months to share good practice. During the pandemic each local authority area has experienced similar practice, with services remaining open but moving to an online offer and clients not

being discharged.

**7.22 Question from Cllr Brian Watkins**

According to a recent survey from the Centre for Cities, Norwich has been identified as one of the slowest cities to recover from the coronavirus lockdown. What are the key actions the Council is taking in partnership with other councils and stakeholders, to try and address this worrying situation?

**Response:**

The Centre for Cities study measures footfall, not spending and confidence. As is well known, many of the City's businesses are in the financial and digital creative sectors, which have been able to operate effectively with home working (eg Aviva), while still contributing to the economy of Norwich. The safety measures we have had in place have meant that Norfolk and Norwich have had some of the lowest incidences of the virus in the country

It is also far too soon to talk about the recovery of any city from the pandemic at this early stage, in terms of footfall. In line with government guidance, non-essential shops have only recently re-opened, the leisure and cultural offer (eg libraries) that many people venture into the City for is only now opening up again, and not all of the City's car parks have yet re-opened. However, anecdotal evidence suggests the City is busy at weekends, since the re-opening of non-essential shops - last weekend St Andrew's car park was full, for the first time since lockdown.

The city of Norwich is central to the County Council's recovery plans, with a range of business and infrastructure-related interventions in place, to speed up the recovery:

- A £500k tourism project to support the City, as part of package of £2.225m of measures to get the Norfolk tourism sector back on its feet. The funding will support the improvement of the presentation, cleanliness and hygiene of key areas, communication of safety messages with visitors and visitor assistance. A small grants programme is also being developed for businesses to support the costs of making the changes needed to extend the season.
- Support for the city's Town Deal for c.£25m of funding from Government to improve the city centre for businesses and the local community.
- Securing over £30m of Transforming Cities funding, focussed on measures to help people's connectivity, allowing them to get to job opportunities, leisure, retail, etc.
- Securing £300k from Phase 1 of the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund, covering Covid signage, physical-distancing measures and closures to traffic on Exchange Street and St Benedict's, to help traders recover. A Phase 2 bid will be submitted by 7 August, looking at further recovery measures.
- Greater Norwich's pooled Community Infrastructure Levy (the Infrastructure Investment Fund) has opened a call for new infrastructure projects, with priority being given to those that support the economic recovery of Covid-19.
- In East Norwich, the Council is working with partners including Norwich City Council, Homes England and developers and landowners to produce a masterplan for the area, with the Council provide funding towards the plan.

We have also secured circa £50k for study into the buildability of links (road, public transport and walking and cycling) to open up the various sites

**7.23 Question from Cllr Ed Maxfield**

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman recently instructed the Council to provide more regular updates to its committee members on the number of children out of education in the county - and those at risk of having their education break down. Can the Cabinet Member for Children's Services tell us what plans he has for providing this information and what steps he will take to review Council practices where it risks failing to meet its statutory obligations to provide education for children?

**Response:**

We will be reporting routinely to People and Communities Select Committee starting from the meeting on 18 September 2020 for two academic years. We have extensive plans in place to as part of our SEND and AP Transformation Programme to address these issues. This includes, but is not limited to securing sufficient places for children with a range of needs. To date we have:

- Worked across multi-agency teams to enable full support around each child register under CME (Children Missing Education)
- Conducted regular welfare calls to the families these are continuing during the summer holiday
- Established a tuition framework, which is being added to on a regular basis
- Held multi-agency triage meetings to ensure the most appropriate support provided from the start
- Rapidly developed working practices to adapt to new ways of working – e.g. laptops provided to all who required devices through distributing refurbished LA laptops
- Ensured tracking of engagements through an attendance register
- Forged transition plans for all year 6 and 7 pupils
- Updated the CME register regularly
- Provided Free School Meals for all those eligible (vouchers)
- Secured tuition for all students, which is reviewed every six weeks and some continues throughout the summer

The LGSCO said:

The Council should provide its People and Communities Select Committee with regular updates on its performance for two full financial years in terms of the following:

- number of children out of education;
- average time for arranging alternative education provision for children who have been out of education;
- average time taken to produce final EHC plans and EHC plan reviews compared with statutory timescales; and
- number of upheld complaints about EHC plans and education provision from both the Council's own complaints process and us.
- These updates should be provided each time the Committee meets during the above period