

Cabinet
7 August 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

Public Question Time	
6.1	<p>Question from Laura Buckland Norwich Printmaking Hub is a non profit organisation, running courses that provide income to artists and tutors, offers work experience to students and graduates and provides affordable traditional skills to the local community. These creative courses require specialist equipment and a space that is not just accessible but also fit for purpose so we can continue our services. Having already relocated to Wensum Lodge and searched for appropriate venues in Norwich we know how difficult it is to find affordable venues for workshops like ours, can you guarantee our business a future by providing an alternative venue, in Norwich, that is both affordable and fit for purpose?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships I am very sorry that our decision to dispose of the site will affect Norwich Printmaking Hub and I can appreciate that this may not have been something that you were expecting.</p> <p>I am aware that your current lease was due to expire in February 2024 and we have sought to give you as much notice as possible about our plans. Our Adult Learning Team is carrying out work to identify and secure new locations for courses currently delivered at Wensum Lodge. The team would be happy to share information with you on the locations that they have considered to help you to identify a new location for your activities.</p>
	<p>Supplementary question from Laura Buckland Closing our studio for any period of time will greatly disrupt the running of our business, how will you compensate our freelance tutors who make a regular income from NPH?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships This is something for you to consider as a business. As I have said above, we have given you as much notice as we can and our Adult Learning team will be happy to share information with you about the alternative locations they are considering.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Tom Waterhouse The minutes from Cabinet on 5 June (Appendix A, 6.2) state “We [Norfolk County Council] are currently reviewing the evidence for, and potential benefits and disbenefits of low traffic neighbourhoods - based on experience and feedback from across the country.” What is the status of this review and how can outside organisations and the public submit evidence?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport No formal work has yet been started on this and we will wait to see if there is any new guidance to local authorities following the recent announcement from the Prime Minister that he has asked for a review of low traffic neighbourhoods in England.</p> <p>Our Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out a range of strategic objectives that, if delivered, will improve the environment for walking, wheeling, cycling and for public transport so that everyone has a choice on how to travel. The development of any schemes in Norfolk to meet this objective will be done in consultation with local elected representatives, the local community and other local stakeholders.</p>

	<p>Question from Tom Waterhouse Will the council be using the development funding it received from the Department for Transport (as part of the shortlisting to be a Zero Emission Transport City) to commission a high-level feasibility and initial scoping work around the delivery of LTNs across Norwich and if not, what will the funding be used for instead?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport No, the funding will not be used for feasibility and initial scoping works around LTNs. The development funding received from the Department for Transport is being used to support feasibility work related to the development of an action plan for the Transport for Norwich Strategy, as well as supporting the production of local cycling and walking infrastructure plans for Norfolk. We have also commissioned some scoping work around the movement of freight in urban areas, such as the use of electric powered cargo bikes and freight consolidation, and we are working on a countywide survey aimed at understanding peoples travel needs and behaviours and attitudes to travelling on different modes.</p>
6.3	<p>Question from Keziah Philipps British Council have said there are fewest creative hubs being identified in the East of England. Hubs make a difference in their communities in a multitude of ways, delivering social, cultural and economic value well aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals of Good Health and Wellbeing. How will that deficit be replaced if Wensum Lodge is closed?</p> <p>https://creativeconomy.britishcouncil.org/media/resources/Mapping_Creative_Hubs_In_England_.pdf</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships</p> <p>I appreciate the opportunity to respond on this important question. Whilst recognising that there is always more that can be done, Norfolk County Council has a strong track record in supporting creative practitioners and SMEs across the county.</p> <p>The East of England has one of the most successful creative universities in the UK – Norwich University of the Arts (NAU) – and Norfolk County Council works closely with NUA to ensure progression routes for graduates from the university.</p> <p>Norfolk delivered the largest number of activities in the UK as part of the national Creativity & Wellbeing Week 2023, with a larger number of creative or cultural organisations participating than in London.</p> <p>The Norfolk Arts Forum, administered by Norfolk County Council, is one of the largest creative networks of its kind in the UK, with more than 1,500 members including cultural organisations and creative practitioners.</p> <p>Norfolk County Council also successfully delivered Start East, a major programme supporting the creative and cultural economy, funded by ERDF and Arts Council England funding. Whilst the main delivery has been completed, Norfolk Arts Service, the Council's arts development team, continue to support the network created and a range of legacy activities.</p>

Supplementary question from Keziah Philipps

Could the budget for the original creative hub idea at Wensum Lodge be used to either adapt it to make it more viable for use by other small businesses or community projects or open another council or community based project there, for example through use of Norwich Stuff Hubs or Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) to set up a creative arts hub? If so please give us an explanation so that we can make a proposal.

<https://creativeeconomy.britishcouncil.org/media/resources/HubsReport.pdf>

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation

As was recently reported at July's Scrutiny Committee, a 'Stage 1' cost report on the works needed to modernise stood in February 2020 at £23m, although this figure will have now increased given the recent significant inflation in the construction industry. This is far in excess of the capital that was identified for the Creative Hub.

However, the Council are happy to consider any proposals for the site.

**Cabinet
7 August 2023
Local Member Questions**

Member Question Time	
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</p> <p>Following on from a report into the 3 deaths at Cawston Park, Healthwatch Norfolk has done a report into overall provision of care for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism in Norfolk. One of their concerns was the high turnover of care staff and a shortage of suitable care placements.</p> <p>The wider adult care provision in Norfolk also has a high turnover of staff, difficulties in recruitment and placements. This must also be a cause for concern with our vulnerable group, so what measures are in place to make sure the high turnover of staff and difficulties in recruitment doesn't negatively affect safety for all our adults in care?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services</p> <p>Thank you for your question. The people that work in adult social care are critical to ensure the sustainability of our social care services. Over the last few years, like most employment sectors, social care has struggled to recruit adequate staff numbers and has seen higher vacancies than normal. However, vacancy levels are starting to decrease and locally some providers are reporting an improving position. However, there is no doubt that recruitment and retention has been particularly challenging as providers have struggled to afford to increase pay in line with some other sectors such as healthcare, hospitality and retail.</p> <p>As we reported to People Select Committee in July, we have extended our recruitment campaign, continued to support social care academies, provided retention workshops, and are working actively with the ICB and councils across the region to promote and support ethical international recruitment into the sector. We also recognise the particular challenges for care providers delivering learning disability and mental health services and we are exploring incentive options for recruitment and retention in these areas. Over the last three years the Council has worked with Suffolk County Council to deliver the Developing Skills in Health and Social Care programme, which has supported access to fully funded training across the sector. In addition to this the Norfolk County Council has worked in partnership with the ICB in offering specialist training in Positive Behaviour Support to all Learning Disability and Autism provision. This aligns to the increasing regulatory expectation from CQC from May 2022 for regulated Learning Disability and Autism provision.</p> <p>The Government has just announced additional Market Sustainability and Improvement funding to help support the adult social care workforce and increase capacity and we will be developing proposals to utilise this funding for Norfolk.</p> <p>In relation to the safe delivery of services, all providers will be working within their registration to deliver safe and appropriate care. Where providers contact the Council with concerns about safe staffing levels this will be followed up by teams, including the Integrated Quality Services, operational teams or safeguarding teams, as appropriate. Where there are concerns, the provision will be kept under review and where necessary measures taken to mitigate risks. Depending on the</p>

	<p>circumstances this could include placing restrictions on further admissions, additional visits, support and advice or additional community nursing provision.</p> <p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale Food vouchers for children eligible for free school meals were introduced in 2021 at £240 per year. This was inadequate, as many families in poverty don't qualify, but with food inflation soaring exponentially since then means it has been devalued by over £50 in real terms. With inflation unlikely to be under control in the foreseeable future, what is the council planning to do to plug this gap and support these families?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services Over the last couple of years, we have used fully the additional Household Support Fund monies from central government to support individuals and families in Norfolk experiencing hardship, so that all households in the county can access hardship support, in a variety of ways, should they need it. As a result, our hardship programme has helped nearly 30,000 households in Norfolk since April this year and the current Household Support Fund is in place until March 2024. Last winter, over £5.37m (81%) of the additional household support funding the Council received was used to support households with children. Since April this year, £2.19m has been used to support households with children. This includes our cost-of-living voucher scheme for families with children eligible for free school meals, alongside wider financial support for families through the Norfolk Assistance Scheme. Through our Nourishing Norfolk work with partners, there are 19 community supermarkets, and this number will rise to 25 by the end of the summer, enabling families to purchase affordable and low-cost food. In addition to any support for children and families through our hardship programme, all children in reception, year 1 or year 2 are automatically entitled to free school meals. This is regardless of household income. Beyond these children able to access free school meals, the Council seeks to encourage every family who is currently entitled to means tested free school meals to access this support and as a result, the Council supports around 30,000 children across our primary and secondary schools who are eligible for means tested free school meals, at a weekly cost of approximately £450,000. For more information about the support that is available for families: Help with living costs - Norfolk County Council</p>
7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp Borough Planners recently confirmed the "worst case scenario" - all 1,100 Hopkins Homes could be built before the West Winch Bypass.</p> <p>Contrary to what last Summer's consultation led residents to believe. But on 15 March 2022, Highways wrote Hopkins showed it can build up to 300 homes on the A10 before it has to deliver a "link road" to the A47.</p> <p>Am I right in thinking this "link road" is not the £80 million Major Route Network Bypass, to route traffic and HGV's out of the village, but just a road through the development, and that therefore Highways has no cap on the development before the bypass is fully built?</p>

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Consultation for the West Winch Housing Access Road (WWHAR) included details indicating up to 300 homes being delivered with a connection to the existing A10, which is consistent with the Highways response to the planning application already submitted by Hopkins Homes.

The Hopkins application includes for the potential for consent to be granted for up to a total of 1,100 homes, but this is subject to significant new highway infrastructure within the development site and new junctions connecting to the A47, which would need to be similar in their location and size to the northern section of the WWHAR project.

In view of the scale of the highway infrastructure that would be required within the Hopkins development it is unlikely that the developer would deliver that, which is why they are working with the County Council and King's Lynn Borough Council and will be making a contribution to the WWHAR project through section 106 agreements linked to any planning consents. All parties are keen to complete the WWHAR as soon as possible, and the current timeline for its delivery indicates that very few properties will be completed before the WWHAR is opened. The aim is to deliver the WWHAR and the associated sustainable transport improvements for West Winch as soon as possible, with the current target opening date being 2027.

Second question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp

Why is Highways going against the evidence of its own report by Mott Macdonald in 2014, which modelled 1,000-car queues every day, a.m. and p.m. south on the A10 from the Hardwick Roundabout, if the 1100 -home development is built, without the bypass? The number of cars per household, generated from the development, could be much higher without the bypass, as West Winch is separated from King's Lynn by the strategic route network and major roundabout, and the A10 is a noisy, congested, high- accident environment for pedestrians and cyclists to negotiate. Highways will not be running a safe highway network if it does not follow its own report.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The 2014 modelling work is now nearly 10 years out of date. More recent modelling has been completed to support the development of the WWHAR project, and this is in the process of being further updated with 2022 survey data. It is right that all modelling is based on the most recent information and that is the case for the latest proposals in West Winch.

The Highways response to the Hopkins planning application accepts that some traffic could connect to the northern sections of the existing A10, but this has been capped at not more than 300 new homes.

As indicated above, the current timeline for the delivery of the WWHAR is that it will be completed by 2027, before any significant new housing development, which will minimise any impacts to the existing A10, but will also then enable the planned new housing growth area to be delivered as quickly as possible.

The proposals for the WWHAR include details for sustainable transport which will

	encourage more active travel and improve non-vehicular links to and from the town centre.
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby With some attempting to weaponise the environment for short term political gain what will the Leader do to promote rational debate to tackle the climate crisis and involve local residents in local initiatives, like traffic management schemes, to combat conspiracy theories and those who seek division rather than consensual solutions?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance Norfolk County Council is committed to supporting Britain's journey to net zero at the local level, doing so by showing leadership in making its estate net zero by 2030 and working with partners to help Norfolk achieve carbon neutrality.</p> <p>Our Climate Strategy, presented and approved to the May Cabinet meeting, involves working with others, not just other public sector bodies, but also local businesses and community groups, to ensure we achieve the best outcomes for the County. Community consultation is always a strong part of any scheme this Council carries out, with all views considered as part of wider decision making, and presenting reliable and credible information is always at the centre of any public communication this Council does.</p>
7.4	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett If Wensum Lodge is left empty it will need 24hr security to prevent vandalism and ensure the building is maintained to a sufficient standard. Given the length of time it has taken to repurpose historic buildings in King Street in the past, how much does the cabinet member intend to include for these purposes and business rates in the budget, and for what period?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation The County Council has not yet undertaken any security assessment of Wensum Lodge and is therefore not able to comment on any potential security costs or arrangements. This work will be undertaken as the plans for the decant from the site and the disposal plans have been developed, following on from the decision by Cabinet in July 2023.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Emma Corlett The budget agreed by council in February included more than £5m to upgrade Wensum Lodge in line with the exciting plans to make it a centre of excellence for the future. What has happened to that £5m?</p> <p>Response from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Thank you for your question. As I have set out previously to Cabinet and elsewhere, the tightening economic environment in which the Council is operating, and in particular the increasing costs of borrowing by the Council, have required a fundamental reassessment of our capital programme. This will help to ensure that the capital programme as a whole remains deliverable, robust and affordable in the context of limited revenue and capital resources. In support of this aim, a key principle of our approach must be that any previously allocated capital funding, if no longer required and justifiable by individual spending departments, should be</p>

	<p>carefully reviewed in order for it either to be allocated elsewhere on the basis of need, or removed from our capital spending plans.</p> <p>As detailed in the financial implications section of the “Adult Learning – Community Delivery” report to Cabinet in July 2023, there will be some costs associated with the withdrawal of the service from Wensum Lodge, for example to buy some new equipment at new or alternative locations. These costs can be calculated once the detailed planning for alternative locations has been completed. However, at this stage, it is expected that there will be a one-off capital cost in the region of £0.100m. As you have identified, there is currently an allocation in the capital programme for Wensum Lodge of £5.67m. In the context of the wider affordability review of the Council’s capital programme previously described, it is anticipated that these costs can be funded from this capital allocation with the remaining amount being released (i.e. removed from the capital programme).</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb A report published last week by the Administrative Justice Council ‘SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY: IMPROVING LOCAL AUTHORITY DECISION MAKING’ found that parental success rate of appeals to the SEND tribunal stands at 96.3% and identifies Norfolk as among the 14 LAs accounting for 40% (17,000) of all appeals during 2018-2022. Will the cabinet member give a date for producing an action plan with targets and deadlines for implementing all 16 of the recommendations in the report?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services First and foremost I deeply sympathise with the position of families who feel they have no option to appeal. The substantial majority of appeals lodged relate to the LA being unable to name the special school parents have requested for children due the ongoing and increasing demand for places against the availability of supply. With these appeals removed, Norfolk’s appeal rate would be substantially lower, and likely in the bottom quartile of all local authorities. The further investment being made on top of the £120m to create more special places and increase capacity and provision in mainstream schools is in response to this challenge.</p> <p>We are confident that the themes identified within the report already form part of Norfolk’s ongoing strategic priorities for SEND in Norfolk and so the report will be considered against the existing programme of transformation under the Area SEND and Alternative Provision strategy, which is currently being refreshed and co-produced with local partners, including parent carer forums and as part of the Local First Inclusion programme.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Cllr Maxine Webb Will the cabinet member provide details of the outcomes of appeals lodged in the past two years including how many are still outstanding and the cost to the council in legal fees?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The outcome of appeals is provided in in the table below. The cost of legal in financial year 22/23 was £747,600.</p>

	Appeal Allowed	Appeal Allowed in part	Appeal dismissed	Conceded	Consent order	Withdrawn	Struck out	Yet to be concluded
2022	18	3	2	24	112	47	2	44
2023 (to date)	3		2	9	23	9		133

7.6	<p>Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton With the former Angel Rd junior school building expected to be returned to the county soon will cabinet member use this opportunity to upgrade it into a school for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to help meet the targets agreed with the government in the Local First Inclusion strategy?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services As part of the process for any vacated property we consider the potential use of such assets for Children’s Service. This will involve how this building could support our Local First Inclusion Programme and will therefore be considered as part of the SEND Sufficiency and Capital workstream.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton Please confirm the council will insist that Evolution Trust pays the whole cost of dilapidations caused by the absence of maintenance to the building since taking it over and protection for the building from further degradation so it is returned to the council in the condition required by the terms of the lease?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services Local Authority officers will continue to work with Evolution Trust to ensure that the school is returned to the local authority in a suitable condition. To prevent any future deterioration, Evolution Academy Trust have decommissioned and board up the building to maintain its integrity and secure our asset. The trust is maintaining the grounds, as requested by Children’s Services, until the handover date back to the Local Authority. The date has not yet been finalised.</p>
7.7	<p>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare With many Norfolk schools and academies not following governmental guidance regarding affordable school uniform, will the cabinet member ensure applications to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme from parents faced with unnecessary additional uniform expenses during a cost of living crisis are processed speedily?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services I can confirm that applications to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme from Norfolk families for financial support with school uniform will be prioritised by the scheme to ensure that families eligible to receive school uniform vouchers do so in time to purchase school uniform before the start of the new academic year.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare What other measures will she put in place to help families meet the increasing costs to families with children during this cost of living crisis?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The Council’s Norfolk Assistance Scheme (now known as the Client Hardship Service) has supported Norfolk families in financial crisis since 2013. During 2022-</p>

	<p>23, the Scheme provided over 7636 awards to households with children in addition to holistic financial support in budgeting and grant assistance. The scheme provides food, fuel, support with payment of utilities and household items including clothing and school uniform vouchers among other items on a discretionary basis. Support is simultaneously then provided in terms of budgeting, debt and grant assistance. In the last financial year this included supporting families with the purchase of school uniforms for around 167 children. Families can find out more information via: Norfolk Assistance Scheme and if people are digitally excluded, they can call Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 who will make a referral.</p> <p>In relation to school uniform, information on the Norfolk County Council website: School uniforms - Norfolk County Council. has been updated to reflect the revised statutory guidance issued in 2021, and also signpost families to the support that is available through the Norfolk Assistance Scheme. Guidance was issued to all Norfolk Trusts and Governing Bodies that subscribe the Governance Support Service by the Council's Governance Support Service in December 2021 and again in December 2022 regarding the revised statutory guidance. The Executive Director of Children's Services will write to all schools at the start of the autumn term to highlight the requirements on schools and governing bodies as set out in the statutory guidance, including that parents shouldn't have to think about the cost of a school uniform when choosing a school for their child, that school uniform should be affordable, and the use of branded items should be kept to a minimum, and to encourage schools to provide opportunities for families to be able to buy pre-loved uniforms.</p>
7.8	<p>Question from Cllr Matt Reilly Boots the Chemist at UEA has for many years been the source of advice and medical supplies to the growing population of young students and UEA staff. Not only will its closure reduce easy access to a qualified pharmacist it will displace those needing help to other primary care settings and A&E adding even more pressure on an overloaded system. In the interests of UEA students and staff and to avoid the knock on effects to others using the health system will the cabinet member use his influence to try to persuade Boots to reverse the decision to close their UEA outlet?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing Thank you for your question. As you may know Norfolk County Council does not have responsibility for pharmacy services. We do however undertake a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment within Norfolk (published by the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board) which is reviewed quarterly. We have not formally received notification of the Boots pharmacy closure at the UEA however the decision made by Boots the Chemist to close a number of their pharmacies is a strategic and commercial decision and we cannot influence that. As Cabinet Member for Public Health, I fully support easy access to local pharmacy services for all of Norfolk's residents.</p>
7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy The Holiday Activity Scheme is crucial for many parents in the summer holidays, providing affordable childcare and allowing parents the opportunity to go to work. That is why I was disappointed to hear that some of the scheduled activities in Thetford have already not taken place this Summer.</p>

	<p>Could the Cabinet Member confirm if the Council is monitoring the activities across Norfolk and whether all activities are taking place as planned, or if there are any incidents of non delivery how these are being addressed?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services There have been no cancellations of any scheduled Big Norfolk Holiday Fun (HAF) provision in Thetford this summer. There are 8 providers delivering activities in 9 locations in Thetford offering 2,765 places for children and young people. The HAF team at Active Norfolk are in regular contact with all providers and are made aware of any cancellations or issues. The HAF team, alongside Early Years, Short Breaks and Children Services staff, are undertaking a series of quality assurance visits to Big Norfolk Holiday Fun (HAF) providers across the county for the duration of the summer holidays.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Brenda Jones In response to the call from the House of Lords Adult Social Care committee to make a commitment to remedy low pay in the social care sector the government response published on 31 July was that 'the increase in the national living wage will have a significant impact on pay in this sector', does the cabinet member share the view that the minimum wage is all that our care workers should expect?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services Thank you for your question. As a Council we have worked with social care providers in Norfolk to understand costs and ensure fee increases each year. Last year both older people residential and nursing and home support fees included a cost of care increase in addition to the annual uplift. In 2023-24, the Council invested £30m to increase fees from April 2023, with most fees seeing an increase of either 9% or 9.5%. This enabled the pay element of fee rates to be increased by 9.7% for all pay grades to enable differential, in line with the National Living Wage pay rate. Our engagement work with the market last year demonstrated that most providers were paying social care workers at rates 5% above the national minimum wage in residential care and 9% in home support.</p> <p>However, it is recognised locally and nationally that the impact of budgetary constraints for adult social care has capped the resources available to drive up sector pay and this has meant that in general it has been challenging for pay to be competitive with some other sectors, including the health sector. We all recognise the value of those that work in adult social care and the critical role that they deliver for our communities. NorCA has developed a job evaluation framework which looks at parity of social care roles with other sectors delivering similar services, such as the NHS, and this has been shared locally and nationally to help support the case for change.</p>
	<p>Second question from Cllr Brenda Jones As much as I welcome the 60 new independent living homes for Hunstanton the requirement to meet the needs of Norfolk is closer to 500 new homes every year to 2028. How does she expect those needs to be met?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services Thank you for your question. The original business case noted that Norfolk required 1135 units of affordable rented accommodation. Our latest position statement</p>

	<p>updates that demand to 1057 by 2028. We expect wider demand for owner/occupier, shared ownership and private rental units to be bought forward through the wider housing market including requirements by local housing authorities in their local plans - there is a mixed economy of demand in which NCC plays its part in ensuring that sufficient affordable rental units are available.</p> <p>I am pleased to let you know we have a healthy pipeline of specialist housing schemes which are currently in confidential pre-planning stages. I am very much looking forward to bringing these schemes to Cabinet in due course.</p> <p>Nutrient Neutrality, as you will be aware, has caused delays of over 18 months to housing development progress across a wide area of Norfolk, and some of our own Independent Living schemes have also been caught up in this delay. We are confident our colleagues in housing authorities are getting closer to a solution so we can get on with business and continue to bring much needed specialist housing for our residents.</p> <p>I am happy to invite colleagues to our schemes already open in Fakenham and Acle so they can meet the residents and see for themselves the benefits this long term programme is bringing to Norfolk.</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</p> <p>Compared to ordinary cars, SUVs are eight times more lethal to children than ordinary cars when they crash, and produce 25% more planet-heating carbon emissions. If SUVs were a country, they would be the 6th-most polluting in the world. There is absolutely no need for SUVs in urban areas like Norwich, where they take up disproportionate amounts of space, cause toxic air pollution, and put lives at risk. Some councils are introducing emissions-based parking charges so these over-sized vehicles are charged for parking at a rate that reflects the space they take up and their costs to society. Will Norfolk County Council work with district councils to introduce similar charges?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>The Council already works with the City Council on setting parking charges, which are different depending on the size of the vehicle. For residents parking in a controlled parking zone in Norwich, and who are eligible for an on-street resident parking permit, the costs of these permits are based on the length of vehicle, with differential rates applying depending on whether the vehicle is short (under 3.92m), medium (between 3.92m and 4.45m) or long (between 4.45m and under 6m) in length. The costs for long vehicles being nearly 80% higher for a 6-month period and more than twice as much for 12 and 18 months when compared to a short vehicle. Elsewhere, on-street parking in Norfolk is charged at the same rate regardless of vehicle size. There are currently no plans to introduce emissions-based parking tariffs.</p>
	<p>Second question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</p> <p>Lots of people live in residential areas that have been de-facto low-traffic neighbourhoods for years, and that are pleasant and uncontroversial places to live. The Transport for Norwich Strategy rightly aims to reduce traffic impacts in local neighbourhoods based around the principle of Healthy Streets. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that Norfolk County Council still backs the aims of its own Transport for Norwich Strategy?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The Transport for Norwich Strategy is an ambitious strategy that puts carbon reduction and better air quality at the heart of supporting a growing economy, strengthening communities and reducing our impact on the environment. We want to improve travel choices for people in Norfolk and I fully support the role that the Transport for Norwich Strategy has in terms of meeting these aims, alongside our other supporting strategies, that include our Local Transport Plan, Climate Strategy and Environment Policy.</p>
7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price</p> <p>Cllr Mason-Billig's predecessor as council leader dismissed concerns about the future of UEA by saying the university was a business like any other. UEA's plans to make over 100 staff redundant could have a massive negative impact on one of the county's major employers and one of our great assets as a county. What discussions has the new leader of the council had with the UEA about their financial situation, potential job losses, and the university's role in the Norfolk economy?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p> <p>The financial situation faced by the UEA is for them to manage in the way that they deem most appropriate. For us the UEA are a strategic partner. We have many common interests and opportunities as significant employers in our region, enhancing skills and innovation and being rooted in the fantastic county that we live in. I recently met with the new Vice Chancellor to explore ways we might continue to work together in what will be the UEAs 60th year. During the course of that conversation I was updated on the plans they have in place to not only manage their financial challenges, but to ensure the UEA continues to go from strength to strength.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Ben Price</p> <p>Levels of E.Coli in the Wensum have been found to be twice the level deemed safe for bathing water. Raw sewage has been pumped into Norfolk's rivers at a rate equivalent to 1,000 continuous days. Norfolk's beaches have been closed because of sewage discharges. Would the Cabinet Member swim in Norfolk's rivers or off our beaches where sewage has been poured out?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>We recognise and appreciate the Member's concerns for the quality of Norfolk's rivers and beaches. Norfolk County Council continues to work closely with the responsible authorities, most critically the Environment Agency, when incidents occur and on an ongoing basis with other key partners through countywide management programmes such as Water Resources East. The Council also has a strong track record in leading projects to improve water quality in our rivers, often with the support of funders including the National Lottery Heritage Fund.</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Catherine Rowett</p> <p>The Early Years Alliance representing childcare providers has warned that the Government's touted promise to expand free childcare is undeliverable, as providers simply do not have the capacity to offer more free places. The Government's policy seems to have been announced with consultation without childcare providers. How is</p>

Norfolk County Council engaging with childcare providers to assess capacity and what support is needed for these vital services?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Early Years staff have had ongoing conversations with providers since the budget announcement was made earlier in the year.

Many providers had been waiting for further detail on funding arrangements from Sept onwards before they made any firm decisions about potentially extending their offer to families. The funding levels were announced just prior to the summer break. We welcome the increase in available funding for Early Years. The Norfolk allocation was positive and in line to that of similar LAs.

It is too early to say what demand will result from the new entitlements, or how many providers will be willing to increase capacity to meet potential demand. The number of young children across most of Norfolk has been in decline for several years so in some cases the newly funded places may result in a change, rather than increase, in required capacity for many providers. We are positive about the potential of the expansion in funding which may provide new sustainable business models for small rural providers. The Early Years team have considerable experience and toolkits available to help providers to adapt and create new provision so we are well placed to continue to support settings over the coming months to develop provision. They will be supporting to providers to deliver both the extended entitlements and the wraparound primary school childcare offer can work alongside each together to provide additional financial and practical support across the private, voluntary and maintained sectors.

The Department for Education are currently holding a consultation on the new funding arrangements that will be in place to support the extended entitlements. We will be responding to this and encouraging the representatives on the Early Years reference group to contribute too.

Second question from Cllr Catherine Rowett

Last year saw a change in direction in British farming - artificial fertiliser use was down, and crop yields were, seemingly correspondingly, up. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that Norfolk County Council is working with farmers, including those on county farms, to discourage excessive use of artificial fertilisers, which as well as impacting on yields can also pollute our waterways and are a major source of carbon emissions?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Norfolk County Council would encourage all farmers to work with their agronomist to make judicious use of all inputs, including artificial fertilisers. This should include discussions on the best way to apply inputs in a manner the best suits the unique environmental conditions of each farm. All inputs and fertilizers should be applied in a way that protects watercourses and the environment.

Norfolk has many organisations such as Wild Ken Hill who are pioneers in new, low impact farming techniques including minimal use of artificial fertilisers, and the Council continues to support and lead on a number of innovative projects within the county which are developing sustainable new practices for land management.

7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins</p> <p>Under the proposed County Deal for Norfolk, the Council would get control of the adult education budget and the opportunity to decide locally what the money is spent on. Can the leader please explain why the decision to dispose of Wensum Lodge could not have waited until the final decision on the deal has been determined?</p>
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships</p> <p>It is important that we use whatever funding is available to Adult Learning efficiently so that we can deliver as many learning opportunities as we can. The Wensum Lodge building is inefficient to run. The utilisation of the space on site has been reducing as learner habits have changed which means relative costs per course have been increasing. It is important that we get the best value from the funding that we have.</p>
	<p>Second question from Cllr Brian Watkins</p> <p>The response to recent refugee crises by this council has been commendable, over the last 2 years we have welcomed and offered a safe haven to many people, notably those fleeing the conflicts in Ukraine and Afghanistan. Is this council continuing to receive ample advice and guidance from central government on both the short and long term in what comes next for those still residing in the county?</p>
	<p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p> <p>Thank you for recognising the commendable efforts of the specialist teams who are the core to the success of refugee resettlement and support. It is important to recognise that this question groups various cohorts and schemes into one, which is misleading since these are different areas with different Central Government departments being involved.</p> <p>With respect to those seeking asylum, refugees or those resettled, Norfolk's programme is nationally recognised by the Home Office as exemplary practice and has been described as offering the 'Gold Standard' in refugee resettlement. Norfolk as received approximately 200 Syrians, 120 Afghans and nearly 1,400 Ukrainians under government schemes (safe and legal routes). A further 100 Afghans are imminently to be welcomed to the county in response to the government's planned closure of the bridging hotels. Resettled refugees receive a holistic support programme, funded by central government. Updates are received via the Strategic Migration Partnership who support us to deliver the programme. The collaboration of both Upper and Lower tier authorities has contributed to this success and demonstrates our abilities to work together to achieve these results. I would like to thank those officers of the council whose dedication and commitment to the refugee resettlement has made this happen.</p> <p>For the Homes For Ukraine, it is over 12 months since the commencement of this visa route and associated hosted accommodation programme, so the National Guidance for the programme is well-established and easily accessible on the gov.uk webpages. The Homes For Ukraine Programme Team at Norfolk Country Council join weekly meetings with DLUHC colleagues, with direct support mechanisms should there be any technical, policy or procedural questions Officers have.</p> <p>There is currently limited information from Central Government as regards the medium to long-term future of the scheme, (such as whether it will remain open, be extended, closed for new applications at a date to be set, etc). The current</p>

	<p>government guidance is that people in the UK via the sponsored visas of Homes For Ukraine, Family Scheme and Extension Scheme have 3 years leave to remain (with work rights and recourse to public funds), and under UK immigration law these visas are not currently routes to settlement; this was at the request of the Ukrainian Government.</p> <p>As at the time of writing, there has been no informal or formal advice from UKGov as to whether this is being looked at or will change in the coming months/years. Under UK law, Ukrainian people in the UK through one of the three sponsored visa routes (Homes For Ukraine, Family Visa, Extension Visa) are not people with refugee status or people seeking asylum.</p>
7.15	<p>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell</p> <p>What help or pressure can this council provide Vida Healthcare to resolve a growing issue facing residents in Fairstead, Gaywood South who feel they are unable to access a doctor easily following the closure of the Fairstead Surgery to patients, which is now merely used a storage facility, not to mention the huge impact this is already having on patients already at Gayton Road Health Centre.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>Thank you for your question. As you may know Norfolk County Council does not have responsibility for NHS primary care services so cannot comment specifically on the issues in Fairfield however the council continues to use its role in leading the Integrated Care Partnership to press for strengthened and sustainable primary care across the Norfolk and Waveney system and as Cabinet Member for Public Health, I fully support easy access to local general practice services for all of Norfolk's residents.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Rob Colwell</p> <p>At the last Cabinet meeting you stated that pollution on West Norfolk's coastline, leading to no bathing advisory, was not this council's concern. Following this, officers attended a multi-agency meeting with the environment agency, councillors and Anglian Water at Heacham Beach. Has there been a U-turn on this previous assertion?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p> <p>Norfolk County Council attends many partnership meetings across the county and in a range of capacities.</p> <p>And whilst this Council has a strong interest in supporting sustainable coastal communities and ecosystems, our overall position, as stated, is that the statutory agency responsible for water quality is the Environment Agency. Therefore, we will continue to support and work in partnership with the Environment Agency and other partners across Norfolk, including District Councils and Anglian Water, to seek a resolution.</p>
7.16	<p>Question from Cllr Tim Adams</p> <p>There is a long wait between the beginning of Traffic regulation orders and completion, especially those planned for rural settings. What are the current figures for both rural and urban TROs awaiting completion, what is the oldest scheme still awaiting completion and is there a priority to complete urban TROs over rural ones?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Traffic Regulation Orders follow a statutory legal process to ensure that any new restriction is enforceable by the relevant enforcement agency. The process typically takes 12 to 18 months, but this does vary depending on the outcome of the statutory consultation process. Part of the statutory process is a formal consultation exercise from which objections may be received and will need to be resolved in order to advance the scheme to the delivery phase. This can be time consuming and may result in delays to the scheme.</p> <p>There are currently around 90 individual TRO schemes being progressed across the county, which are a mixture of urban and rural locations. The oldest one dates from Spring 2021 and is in Downham Market.</p>
7.17	<p>Question from Cllr Stuart Clancy</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member for Highways confirm that Norfolk County Council will not be pursuing the implementation of an ULEZ zone in Norwich?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>There are currently no plans or funding in place for the implementation of an Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in Norwich or elsewhere in the county.</p>