

Cabinet
6 March 2023
Public & Local Member Questions

	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from Liam Calvert On 27th February a cyclist died after a collision on Norwich's ring-road involving the driver of a motor vehicle. There have been around 200 collisions resulting in serious injury or death to cyclists and pedestrians in Norwich in the last five years. Not only do these collisions destroy lives, the perception that the roads are unsafe significantly reduces people's freedom to travel in the way they choose. Vision Zero strategies involving safer speeds, junctions, behaviours and vehicles have been successful in reducing road casualties in many cities. Will the cabinet undertake, within 6 months, to publish a plan based on Vision Zero principles and in collaboration with Norfolk Police.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The Norfolk Road Safety Partnership is committed to delivering a new Road Safety Strategy based on 'Safe System' principles. The 'Safe System' approach is closely aligned with Vision Zero and has the long-term goal for a road traffic system which is eventually free from death and serious injury. The Safe System is based on five principles: safe vehicles, post-crash response, safe roads, safe speeds and safe road use. Planning work for this new Safe System Strategy is currently taking place with input from all members of the Norfolk Road Safety Partnership. With regard to cyclist safety, several projects and initiatives are already taking place. The Transforming Cities and Active Travel Fund are providing opportunities to radically improve cycling and walking infrastructure across the county. Our Road Safety Team is expanding Bikeability cyclist training having secured Active Travel England and Capability funding. We will also working be with the police on a publicity campaign based around keeping cyclists safe.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Calix Eden The First Norfolk & Suffolk bus services 24 and 24A running through Thorpe St Andrew are particularly unreliable and many residents have complained. In one case a resident could not hold down her job because of this unreliability. Can the cabinet member for highways put pressure on the bus company to improve their service so it is reliable?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport We have passed on your concerns to First Bus who will look into the issues of unreliability and make improvements where necessary. It is also worth highlighting that the measures being implemented by this Council via the funding awards from government for Transforming Cities and Bus Service Improvement Plans, all aim to improve bus journey reliability.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Calix Eden We all know many businesses and work places keep going on Sunday. Therefore, many residents need to get to work on Sunday, but at the moment there is no service. It is also important for social and family contact, and important for the local shopping economy. Can the cabinet member for highways help convince First Norfolk & Suffolk to reinstate a Sunday service?</p>

	Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
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	We have asked First Bus if they can consider putting on a Sunday service, and evening services. We may be able to provide some kickstart funding for this but ultimately it would need to be financially sustainable in the long term for First to include it in their commercial network.
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**Cabinet
6 March 2023
Local Member Questions**

	Member Question Time
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</p> <p>A significant number of the risks listed in the NWL risk register (at least, the most recent version that I have been able to obtain) are listed as “low risk” when in fact they have already occurred and have led to rising costs and reputational damage. Notable among these is the claim that delay to getting DfT approval for the OBC would be low-risk. Furthermore, the risk register fails to address the risk to revenue reserves should the capital spent so far revert to revenue. In light of this, will the Cabinet Member commit to an immediate, complete and transparent overhaul of the risk register for the NWL?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Risk is closely monitored as part of the governance arrangements in place for all our major infrastructure projects. Delay getting DfT approval for the NWL is shown currently at a medium risk in the latest risk register. The programme implications related to the sufficiency of time risk allowances and terminal float allowances within the overarching programme is shown as high risk. The risk register is updated by the project team on a monthly basis and reported to the Project Board and Member Group where there is an opportunity to review and comment.</p> <p>The NWL risk register covers the capital project cost implications and not revenue implications. The report to Cabinet on 4 July 2022 set out the funding implications should the project not proceed to construction. The specific point related to revenue funding should the scheme not proceed is considered within the corporate risk register.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</p> <p>The completion of the “missing link” of the Riverside Path between St Georges Street and Duke Street would boost the local sustainable economy and benefit active travel. Disappointingly, this relatively small investment has been put on hold due to inflationary costs (and yet work on the NWL is proceeding despite those same inflationary pressures). Can the Cabinet Member confirm what is being done to restart the work on completing the Riverside Path?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Although funding towards this project has been secured from Sustrans and from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), through the Infrastructure Investment Fund, the project is currently paused due to cost increases due to the complexity of the build and inflationary pressures affecting many construction schemes across Norfolk and the UK. We are currently reviewing the design and considering options for the scheme to continue.</p>
7.2	<p>Question from Cllr Ben Price</p> <p>The riverside walk between St Andrews Hall and Pulls Ferry is one of the most beautiful in the country, helping to support tourism. This route is well used by cyclists. The one place where this journey is disrupted is at Whitefriars bridge, where it is dangerous to cross directly. Our current environmental policy states that we will support the community to make sustainable travel choices by working to support alternatives to car</p>

	<p>travel including promoting initiatives that utilise cycling and pedestrian improvements. Does the cabinet member agree with me that we need to look again at the Whitefriars crossing, develop a sensible scheme, ready for delivery once funding becomes available?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The River Wensum Strategy outlines a range of projects aimed at enhancing the river corridor through improved access and attracting inward investment. Whilst the delivery plan for the strategy doesn't include any proposed improvements at Whitefriars bridge, officers would be happy to discuss with Cllr Price what improvements he feels are required at this location. The Local Member Fund presents an opportunity for a crossing assessment at this location to be funded. This would be carried by our network safety team, who would consider the potential usage and safety aspects such as the brow of the bridge possibly obscuring the crossing</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Ben Price At the February 2022 budget council, Greens proposed amendments that would have helped establish low-traffic neighborhoods, covered cycle parking, and parklets. Residents I've spoken to in Norwich overwhelmingly would like to see those in place now, helping us to transition away from polluting car dependency. Can the cabinet member confirm when these schemes will be coming forward, and will he work with me to help make Norwich a priority for their introduction</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Norwich was one of three Cities nationally shortlisted as a Zero Emission Transport City (ZETC) and we are currently awaiting further information from government on the next steps. However, some development funding was allocated to the County Council to enable initiatives aimed at reducing emissions and car dependency to be investigated and we are in the process of commissioning some initial scoping work around this. Funding to deliver such initiatives would need to be secured before we could say when they could come forwards.</p>
7.3	<p>Question from Cllr Paul Neale Many residents have complained of poor customer service and higher costs since the Car Club transferred to Enterprise. Green councillors have repeatedly asked for details of the following in order to evaluate the service: Details of the contract with Enterprise, especially management of prices, and responsibility for contract management; Customer numbers and number of cars available since the transfer; Equalities assessment and environmental impact assessment of the transfer; Objectives for roll-out of EVs; Objectives for growing the service and how these will be monitored. Will the Cabinet Member agree to provide me with these details so that this vital service can be effectively monitored and managed?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Detail has been previously shared on the rationale behind the transition to Enterprise and the impact of a significant rise in running costs including fuel prices, which coincided with the transfer of the service to Enterprise Car Club. The increase in car club membership costs is not unique to the service in Norwich and are reflected across the UK and is not limited to just Enterprise Car Club. Many of the details requested are commercially sensitive but I have asked officers to make contact with Cllr Neale to discuss the performance of the scheme.</p>

Second question by Cllr Paul Neale

In January 2022, Cllr Proctor confirmed that the UK has very low levels of proven electoral fraud, as Cllr Osborn raised concerns about voter disenfranchisement under the introduction of Voter ID. Cllr Proctor called this a “difficult issue”. Has he expressed these concerns to the Government, and what is the council doing to ensure that voters are not disenfranchised by the introduction of voter ID?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy

The District Councils conduct all NCC elections on our behalf with the next full council election taking place in 2025. The Democratic Services Team have a close working relationship with the election teams in each district and provide support, information and guidance as required. In relation to the introduction of voter ID, the election teams in the districts have been put in touch with NCC officers in Adult Social Services and with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team so they can work together to ensure that groups and communities in Norfolk are correctly signposted and receive the help and information they need. The need for voter ID has been and continues to be well publicised.

7.4

Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp

When the Conservative Administration made a mistake in proposing to take away the Free School Meal Holiday Vouchers, from children on free School meals, last year, I successfully campaigned to bring this vital lifeline for needy families back. Now that food inflation is soaring at 16.7 per cent and the Government may raise the Energy Price cap in April allowing electricity prices to rise by 40 per cent, the School Meals Vouchers are needed more than ever. Will the Conservatives keep the Free School Meals Vouchers for the coming tax year.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The government recently issued guidance around the next phase of the household support fund which will run from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. Funding has been confirmed at the same level as previous rounds, meaning we have £13.4 million to support Norfolk Households facing hardship over the next 12 months. Last April the Council re-affirmed our commitment to support families eligible for free school meals, with the provision of monthly vouchers. This approach recognises that hardship is not limited to the school holidays. We provided vouchers to value of £15 per child, per month with an additional £30 at Christmas, when costs are higher. We are currently finalising our package of support for the next financial year but there is a firm commitment from the Council to continue cost of living support for free school meals eligible families during the forthcoming period.

Second question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp

Government awarded £24m for the King's Lynn STARS Project for Sustainable Transport and Regeneration, an evolving project to increase sustainable transport and routes into King's Lynn around Southgates.

Can some funding be used to repair the West Lynn Riverbank footpath to increase Active Travel into King's Lynn South and competent persons be despatched to inspect and repair the damaged treads of the West Lynn Ferry Landing Stage and slippery concrete slope. I took advice from the Health and Safety Executive and safety is an issue for enforcement from Environmental Health. It is appalling that this Conservative-run Council does not take safety of residents of the Borough of King's Lynn seriously

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>The £24m funding referenced is for a specific scheme as detailed in the funding submission. It is unlikely this funding could be used on other projects, however, the Local Member Fund could be used for the repairs highlighted. Please contact your local Highways Engineer to discuss these proposals if you are willing to fund these from your allocation.</p> <p>The County Council are also jointly working in partnership with the Borough Council to investigate the feasibility of making improvements to the access points leading to the West Lynn Ferry. The study, which is in its early stages, is intended to help clarify ownership of the component structures and will identify how any improvements could be funded.</p> <p>Given the safety concerns highlighted above, an urgent joint County / Borough inspection of the access points for the ferry has been arranged.</p>
7.5	<p>Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone</p> <p>What can this Council do in order to move Norfolk up from the bottom band of nursery hourly pay rates, in order to ensure the availability of day-long, two year plus settings in the towns and villages on which our rural communities rely?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>What can this Council do in order to move Norfolk up from the bottom band of nursery hourly pay rates ...</p> <p>Funding for Early Years is received from central government using a National Funding Formula, which was introduced in 2017 following a national consultation and gives Norfolk the lowest possible rate - see Early years funding: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). We are in full agreement with Early Years Providers that increases to rates of funding are insufficient to cover the rising staffing and utility costs which are directly or indirectly met.</p> <p>All funding is directly linked to children's attendance, and we have been in a period of significant decline in numbers of children in the county for several years which would have resulted in some changes to the childcare market even if funding increases had met rising costs. We have also seen a change in the way parents are choosing childcare. The rising costs for families and more flexible working options have had an impact on the demand for childcare. The percentage taking up their funded offer has increased, but many providers report that fewer parents choose to top up their EY funded sessions.</p> <p>We already have regular meetings with regional DfE colleagues to discuss the challenges facing the early years sector in Norfolk and we raise our concerns about the impact of the low level of funding that Norfolk receives. We also attend the DfE/LA working group for funding, which enables us to pose questions in relation to early education funding.</p> <p>... to ensure the availability of day-long, two year plus settings in the towns and villages on which our rural communities rely?</p> <p>The formula for distributing the received early years funding locally is set by Norfolk County Council on the basis of recommendations from Schools Forum, following a sector consultation and in discussion with the EY reference group. The formula was discussed on the 27th of January under item 4c Norfolk Schools Forum agendas and</p>

[papers - Schools](#). The maintained nursery school representative, Early Years representative and many others who have Early Years provision as part of their school or trust took full part in this discussion. The responses to the consultation have been agreed by the consultative group and Schools Forum, results have been shared with providers.

The locally agreed formula for 3 and 4 year old children does include a supplement for flexibility, which increases by 10p per hour the funding for providers who open for extended hours and 10p per hour for quality where staff meet a higher qualification standard. The formula does not include a sparsity/rurality supplement. The clear steer from providers in recent years has been that any increase in funding be used to fund an increase in the base rate, to benefit all providers equally.

Norfolk county council does provide additional sustainability funding of up to £10,000 to provide financial help a provider overcome a short-term financial issue. For small rural providers this has helped to keep some providers open when numbers fluctuated within a fundamentally viable business. [Other funding for early years providers - Schools \(norfolk.gov.uk\)](#).

The highest level of demand for Early ears childcare is during school hours in term time for funded children, outside of these hours demand is much lower and sporadic, and therefore expensive to provide - which makes it challenging for group providers to find a business model that works in rural towns or villages. Typically, in these areas there will be group provision within school hours, often run by or on a school site, with any additional hours being provided through childminders who operate with significantly lower overheads. There has been a decline in the number of childminders in the county and we do have an active recruitment campaign which we target in areas of the county where we need additional provision. We have enhanced the support we provide to enable new childminders to meet Ofsted's registration requirements, and this includes fully funded support and training from the point that someone registers their interest in becoming a childminder, and then support and heavily subsidised training remains available throughout their career as a registered childminder. We have recently also enhanced the process through which we support existing childminders, including at least termly 1-1 contact with a member of the early years team, to support them to provide high quality, sustainable provision. We have recently created a childminder consultative group to allow us to have debate about the challenges and issues that childminders face specifically.

7.6

Question from Cllr David Sayers

What is the Cabinet Member for Children's Services perspective on students protesting for access to unlocked toilet facilities during lessons if necessary, and does the Member believe that schools should be provided with guidance on when students should be permitted to use toilet facilities?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

All but one secondary schools in Norfolk are academies and part of multi-academy trusts (MATs), governed by a board of trustees. Academies are directly funded by the Department for Education and independent of local authority control. The trustees set and oversee the implementation of all policies and procedures for their academies. For the one local authority maintained secondary school, the local governing body sets and oversee the implementation of all policies and procedures. It is not a role of the local authority to scrutinise policies or procedures for schools or academies. If we have

concerns about the policies and procedures of a local authority-maintained school there are powers of intervention we can use.

It would not be unusual for a school to want to discourage students from using toilets during lesson time, as this is a disruption to learning and potentially a risk to pupil safety. However, all schools would have the welfare of the individual pupil at the forefront of their planning. All schools should also ensure that their policies and procedures do not unfairly discriminate against any group, for example female students or students with disabilities.

Where there are specific individual concerns for a child or family, all schools, including academies, are required to publish a complaints procedure on their website, and this route should be followed first where there are concerns about an academies policies or procedures. It is important that this is followed in all cases, as the design and implementation of specific policy and procedures need to be adapted to each individual school. For example, in this case, it is possible that toilets are readily available very close to classrooms in one school but are in a separate block in another – clearly those two schools cannot adopt the identical approach. It is also important that the rationale behind the policy is understood – there may be very good reasons why a school has adopted a particular policy that parents and students may not be aware of.

Regarding student protests, all schools and academies will have behaviour and other policies which would need to be applied to decide how a school responded to any protest by students that involved them breaking school rules or not attending lessons. Students have every right to express their opinion about school policies but must follow the schools' rules when doing so. Most schools will also have some sort of school council type system which is a mechanism for students to have their say.

The Department for Education produces guidance on complaints, including what to do if you are dissatisfied having followed the school's complaints procedure.

Second question from Cllr David Sayers

Has Norfolk County Council utilised private brokers to locate care homes for NHS patients and if so, what was the expense in previous fiscal year and the current fiscal year to date, given that there have been reports in the media that private brokers are earning millions for such a service?

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

Thank you for your question. Norfolk County Council does not use private brokers. We have an internal Brokerage Service that supports our sourcing of care and contracting arrangements and works alongside our practitioners, home first hubs and commissioners.

7.7

Question from Cllr Brenda Jones

As more and more Norfolk care providers are forced to leave the care market can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention give a commitment that no contracts will be agreed with providers who are rated as inadequate?

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

Thank you for your question.

The Council wants all people who receive care services to receive a good service, and where a provider is providing an inadequate level of service we will take steps to intervene. We do not place new work with inadequate providers, and where a provider with an existing contract with NCC receives an inadequate judgement, we will cease further placements.

Our Integrated Quality Service (IQS) reviews the quality of the care we commission and works with providers to identify quality improvement actions to support compliance. The IQS works closely with CQC. In some circumstances, where we are satisfied through our quality assessment process (PAMMS), we may reach a view that quality has improved but CQC have not yet reassessed their rating, and will recommence further placements, with further monitoring.

Our new contract awards process considers both quality and value for money as the criteria for award. If a provider is inadequate in CQC rating they will not be awarded a new contract.

Over the last twelve months we have seen three more residential and nursing care providers and four more home support providers, but a reduction of five providers supporting working-age adults. Although there will always be some closures as well as new care provision, it has been a challenging period for some care providers, with some providers choosing to close or sell their business.

Where a provider is persistently poor quality, we will seek to remove them from contracting with us in providing care.

7.8

Question from Cllr Maxine Webb

Referring to page 521 of the Cabinet agenda papers, could the Cabinet Member for Children's Services elaborate on the "concerns about the imbalance in the market" that have been raised to the DfE by officers, and explain what engagement the Council has undertaken to address them with the local providers themselves?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

We have been clear, for a number of years now, that we have historically had an over reliance on the independent sector for special school placements. The SEND & AP Transformation programme and related £120 million of capital investment by the council was established, in 2019, to start the process of addressing this. With three new special schools completed in the past 18 months we are now starting to benefit from a greater balance between independent and state-funded specialist provision. Within the next phase of our SEND strategic improvement programme – Local First Inclusion – we will continue to create more state-funded special schools and specialist resource bases, alongside a focus on local mainstream school inclusion, to ensure that we have sufficient specialist provision; judged to be Good and Outstanding by Ofsted in line with the current judgements of the all but one of the current Norfolk special schools. We are continuously engaged with our state funded special school leaders who contribute to our strategic planning and more recently we have engaged with the network of independent special schools specifically regarding our plans within the Local First Inclusion programme. We anticipate Secretary of State decision making regarding a

	proposal for joint investment between the DfE and NCC during March and will be able to brief Members further when we have achieved certainty regarding next steps
7.9	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett March sees the beginning of Spring, however weather forecasts show snow and cold weather could still hit Norfolk over the coming weeks. Can the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport confirm the exact date when work to install bus shelters along St Stephens Street in Norwich will begin?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure Delivery discussions with the shelter manufacturer (Clear Channel) are ongoing. At the current time, installations are expected to start mid-April, although this is still to be confirmed by the manufacturer. Full information will be made available closer to the confirmed date.</p>
7.10	<p>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy Can the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste explain why Norfolk Conservatives are breaking their manifesto pledge to keep all Norfolk recycling centres open?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste The County Council is committed to increasing recycling and developing and delivering improved recycling centre services for Norfolk and to support this commitment has provided around £15m in recent years to deliver new and improved recycling centres across Norfolk to help manage more recycling and increase reuse.</p> <p>For example, the County Council opened the new Norwich North and Norwich South Recycling Centres in 2021 and 2022 and has recently submitted a planning application for a new recycling centre at Sheringham, with funding also provided by the County Council for new recycling centres in the Wymondham, Long Stratton and North Walsham areas. As the County Council delivers these new, much improved recycling centres, the ones they replace are closed and consideration is also given to whether other sites in the same area are still required or whether operations can be moved to a new site that provides an improved service.</p> <p>Supplementary Question from Cllr Terry Jermy Which other Norfolk recycling centres are being considered for closure in the future?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Currently none, however the County Council is committed to delivering a wide programme of continuing upgrades and replacement sites for the recycling centre service, with new sites planned for the Sheringham, Wymondham, Long Stratton and North Walsham areas which would provide an improved service and replace existing sites in those areas.</p>
7.11	<p>Question from Cllr Matt Reilly The building of the unused car park and refurbishment of the Council chamber at County Hall cost in the region of the £4.25m, the amount received by the Council for the sale of Holt Hall.</p> <p>The closure and sale of Holt Hall with the associated loss of outdoor education facilities</p>

	<p>was clearly against the public will and damaging to young people.</p> <p>Does the Leader think the work at County Hall is of greater value than the work done at Holt Hall to better the future for young people in Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy 'The rationale for the closure of Holt Hall was discussed extensively at the time. I would refer the Councillor to the original decision. As the Councillor will be aware Capital Receipts go to fund the Council's Capital Programme and reduce borrowing costs – so for example helping to support the delivery of £125m SEND School programme or supporting the Council's Extra Care programme.</p> <p>Second question from Cllr Matt Reilly Since Cllr Corlett raised the issues facing the UEA at Council on 24th January, the situation has worsened with clear mismanagement at the University and a predicted shortfall of £45 million. This year, university managers will make staff pay with their jobs and students with their courses. The situation is an emergency. Will the Leader urgently ask Government to provide bridging funding to avert this crisis which will have an impact on the whole county?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy University funding is not under the remit of Norfolk County Council; our responsibility to education centres on schooling to the age of 18. In that respect I'm sure the Councillor welcomes our substantial funding towards SEND School building and the recent OFSTED report which highlighted "exemplary" and "exceptional" areas of practice within Children's Services.</p>
7.12	<p>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare Can the Cabinet Member for Children's Services clarify the reasons why there are lower than anticipated foster care placements available, as set out in paragraph 2.9 on page 515 of the Cabinet Agenda?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services As set out in detail in the National Children's Social Care Review, there is a national shortage of foster carers throughout the UK and a key recommendation around a nationwide campaign to drive recruitment. Whilst the New Deal for foster carers has had a positive impact on the number of beds available via in-house fostering, Norfolk is experiencing the same challenges as every other LA, with approvals matching terminations rather than exceeding as we would hope. That said, in 2022/23 we have increased the number of new fostering households (that is fostering households where they have not previously fostered for another agency, rather than transfers) by 30%, and we have increased utilisation of our in-house foster beds by 14%. We have also seen an increase in the number of approved beds available in households, with a number of foster carers coming forward to seek approval to increase their offer. Further to this, we have a number of ambitious plans in train to continue to improve the number of applicants to Norfolk Fostering Service in the coming year.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare Has the six-month delay to re-register for foster carers who have left Norfolk County Council and returned within the last twelve months contributed to this issue and if so, how many placements have been lost as a result?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>Those seeking to return to the Norfolk Fostering Service will be 'fast tracked' back into the service so the process will be significantly expedited. Very few fostering households chose to leave NCC (2%) and their placements were not lost as those with children already placed with them continued to care for them after transfer.</p>
7.13	<p>Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton</p> <p>Will the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention join with the overwhelming number of people in the Norwich area in calling for the Walk In centre on Rouen Road to remain open?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention</p> <p>Thank you for your question</p> <p>The provision of this service is the responsibility of the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System. As you may be aware they are consulting on its plans to transform how general practice services are delivered in the Norwich area. This consultation will be open between 24 January – 26 March 2023. This consultation is happening because the current contract that covers the Norwich Walk-in Centre, GP Practice on Rouen Road, will be expiring in Spring 2024. They want to consult with the public early on how services are provided after that time. They would welcome your feedback to help them understand what the impact would be on patients using the Norwich Walk-in Centre and GP Practice on Rouen Road. I would encourage you to respond to the consultation which you can access via this link Consultation on general practice services in Norwich (improvinglivesnw.org.uk)</p>
7.14	<p>Question from Cllr Colleen Walker</p> <p>On 14 April 2019 Council agreed a motion moved by the Leader with just two abstentions asking the Leader to write to the Secretary Of State For Work and Pensions asking for fair and transitional state pension arrangements for the 45,000 Norfolk women born in the 1950's, who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age with lack of appropriate notification.</p> <p>The Secretary of State clearly ignored him, so what steps does he now propose to support WASPI women including assistance to help with their ongoing legal action?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy</p> <p>Thank you for your question. As you point out we wrote to Government outlining our position, which is supportive of the WASPI group and well known. This is now down to National government to take action rather than local government.</p>
7.15	<p>Question from Cllr Mike Sands</p> <p>Will the Cabinet member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport use the delay in the NWL to develop a plan B to relieve the communities blighted by rat running and identify sources of revenue and actions to mitigate against the risk the scheme does not go ahead, in order to reassure Norfolk that should the decision not to proceed become permanent the consequences have been properly considered?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</p> <p>Work on the Norwich Western Link is very much ongoing to ensure that the project is in</p>

	<p>the best possible position to move forward when we receive a decision on the Outline Business Case. We have submitted a strong business case, which clearly sets out the benefits the project will create, and we remain confident of hearing positive news soon.</p> <p>As mentioned in a previous response, risk is closely monitored as part of the governance arrangements in place for our major infrastructure projects. The NWL project's risk register is reviewed and updated on a monthly basis and reported to the Project Board and Member Group, and the point related to revenue funding should the scheme not proceed is considered within the council's corporate risk register.</p>
7.16	<p>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby</p> <p>The proposal to replace Frederick Nicholls school was advised to parents three days before it was made public, is not an additional school, represents just 52 additional places and will be disruptive for many families. Having found an additional site and with the money that has been earmarked since 2018 why has the Cabinet Member for Children's Services not used the opportunity to add a new school and invest in the existing Frederick Nicholls site to help meet demand that this proposal goes nowhere near addressing?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p> <p>Originally Fred Nicholson Complex Needs School was identified within the SEND Transformation Programme for expansion of provision on the existing site. Along with the other Complex Needs Schools, it has a good or better Ofsted rating, and the ability to increase high quality places is part of the strategy. When the proposal was looked at in more detail, it was found that the site could not support an expansion of the school.</p> <p>The school has increased in numbers from around 99 pupils in 2008 on this site to now around 175 pupils, along with the additional staff to meet their needs. This has been as a result of pressure for special school places and without any significant capital investment. As a result, the buildings and site are no longer sufficient to support the number of pupils and staff. They require considerable investment to address ongoing condition and not fit for purpose for current demands.</p> <p>The capital project to relocate and expand the school will take some time to complete and this means families will have an opportunity to understand whether it will impact their child. For some they will have left by the time it moves or can plan for when it does move. The intended new site is a 20-minute drive from the current site. A lot of children attending Fred Nicholson are not local to the area - special schools do not have a catchment or local school, although we need to ensure they do not travel for unnecessarily long periods of time.</p> <p>This project is part of our overall approach of expanding our existing good special schools wherever we can – examples of this are projects completed at John Grant and Sheringham Woodfields and we are also looking at opportunities with the other special schools. There are plans to build a fourth and fifth new special school currently for which we have made a further submission to the Department for Education</p>
7.17	<p>Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham</p> <p>Of the more than 500 posts that have been vacant for more than six months within Norfolk County Council, how many has the Cabinet Member for Finance reviewed with a view to deleting, and how much has been saved as a result?</p>

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Thank you for your question. We assume you are referencing information provided to the Chair of Scrutiny who had asked a question about vacant posts for six months or longer. The measure data provided in response to that enquiry was about requisitions, which in essence relates to live vacancies being actively filled. Therefore, the figure of “more than 500 posts” (510) represents the number of live requisitions (posts being recruited to) created between 01/08/2022 and 31/01/2023 which had not had an offer made in that same period. These are not therefore posts which have been vacant for more than six months. This data will include (for example) posts on our skills shortage list, posts temporarily being covered by agency / temporary arrangements as recruitment goes forward, or where recruitment activity remains underway. It relates to roles in a variety of job families, for example Social Care (i.e. Social Workers, Reablement Support Workers, Residential Children’s Practitioners etc), Highways, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, nplaw and Public Health.</p> <p>The fact that the post has not yet been recruited to, does not necessarily mean that it is not required and could therefore be removed from the establishment. The Council as a whole keeps vacant posts under review both as part of the budget-setting process and through wider HR processes to seek to ensure that vacancies are not carried unnecessarily. As an example, the staff consultation currently being undertaken as part of the Strategic Review includes the proposed deletion of 64 vacant posts.</p>
7.18	<p>Question from Cllr Steve Morphew</p> <p>Will Cabinet Members join me in supporting the action by BBC staff fighting to protect local radio that reflects the unique character of Norfolk and news broadcasts relevant to our communities and county?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy</p> <p>As a council, we are always supportive of a strong local media and would always wish to see BBC Radio Norfolk thrive as it is an institution in our county and long may it continue to be. Over the years, we have worked with them on many major community initiatives to help promote Norfolk and for many years, joined together at the Royal Norfolk Show to celebrate and promote all things Norfolk. We have responded to the BBC consultation saying how we want to see local radio being continued to be just that – local.</p>