

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS				
Council – 28th July 2022				
No	Received from	Executive Member Responsible	Question	Answer
1	Councillor Anne Lee	Cllr David Brackenbury	<p>What action can North Northants Council take in response to the news that Northamptonshire has been named the worst place for sewage pollution in England with eight major sewage pollution incidents in 3 years?</p> <p>https://www.northantslive.news/news/northamptonshire-news/northamptonshire-worst-place-sewage-pollution-7361496?utm_source=linkCopy&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=sharebar&fbclid=IwAR3IV1myvAWZwlp2yZFNafSmZEADQmQ8VQ2S2ItYE6WqYiq_UyheAtbYK8</p>	<p>North Northamptonshire Council is not the public body responsible for sewage pollution. This is an issue that fall to Anglian Water as the relevant water authority and the Environment Agency and OFWAT as the principal regulators. North Northamptonshire Council liaise with Anglian Water and the Environment Agency on a regular basis and do raise the matter of sewage pollution as a matter of concern. All water companies are currently creating their DWMP (Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan), which are designed to set out how they will manage and reduce these incidents over the next plan period. The Council, in its role as the Lead Local Flood Authority, have been closely involved from the outset. The North Northamptonshire Council draft response to the DWMP is due to be discussed at the Planning Policy EAP on the 5 September 2022 which will provide an opportunity to influence the future plans of the water authority.</p>
2	Councillor Anne Lee	Cllr David Brackenbury	<p>How can we act quicker in future to prevent building constructions in breach of planning regulations becoming a danger to the public, such as is currently the case in Job's Yard in Meeting Lane, Kettering?</p>	<p>Jobs Yard in Meeting Lane Kettering is a residential block of flats which has been constructed by the site owner without appropriate planning permission and without any valid building regulation application and plans being submitted and approved by the Council's Building Control Department.</p> <p>Since works commenced on site in November 2018 NNC Building Control and Planning have tried to work with the site owner to regularise works on site but he has not cooperated with the Councils Building Control or Planning Team and has continued to build additional storeys on top of the building without any regards for proper process or building regulation or planning approval and the development has stopped and started a number of times during this period.</p>

				<p>Under Building Act legislation responsibility for compliance with the building regulations lies with the person(s) carrying out the work and the owner of the building – in this case, the developer.</p> <p>Building Control do not have powers to stop works. The normal approach adopted is to initially work with the developer to resolve areas of non-compliance – this approach works in the vast majority of cases. However, if informal enforcement fails as has been the case at Jobs Yard, Building Control are able to prosecute the person carrying out the work under section 35 of the Building Act 1984 and/or serve a section 36 notice which requires removal or alteration of the offending work. In addition, the local authority can also apply for an injunction for the removal or alteration of any work which contravenes the building regulations.</p> <p>In this case a section 36 notice was served on the developer on 2nd February 2022 requiring that the developer remove or alter the offending building work. The developer failed to comply with this notice, therefore, further legal advice was obtained on what appropriate actions should be taken, and based on that advice, proceedings are now being instigated in the High Court to seek an injunction to compel the developer to demolish the building at his cost.</p> <p>As part of this injunction application an independent structural engineer's report was commissioned to provide us with a specialist view on the as-built structure of the building at Jobs Yard which was received on 17th June 2022. It is based on the recommendations of this report that an immediate road closure at Jobs Yard and cordon was implemented as a precautionary measure in the interest of public safety, and that action has been taken by the Health and Safety Executive via the service of a prohibition notice to restrict use</p>
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				<p>of the scaffolding on the building and restrict access onto the site.</p> <p>As with all cases such as this that are complex, we will ensure we carry out a case review and identify any lessons learned in terms of our approach. This will be completed in full when the pending legal action has been completed and the case has been concluded. However, already in terms of learning we would apply the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular structured case reviews involving other stakeholders as appropriate i.e., planning, legal, Health and Safety Executive to review individual and collective actions proposed, their appropriateness and timing in line with NNC's enforcement policy. - Consideration of widening use of specialist consultant resources to support enforcement action being considered. - Reviewing arrangements for provision, implementation, and monitoring of emergency safety cordons. - Establishing a communications strategy for briefing of stakeholders and other interested parties in appropriate cases.
3	Councillor Anne Lee	Cllr David Brackenbury	When will this Council's applications to the Levelling Up fund (agenda item 4 on the EAP Climate Change, Environment & Growth, marked as 'to follow') be shared with all councillors, and what is the rationale for keeping this report secret?	The Council is able to confirm details of the applications to the Levelling Up Fund now that the Government's portal for submitting bids to Round 2 is open, and importantly there is full clarity on its requirements for submitting bids and associated supporting information. The portal was due to open some weeks ago but was delayed by DLUHC creating an element of uncertainty. A briefing note will be sent to all councillors on the Climate Change, Environment & Growth EAP ahead of Full Council, and there will also be a press release. These will confirm details of the two packages being

				submitted by the 2 August deadline when the portal closes (previously 6 July).
4	Councillor Charlie Best	Cllr David Brackenbury	Does this Council support the urgent introduction (given our declared Climate Emergency and soaring energy costs) of Supplementary Local Planning Regulations to strongly encourage developers, builders and homeowners to work to the highest standards of energy efficiency? This should apply to modifications and extensions as well as full new builds.	<p>The Executive Member for Growth & Regeneration is aware of the proposed initiative to prepare a Guidance Note to encourage developers to invest in highest standards of energy efficiency in new buildings. The Council does recognise the urgency with which the Climate and Environment Emergency needs to be tackled and is shaping its services to support how it addresses climate change throughout the organisation.</p> <p>The Interim Planning Policy Lead Manager has added the preparation of a Building Energy Standards Guidance Note to the team's work programme. The Planning Policy Team is progressing other priority projects at the moment, including the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, which will also explore the setting of energy standards in new policy. Given the Council's commitment to tackling the Climate and Environment Emergency, I expect a set of timescales to be agreed for the Council to progress with the preparation of its own Guidance Note within this administrative year.</p>
5	Councillor Jim Hakewill	Cllr Jason Smithers	Given the significance placed on the LGA Financial Peer Review of NCC (September 2017) by our NNC Leader, how quickly could a (free) LGA Corporate Peer Review be arranged? External peer review will give a reality check on NNC's progress to date and enhance budget setting for 23-24.	<p>The Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge, also known as a CPC, is an effective process and one that is well regarded by the sector.</p> <p>I consider the timing of any CPC to be important. The Council is in the process of carrying out a range of service reviews and restructures and it would seem sensible to wait until the first phase of these had completed before embarking on a CPC.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and I have already started discussions with the Local Government Association and they agree that now is too early.</p>

				<p>If we look at the case of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP), which came into being on 1 April 2019, its first Corporate Peer Challenge was carried out in November 2021, thirty months after the creation of the Council.</p> <p>The Council is however seeking support from external challenge in other areas. For example, the Planning Advisory Service is carrying out a review to help the Council improve its planning service. External challenge and peer review will therefore remain an important feature of the Council's improvement journey.</p>
6	Councillor Jim Hakewill	Cllr Helen Howell	How many people were invited to the Chester House Estate official "Grand Opening" by HRH The Princess Royal on Wednesday 23 rd July?	<p>The "Grand Opening" of Chester House Estate by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, took place on Wednesday 20 July 2022. The numbers of invitees were agreed in advance through the Lord Lieutenants office. The maximum number of invitees that was agreed could be invited was up to 500 people. 448 guests were subsequently invited from, primarily, across the various stakeholders that have been part of making Chester House Estate a resounding success in its first year.</p> <p>We were delighted that HRH chose to speak at an event at which she is not a patron. We have subsequently received a letter of thanks from the Palace for such an "interesting and enjoyable visit, and an outstanding opportunity for all ages to learn the history of the site".</p> <p>Positive media coverage following the event further promotes Chester House Estate as a free to enter visitor attraction, a place for learning and raises awareness of such a positive cultural asset to the residents of North Northamptonshire.</p>
7	Councillor Jim Hakewill	Cllr Graham Lawman	Whilst significant underspends are not a good budget outcome, how will the £1.5 million allocated to Highways improvement works be fairly and	A programme of works is being developed in partnership with KierWSP and NNC Grounds Maintenance to target the spend on repairs to footways and carriageways, white line painting, clearance of overgrown vegetation, sign cleaning and updating

			<p>evenly spread across the Council's 26 Wards so that every part of the Council's area will benefit?</p>	<p>and drainage issues. The programme of works will prioritise on areas of most need and greatest benefit to road and pathway users – drivers, cyclists and pedestrians - using information from StreetDoctor and Highway Engineers' records - and will complement current planned works being undertaken through the Highways Service.</p> <p>Whilst every effort will be made to cover every ward, this should not be at the expense of ensuring best value for money and ensuring that the most in need defects are repaired within time constraints and assuring safety for road users and Highways staff.</p>
8	Councillor Emily Fedorowycz	Cllr Helen Harrison	<p>The heatwave we saw last week put a lot of vulnerable people at risk. What did we do as a council to assist these individuals and what can we do for next time to help vulnerable individuals cope with extreme heat? Which officer or team would lead on this please?</p>	<p>At any time, the council is supporting in the region of 4,000 adults with adult social care needs. The majority of that support is provided by independent sector domiciliary and residential care providers that are monitored by the council's commissioning and contracting function. Where providers are delivering personal care they are also regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Extreme weather is just one of the many occurrences that providers are required to plan for as part of running a service for vulnerable adults, and they will have mobilised the plans they have in order to support people appropriately. Updates from the Met office are circulated to all registered care providers when received to ensure they are aware of and planning for these types of events.</p> <p>For those people with similar needs that are not in receipt of support through the council, we still have to monitor the quality of care and they are still regulated by the CQC and therefore people that fund their own care through regulated providers would have had the same type of support.</p> <p>For those people that are not in receipt of any care support, we have ensured that our social media channels have been regularly providing updates and advice on how to stay cool</p>

				and manage the conditions. It is also important to note that where people have GP or consultant oversight of their medical conditions, they will also have had practical advice in managing their needs through those channels.
9	Councillor Emily Fedorowycz	Cllr Jason Smithers	How much has been spent of the £250,000 allocated to be spent this year on combating climate change? When will the topic of this spending be coming to the EAP for Climate Change? What options are being considered for this year's budget?	The revenue budget allocation for climate change this financial year is £500,000. To date, this budget has been used to provide the carbon literacy training which has been delivered to members and senior officers. Further use of the budget will principally be informed by the Council's Carbon Management Plan, which is in the late draft stages before being presented to the Climate Change, Growth & Environment EAP for comment and feedback. The date for this is to be confirmed shortly, with it having been necessary to collate energy use data for a period of one year. Alongside the Carbon Management Plan, which will inform our understanding and agreement on what the Council must prioritise in order to become carbon neutral by 2030, an investment plan for the use of the budget is being developed. This will identify options for the how the budget can be best spent to realise the Council's carbon neutral ambitions and advance the priority work identified through the Carbon Management Plan. The budget allocation for this financial year must be prudently allocated and therefore careful planning is required to maximise its positive impact in the long-term.
10	Councillor Ross Armour	Cllr Helen Howell	What was the decision taken by the Shared Services Joint Committee at its meeting on July 13 th with regards to the children's School Swim Service?	The decision was to support the recommendations as laid out in the report which went to the Shared Services Joint Committee on 13 th July 2022: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the change request recommendation that all schools should access swimming lessons directly with pools/leisure providers and no longer access lessons via the Council provided School Swimming Service. The School Swimming Service is one of several providers of swimming lessons, this change would

				<p>mean that the Councils were no longer providers. This change would be effective from 31 December 2022.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Approve the recommendation that the Councils, NNC and WNC, are no longer providers of school swimming lessons effective from 31 December 2022. 3. Grant delegated authority to the Monitoring Officers for North and West Northamptonshire Councils to put into place a deed of variation to the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) for the service to exit the IAA. 4. Approve that both WNC and NNC will act in accordance with Service Plans, Exit Plans, and any Collaborative Working Agreements agreed by both WNC and NNC service leads and approved by Monitoring Officers until such time as a formal Deed of variation has been completed. 5. A formal staff consultation with affected staff is now underway.
11	Councillor Ross Armour	Cllr Jason Smithers	Will the Council's current consultation process be looked at and adapted so that it becomes easier for our residents to use?	<p>The Council is always keen to learn and improve the way it does things and that includes its approach to consultation.</p> <p>The Council's small Consultation Team works closely with services across the Council to support these service areas to deliver their consultations as effectively as possible within the allocated resources.</p> <p>Each consultation's methodology is designed with the subject matter and target audience in mind. As well as the provision of online consultations hosted by the Council's consultation portal, local residents and stakeholders are able to email the Council, write in and provide feedback via social media. Telephone helplines, online focus groups and more traditional face-to-face events are also put in place when deemed appropriate.</p>

				<p>The Council's dedicated Citizen's Space consultation portal was procured to allow the Council to capture feedback in a structured way in accordance with guidance and legislation. The software is used by many other public sector organisations across the country including government departments and meets our stringent accessibility requirements.</p> <p>The Council's Consultation and Engagement Manager stays abreast of developments in the field of consultation and engagement and ensures that the Council's approach is robust and legally compliant.</p> <p>The Council benefits from being a member of the Consultation Institute, a not-for-profit best practice Institute, promoting high-quality public and stakeholder consultation. The Institute provides ongoing professional support and training.</p> <p>The Consultation Team works closely with colleagues across the Council, including the Communications Team to help ensure consultations are well promoted and the Equalities Lead to ensure we meet our consultation equalities duties.</p> <p>After each consultation, colleagues in the Council's small Consultation Team take stock of what worked well and what can be improved.</p> <p>To help support officers, the Consultation Team have put in place a Consultation and Engagement Framework document which explains the Why, Who, How and When we will consult. There is also a strong intranet presence which provides further advice and guidance regarding best practice consultation for the Council's staff.</p>
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12	Councillor Emily Fedorowycz	Cllr Graham Lawman	Given harmonisation of Green Waste charging is being considered, what would be the annual cost of harmonising the former East Northamptonshire area by stopping charging for Green Waste Collection so that those residents are harmonised with the rest of North Northamptonshire's former councils?	The budgetary implication of rescinding the subscription charges for former ENC residents is £2.650 million. This is made up of (i) initial mobilization costs of £687,000 covering new bins and deliver them as well as initial administration costs; (ii) loss of current income stream of £625,000; & (iii) additional revenue costs including collection, disposal costs such as gate fees, contamination costs and additional administration of £1.338 million. This, of course, is unbudgeted.