

Councillor Questions, Responses and Supplementaries – 30 March (carry over) and 22 June 2023

Carried over from Council – 30th March 2023

No.	Received from	Executive Member Responsible	Question	Answer
1.	Cllr Peter McEwan 16/03/23	Cllr Graham Lawman	Will the leader request from senior officers any work such as tree cutting, planting, roadworks, and lighting etc that is happening in members wards that ward members are informed beforehand?	<p>The range and volume of activity to keep NNC's green space and infrastructure in good order, makes notifying Members of all activity in their Ward impractical. Where there are significant works taking place, we do notify Ward Members of proposed works, for example the information shared with Ward Members in January this year as part of the Treescape planting programme. Larger highway schemes, such as resurfacing, are communicated to all Members through regular emails and updates; the service will continue with this approach.</p> <p>Information on all roadworks (whether utility providers or highways authority) can also be viewed at the national website: one.network.</p> <p>The Planning Authority is generally not informed of the commencement of works undertaken by developers on private land as there is no legal requirement to do so and, therefore, this information is not available to share with ward members.</p>
			<p>Supplementary Question:- Referring back to about four or five full council meetings ago there was a statement made by either Cllr Graham Lawman or one of his colleagues saying that all ward councillors should be notified of anything taking place</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- I think the answer gives us that exact information, that on major topics ward councillors are informed, and there are also regular information sheets that are circulated, particularly on traffic regulation orders and minor works.</p>

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			within their ward. Can we have clarification whether that is the case?	
2.	Cllr Valerie Anslow 20/03/21	Cllr David Brackenbury	<p>As the planning authority for North Northants, when will the council take the lead and tell Vistry Group that felling 61 mature trees does not fit in with its corporate vision, and that alternate solutions need to be found for the utility work associated with Stanton Cross SUE.</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- Can I be assured that a highways officer will be at the meeting between North Northants, the Vistry the developers, and the Wellingborough Walks Action Group?</p>	<p>Irrespective of whether the felling of trees fits with the corporate vision of the Council, North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) is bound by the decisions made by its predecessor authorities. In this case, the developer has planning permission granted by the former Borough Council of Wellingborough (BCW) that enable them to lawfully develop the Stanton Cross SUE. This development will result in the loss of trees as identified in the Environmental Statement that the developer submitted to BCW in support of their planning application. Although NNC has encouraged the developer to reconsider their proposals to minimise tree loss, the Council does not have legitimate grounds to prevent the developer from implementing the permission granted by BCW.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- I know that extensive discussion is going on between the developers, Vistry, and the action group. While North Northamptonshire Council are involved as the local planning authority, we are keeping a careful eye on this whole situation and of course will involve our own highways expertise as required.</p>

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No.	Received from	Executive Member Responding	Question	Answer
3.	Cllr Anne Lee	Cllr Harriet Pentland	Since May 2021, what approximate expenditure has been made on combatting climate change, excluding the planting of trees?	<p>To date £17,644 has been spent on non-tree planting related activity to combat climate change. This expenditure is to support Carbon Literacy Training for councillors and officers, and for the purchase of National Tree data. In addition, a further £399,500 of climate change funding has been committed to a variety of other projects that are closely linked to the Council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP), approved by Executive in December 2022. Following approval of the CMP, a process for the assessment and allocation of climate change funds has been implemented and the following expenditure has also been approved, which will support activities outlined in the Plan:</p> <p>£13,000 for Energy Survey (Mechanical and Electrical) of Corby Sports Centre and Swimming Pool</p> <p>£110,000 for Battery operated equipment for Grounds Maintenance</p> <p>£31,500 for Net Zero and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Evidence Base Consultancy for Strategic Planning</p> <p>£65,000 for Energy Surveys (Mechanical and Electrical) of Top Ten NNC Buildings</p> <p>£50,000 for a Residential Energy Efficiency & Energy Officer post for Private Sector Housing for Regulatory Services</p>

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				<p>£130,000 for Corporate Properties - Stock Condition Surveys</p> <p>These projects are supported through the Council's Climate Change Investment Fund and totals a current funding commitment of £417,144.</p> <p>The Council is also responsible for delivering many other activities which seek to combat climate change, such as environmental initiatives embedded within the Council's highways contract with Kier. Other activities do not involve direct expenditure by the Council but often these involve working in collaboration with other organisations including the private sector. Examples include the delivery robot and E-Scooter trials, with Starship and Voi Technology respectively, which provide an alternative to the private car for shorter journeys, and the installation and operation of electric vehicle charging points with Believ (formerly Liberty Charge).</p>
			<p>Supplementary Question:- What are the prospects of North Northants Council reaching net zero by 2030 at the current rate of progress?</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- I have had no indication that there is any reason to believe that we will not meet our 2030 goal. We are making good progress and there are regular progress updates provided to the council, for example through the Sustainable Communities EAP which I would welcome other councillors to follow online so that they can see for themselves the progress being made.</p>

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4.	Cllr Valerie Anslow 05/06/23	Cllr David Brackenbury	<p>At the March Full Council meeting a motion was agreed that Tree Preservation orders need to be highlighted on planning applications so that they are given due consideration and weight by those making decisions. Why is it therefore that this Council is agreeing that another 25 trees, with TPOs, on the Wellingborough Walks be felled when the planning application is only in outline and a Section 278 notice has not been served?</p>	<p>Route 2 of the Stanton Cross SUE was granted full planning permission by the former Borough Council of Wellingborough under WP/2004/0600 and WP/15/00605/VAR and is not a reserved matter. At this point therefore, North Northamptonshire Council is not making a decision on a planning application and the motion agreed at Full Council that Tree Preservation orders need to be highlighted on planning applications reports does not apply.</p> <p>With regard to the emerging s278, technical drawings for the new roundabout have been submitted by the developer for a proposed agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to facilitate the full construction of the Route 2 works affecting the London Road / Embankment area. These plans have yet to be fully agreed. There is no planning assessment associated with the issuing of a s278 notice and therefore the March motion is not relevant to this process.</p>
			<p>Supplementary Question:- Could you explain what the second paragraph in your answer means?</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- Section 278 are technical aspects surrounding the highways proposals which form part of an existing planning permission which has been granted. It is important to point out that discussions between the Action Group, North Northamptonshire Council as the local planning authority and Vistry are still ongoing and we will continue to facilitate those discussions. Of course if the developers wish to come up with an amended scheme it is our job to pass that to the</p>

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				planners and see whether that is viable and acceptable in respect of material planning considerations.
5.	Cllr Simon Rielly 12/06/23	Cllr Scott Edwards	Can you tell us how many children are still missing from education in North Northants?	There are currently 94 pupils classed as 'Children Missing Education' (CME) in NNC. This is a reduction of 26 from the figure as at 31st March 2023, which was 120. CME are defined as those children whose current educational provision is not known. This is often due to them moving out of area or changing school without informing the Council. The Education Inclusion Team continue to work to locate and track these children and support them back into education where appropriate.
6.	Cllr Simon Rielly 12/06/23	Cllr Graham Lawman	Did North Northants Council apply for and receive all the possible school transport grants that we were entitled to apply for?	<p>The Council has been allocated the following sums by the Department for Education under the Extended Rights for Home to School Travel grant:</p> <p>2021/22 £261,400 2022/23 £291,900 2023/24 £283,700</p> <p>The amounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 have been received in full and the grant for 2023/24 is being received in instalments.</p> <p>There has been no other funding offered for Home to School transport.</p>

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7.	Cllr Alison Dalziel 12/06/23	Cllr Graham Lawman	Is the Leader and the Executive happy with the quality of grass cutting and street cleaning services across North Northants?	<p>Our street cleaning teams continue to work hard to maintain our rural and urban environments so they are places that we can all be proud to call home.</p> <p>It is a great shame that a small minority of people litter and fly-tip our local areas which undermines the attractiveness of our towns, villages and countryside. Our environmental enforcement team actively discourage those who fail to dispose of their waste responsibly.</p> <p>We have recently successfully prosecuted a number of serial fly-tippers, which will hopefully deter others from this anti-social and criminal behaviour.</p> <p>Spring is a particularly challenging time for our street cleaning and grounds maintenance teams with grass growing quickly and the parks and open spaces busy with people enjoying the fine weather. Despite this, we continue to empty litter bins, sweep the streets and cut the grass, with some town centre areas cleaned daily.</p> <p>Some areas of grass have been purposefully left to encourage wildflowers, promote pollination and support biodiversity, which demonstrates our support and commitment to caring for the natural environment. We are engaged on a programme of signage for these areas to advise the public.</p>
8.	Cllr Simon Rielly 12/06/23	Cllr Graham Lawman	Do you have a date when the ANPR cameras will be installed in George Street Corby?	<p>We can assure Council that we are keen to take the benefits of this provision – such as safer pedestrianisation, better air quality as soon as possible.</p> <p>The report presented to the Executive detailed that, from the point of consultation on the (Traffic Regulation Order) TRO starting, it is estimated that it will take circa 4 months to complete the statutory TRO process, with a</p>

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				<p>further up to four months from the point of order for the enforcement cameras to go live.</p> <p>We are pleased to confirm that the TRO consultation paperwork will be issued shortly. Based on the outcome of this statutory consultation, the Council can consider implementation of the TRO and progress procurement of the necessary enforcement equipment, which we would seek to progress and install as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Once enforcement commences there is a requirement for a 6 month “warning period” for all first time contravenes.</p>
9.	Cllr Alison Dalziel 12/06/23	Cllr David Brackenbury	How many people have managed to pass and obtain their Hackney Carriage License across North Northants since March 2023?	<p>Following implementation of the NNC Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy on 1st April 2023 there have been some delays in completing the procurement process relating to the driver testing that is required to be undertaken as part of the licensing process. We have now identified a date this month (30th June) to begin offering the training to the people on the waiting list and further dates will be added as demand comes through. The booking link has been shared with our teams in licensing to push out to the drivers which is happening imminently. The process is being pushed out to new applicants first, so that anyone that wants to apply for a licence will then be able to. Once the backlog is dealt with the training will then be pushed out to existing drivers, who we have allowed to continue to drive while this issue was being resolved, so as not to impact upon their work.</p>

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			<p>Supplementary Question:- Is that a detailed way of saying zero?</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- Yes, it is at the moment. To provide a little background context, as of the day before yesterday, 68 people had registered an interest in becoming a new hire vehicle driver, all of whom were contacted with the new details of the testing arrangements and how to book onto a course which will take place on 25 June, of which there are 25 allocated places. At the moment, existing drivers are currently exempt from taking this test. As the new testing regime beds in we will be keeping a close eye on it.</p>
10.	Cllr Alison Dalziel 13/06/23	Cllr Matt Binley	I refer to the article in the Northamptonshire Telegraph of 5th June 2023 titled 'Corby pensioners angry as bin store built on communal garden at sheltered housing complex'. Could I be provided with the three dates and format of the engagement undertaken with residents of Marlow Court prior to the bin store installation in mid-May, as stated in the article by Cllr Binley?	The first resident meeting that was attended by Cllr Binley and Officers was 13 th January 2023. At this meeting, residents raised a number of issues with Marlow Court, of which a lack of recycling facilities was one such issue. In line with the recycling arrangements in place across the local area, it was identified that a sufficient bin store area wasn't available at the scheme. Regarding consultation with the residents as to where the bin store area was to be sited, Officers from Tenancy Services spoke to residents following the initial design that Officers from Housing Property Services created. This was adjacent to the main entrance door to the scheme. Following feedback from residents, the location of the bin store was changed to the one where the bin store has been built. There were no other options deemed suitable within the Marlow Court site for the bin store area, than the one where it has been built. Housing Property Services worked with colleagues in Refuse and Recycling to ensure that the site met their requirements for accessibility of the refuse vehicles and

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				<p>the area could accommodate the required number of bins for the scheme.</p> <p>The three dates are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 13th Jan 2023, officers attended Marlow Court to discuss scheme issues and solutions. 2. 8th March 2023, officers attended site to consider possible locations for bin store 3. 26th May 2023, officers attended residents meeting to explain bin store location decision making
			<p>Supplementary Question:- Would Cllr Binley agree to come with myself and the ward councillors to Marlow Court, just to clear up a discrepancy between what was written in the newspaper, the response to the question I have now received, and a letter which was issued to all residents on 31 May 2023 by a North Northamptonshire Council Support Services Manager which actually says that no consultation was given with the residents of Marlow Court and apologises for this, saying that this was an oversight?</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- I am aware that the contractor did commence on site before the authorisation had been given and an agreed start date. I am also aware that officers from the Housing Property Services Team have apologised to tenants for this. However, as is detailed in the answer to the question, there has been extensive conversations with the tenants of Marlow Court. I have already attended Marlow Court and had those discussions personally with the tenants this year. I would be happy to pick up offline with ward members about their concerns and liaise with officers. However, respectfully, of course there are other sheltered accommodation schemes within North Northamptonshire and whilst we are investing heavily in the schemes through the Sparkle Programme, we do have to look proportionality at all sheltered accommodation areas across North Northamptonshire that require attention and upkeep, especially Corby</p>

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				Borough Council's previous area that had been neglected for so many years and had not been invested in.
11.	Cllr Lyn Buckingham 13/06/23	Cllr Matt Binley	Point of clarification please: As councillors we regularly hold meetings within the sheltered complexes. Several schemes have reported problems within the communal areas with floor coverings being taped down to affect a repair, which we consider a Cat 1 Hazard under HHSRS. Would these repairs be paid for by 'Decent Homes (safety funding) or under the sparkle scheme (cosmetic improvement funding)?	NNC have introduced the Sheltered Housing Communal upgrades (also known as Sparkle) to the Corby neighbourhood area this financial year, in recognition of the need to invest in the cosmetic appearance of communal areas of sheltered housing schemes in Corby. This replicates the approach that was already in place in the Kettering neighbourhood area. Housing Property Services colleagues are working with Tenancy Services colleagues to agree the priority order for the schemes to receive the communal upgrades. Works at Marlow Court commenced this year and it is expected to be possible to start a further scheme out of the budget available this year. It is anticipated that all Corby sheltered housing schemes will have had similar upgrades over the next five years. Should a section of carpet be deemed unsafe, and the scheme is not on the Sheltered Housing Communal upgrades programme for that year, then we would replace the required section of carpet if it cannot be re-secured. Colleagues in Housing Property Services and Tenancy Services will arrange to inspect sheltered schemes and assess the condition of the communal area carpets. Appropriate remedial works will be arranged accordingly. Taping down of any carpet area will remove any immediate risk, until full replacement is completed.

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				As a point of clarification a raised carpet is not a Cat 1 Hazard under HHSRS.
			<p>Supplementary Question:- Given any category one hazard, if you are using duct paper to effect a repair, is that considered an actual repair?</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- Officers have confirmed that this would not be categorised as a category one hazard and I trust the expert opinion of our hardworking officers. Being myself a qualified health and safety professional, taping down the corner of a carpet is an adequate temporary repair, on the basis of it being fixed at a later date.</p>
12.	Cllr Lyn Buckingham 13/06/23	Cllr Matt Binley	<p>After the push to bring down the backlog of housing application assessments being done by December 2022, we are again being told of long waits for applications being processed, please could you give us current waiting times for applications being processed?</p>	<p>The Housing Allocations team cleared the previous application backlog by November 2022. In Quarter 4 of 2022/23, the team saw an increase in demand, which peaked in February, but has been consistently decreasing since that time. As part of a dynamic response to the demand, a service lead restructure was implemented, and appropriate additional resources deployed.</p> <p>The team currently (as at 15th June) have a backlog of 251 applications that are outside of the 10-working day processing target with the oldest being 13 working days outside of the target.</p>
			<p>Supplementary Question:- We are getting reports from residents that apart from being 13 working days outside of target for the backlog, they are waiting longer than 14 days. Would Cllr Binley meet with my constituent</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- If ward councillors wish to, then of course they can flag up these kinds of cases if they are concerned about any irregularities, with myself or the Assistant Director to look into. However, receiving weekly reports as I do</p>

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			<p>who has been waiting for an answer on his housing application for 14 weeks?</p>	<p>from this area of the business, I am absolutely happy and confident that there are not any cases whereby any individuals have been waiting that long. There are cases for example that are suspended whereby we are waiting for additional information from the applicant's perspective rather than the Council's.</p>
13.	<p>Cllr Lyn Buckingham 13/06/23</p>	<p>Cllr Graham Lawman</p>	<p>Why are standards on street scene across the district dropping despite costing us more? Our case load is growing with complaints about grass cutting and clean up starting to clog up drains. With no maintenance of the drains, raising serious fears of flash flooding and an air of neglect.</p>	<p>The street cleaning team continue to carry out their duties in accordance with our published standards and policies. There has been no reduction in service. Our environmental enforcement team are also active in discouraging the small minority who drop litter or fly-tip, which is detrimental to our local area and costs the taxpayer in cleaning. We have had several recent successful prosecutions for serial fly-tippers, which should act as a deterrent to others thinking of disposing of their waste in this way.</p> <p>Spring is a particularly challenging time with the grass growing quickly and the parks and open spaces busy with people enjoying the fine weather. Despite this, we continue to empty litter bins, sweep the streets and cut the grass. Some areas of grass have been purposefully left to encourage wildflowers and support pollination and biodiversity, which is an increasingly popular environmentally-friendly approach to land management.</p> <p>Our highways service maintains the drains on a scheduled programme and reacts to any reports of blocked drains that need more urgent attention.</p>

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				<p>Those members who attended the first Kier engagement event at Brixworth will have seen the equipment in operation. If Members or residents are particularly concerned about any areas, they are encouraged to report them through our website so that we can respond accordingly.</p>
14.	Cllr Keli Watts 13/06/2023	Cllr Lloyd Bunday	<p>Would the council kindly assign names to all emails sent to what are now generic addresses such as highwaysinsurance@northnorthants.gov.uk or parkingenforcement@northnorthants.gov.uk so that the sender knows who to chase up in the case no one replies? Recently an organisation in Kettering had to cancel an event at a late stage because no one came back to them with the information required to proceed and they didn't know where to turn.</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- What is the suggestion for Groups or members of the public to follow up emails from these generic email addresses?</p>	<p>If Members have not received a satisfactory response from a generic email address or indeed any officer, then they should escalate the matter to the relevant Assistant Director. Information has been provided previously to members on Assistant Director contacts but this will be recirculated. If this escalation does not resolve matters, then members should escalate the matter to Executive Directors.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- The use of generic email addresses is very useful for directing enquiries into departments. If those enquiries aren't being handled by those departments then their Directors need to know that. And if they are still not being answered, then we as members need to know that. So I am quite happy for members to direct follow up enquiries to Directors, Assistant Directors or even portfolio holders.</p>