

Councillor Questions and Responses – 7 March 2024

No.	Received from	Executive Member	Question	Answer
1.	Cllr Anne Lee	Cllr Jason Smithers	Which trips abroad by councillors have been funded by North Northants Council?	<p>In 2022 NNC funded a trip to the annual International Walking Association Conference. It was a requirement of the IML Walking Association that if the council wanted to continue as a member to enable it to host the Waendel Walk that a representative must attend. The conference was held in Norway.</p> <p>The relevant Executive Member was chosen to attend. Flights and transfers were booked on an officer’s government procurement card. In the end that Exec Member could not attend, and Councillor Graham Lawman attended instead.</p> <p>There was a budget allocated for this expenditure which NNC inherited from the former Wellingborough BC. The expenditure for the trip made on the government procurement card was £654.</p> <p>The Waendel Walk has since been transferred to Wellingborough Town Council so any costs associated for the 2023 event or conference have not been met by NNC.</p>
2.	Cllr Mark Pengelly	Cllr Lloyd Bunday	What were the Legal costs for past 12 months on fighting SEND cases by the council ?	<p>The reported spend on Legal support for the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process up to period 10 was £42k. The full year budget for these costs for the 2023/24 financial year is £95k.</p>

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			<p>Supplementary Question:- Does the Executive Member agree with me that it doesn't sit right with parents and guardians that the Council has a budget of £95k to fight parents and guardians who are trying to get their children into school and of the £42k spent fighting how much of that was given in the parent's favour and how many cases did the parents win?</p>	<p>Supplementary Answer:- I will pass the supplementary question on to Councillor Scott Edwards for a written response, who unfortunately is unable to attend this meeting.</p>
3.	Cllr Mark Pengelly	Cllr Mark Rowley	<p>How many children are now not in school or waiting to be allocated places in North Northants?</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- How many children have an allocated school place but are still not present in the school because</p>	<p>The total reported number of pupils without a school place at the end of January 2024 was 312. Of these, 150 are currently in the School Admissions process, 49 are excluded or absent from school and 113 are awaiting a specialist placement linked to an Education, Health and Care Plan or other identified SEND need. As a comparison, at the end of the summer term in July 2023, the equivalent figure was 291, so there has been a small increase over this period. This is linked to the increased demand, and limited supply, for specialist places locally. Council officers work closely with DFE colleagues on understanding changes in demand and developing plans to address any areas of challenge.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- I will pass the supplementary question on to Councillor Scott Edwards for a written response.</p>

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			<p>of its suitability and how is that reported as some parents and guardians are having to home educate whilst waiting to get their EHP place.? Does the Executive Member recognise that one child not in school is one too many?</p>	
4.	Cllr Mark Pengelly	Cllr Jason Smithers	<p>The Leader of the Tory Group says Kier are failing, can he say where he believes we need improvements and who is to blame for these failures?</p>	<p>Kier are contractually responsible for repairing our highways network in line with the Council's standards, which are laid out in the contract. A key indicator within the performance framework relates to the time taken to repair potholes. These standards are published on our website.</p> <p>Each month we report to Executive Kier's performance in relation to repairing potholes within the timeframes specified in the contract. Kier are currently performing ahead of those standards and have been for many months. It is important that our in-house contract team continue to push Kier to provide the highest standards possible so that we can get the best value for money for our residents.</p> <p>Whilst Kier carry out routine inspections of the highways network to assess for defects, we also encourage residents to report defects via our website using the reporting tool: Fix My Street. On some occasions, Kier have not provided updates in a timely manner on some of the cases that have been raised by residents. The contract team have raised this with Kier and an improvement plan has been put in place.</p>

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			<p>Supplementary Question:- Does the Leader agree with people on this side of the Council also most our residents that kier wasn't fit for purpose in April 2020 when he proclaimed that Kier were the new contractor that were going to be working on behalf of NNC at the time, also 2022 when he said that we need a fit for purpose highways contractor that's essential in the delivery of services. Who is to blame for the failure of Kier, is it the previous Executive Member or Cabinet Member at the County Council who brought this in or is the present Executive Member?</p>	<p>I know how important the condition of our highways is to local residents and I shall continue to monitor Kier's performance to ensure they are delivering on their contractual commitments for the benefits of our residents.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- I don't feel that the highways Authority is failing, I think it is doing the work we require of them. I think there is some attention we need on key performance indicators to bring them up to speed and let them understand the high expectations that all of these members here all of the members over there expect of our highways contractor. Apportioning blame to Executive Members – I do not think that is conducive to a good discussion in this chamber. I am happy to have an offline conversation with Councillor Pengelly.</p>

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5.	Cllr Lyn Buckingham	Cllr Matt Binley	<p>How many play parks does NNC have across the district and out of those NNC play parks how many have a provision for disabled children and where are these located?</p>	<p>There are 107 play areas managed directly by NNC in our open spaces and country parks. This does not include play parks within North Northants that are managed by Town and Parish Councils on sites they own. All parks within NNC management are inspected by qualified inspectors on a cyclical basis to comply with the relevant legislation, defects and repairs are carried out by suitably qualified persons. All parks are designed to cater for a range of ages and abilities, including relevant disability access legislation and inclusive equipment.</p>
			<p>Supplementary Question:- Will NNC be consulting with specialist disability groups and SEND groups on what sort of equipment or play areas are needed in the future?</p>	<p>The Council is also consulting on the development of an Urban Green Space strategy, backed by £1.5 million from the Government’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund. We are actively looking for feedback on how our urban green space can be enhanced, including improvements to accessibility.</p>
				<p>Supplementary Answer:- With regard to people with SEND needs there are already designs that are in existence such as the sensory domes which are the types of equipment that are used. I certainly know of one that is due to be delivered this year in North Northamptonshire.</p>
				<p>It is not so much about consulting about what type of equipment is needed and wanted in an area because of course that type of thing is already known about so that it caters for</p>

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				individuals who have a whole spectrum of different needs, it's more about where those are best situated.
6.	Cllr Lyn Buckingham	Cllr Mark Rowley	<p>How many tenants are waiting to downsize under the council's Fresh start (for Corby) and other similar scheme for Kettering, if they have a downsizing scheme (please let us know if there is one for Kettering)</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- Would Cllr Rielly look into the speed of people being able to downsize because we are hearing that it can still take up to two years so we have a lot of tenants who are</p>	<p>There are 163 active applications on Keyways for North Northamptonshire Council tenants requiring to downsize as of 04 March 2024. Housing currently have two schemes and provide one-to-one support throughout the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh Start in Corby • Home Moves in Kettering <p>Both schemes can help tenants to downsize to a smaller, more suitable accommodation and free up much needed larger accommodation. Housing Officers/ Financial Inclusion and Support Officers promote both schemes in particular under occupied properties, people struggling with affordability due to “bedroom tax” or with heating/decorating and maintaining their home or if the property no longer meets the needs of the tenant due to medical issues or specific succession cases.</p> <p>Housing Options also advise and support transfer applications about the schemes.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- Yes, happy to look into that and see what we can do.</p>

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			waiting to move up into two or three bedroom properties who are unable to do so due to the blockage.									
7.	Cllr Lyn Buckingham	Cllr Mark Rowley	Please could you let us know if the backlog of housing repairs (for which NNC put in £900K) has been completed in both Corby and Kettering if not what is still outstanding?	<p>The Backlog Repairs' Project was approved in 2023 to complete the backlog repairs that had accrued during the pandemic and to run for one year from May 2023 and conclude in May 2024.</p> <p>The project was allocated an additional budget of £900,000 across both neighbourhood accounts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May 2023 there were 5,352 outstanding/backlog repairs. • As of the 28th February 2024, there are 1,124 outstanding repairs. <p>The project is now in month nine of the programme and on target for the final quarter.</p> <p>As such, we have hit 79.0% of the Repairs Backlog against an agreed target of 79.5%.</p> <p>The table below shows the budget allocation for this project and current spend:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1182 1251 2078 1390"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1189 1256 1429 1390"><i>Neighbourhood Area</i></th> <th data-bbox="1435 1256 1653 1390"><i>Initial Allocation</i></th> <th data-bbox="1659 1256 1845 1390"><i>Spend to date (28/02/24)</i></th> <th data-bbox="1852 1256 2072 1390"><i>Budget remaining</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1189 1394 1429 1390"></td> <td data-bbox="1435 1394 1653 1390"></td> <td data-bbox="1659 1394 1845 1390"></td> <td data-bbox="1852 1394 2072 1390"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>Neighbourhood Area</i>	<i>Initial Allocation</i>	<i>Spend to date (28/02/24)</i>	<i>Budget remaining</i>				
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			<p>Supplementary Question:- Are there any current backlogs of repairs occurring because of work that's gone on? Have we been able to keep up with day to day repairs, not just the backlog?</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="1189 325 2069 451"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1189 325 1431 384">Corby</td> <td data-bbox="1431 325 1659 384">£500,000</td> <td data-bbox="1659 325 1850 384">£229,146</td> <td data-bbox="1850 325 2069 384">£270,854</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1189 384 1431 451">Kettering</td> <td data-bbox="1431 384 1659 451">£400,000</td> <td data-bbox="1659 384 1850 451">£157,265</td> <td data-bbox="1850 384 2069 451">£242,735</td> </tr> </table> <p>We have employed an additional contractor to undertake fencing works and remain on track to complete the backlog project on time and to budget.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- There are two teams actually working on this I believe, one doing the old backlog that's highlighted in your supplementary and the ongoing repairs undertaken by another team. So there is a backlog but they are working on it.</p>	Corby	£500,000	£229,146	£270,854	Kettering	£400,000	£157,265	£242,735
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8.	Cllr Anne Lee	Cllr Helen Howell	What is being done to safeguard the accreditation of Kettering's museum?	<p>Officers are preparing to embark on a comprehensive North Northamptonshire Heritage Masterplan. This initiative, supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, will provide strategic direction for the restoration of the museum and the optimal storage and care of collections across North Northamptonshire.</p> <p>All archaeological archives under the care of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire will be housed in the ARC, ensuring their safety and preservation. These archives will be made available to local museums, including our own, as and when required. This will include those that are currently housed in Kettering.</p>								

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			<p>Supplementary Question:- Since most of the collections of Kettering Museum that are in storage are social history items rather than archaeological items, do we have the Executive Member's assurance that those collections in storage are being looked after properly and regularly visited to check for signs of woodworm etc?</p>	<p>Upon completion of the heritage masterplan, officers will collaborate with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to commence the restoration and eventual reopening of the museum. In the meantime the Gallery and Museum collections are being managed and officer are in regular liaison with our regional contact for Museum accreditation. The accreditation remains in place but reaccreditation is currently paused.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- The answer to that is yes.</p>
9.	Cllr Ross Armour	Cllr Helen Howell	<p>When will a condition survey take place for the disused sports pavilion at Lake Avenue in Kettering so it can be brought back to life for the community to use?</p> <p>Supplementary Question:-</p>	<p>A condition survey has been completed for the pavilion at Lake Avenue. This, along with condition survey data on the wider Leisure estate, will feed into the development of the Council's Leisure Strategy, which will consider future investment need and their prioritisation. In the meantime, the property remains in use.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:-</p>

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			I was a little bit confused by the latter part of this answer because my findings are that the pavilion is essentially desolate at the present time, so can I simply ask who is using it?	It is in use and is being used by the Kettering Harriers so I am not too sure what you mean by desolate. I have been assured by officers it is in use.
10.	Cllr Ross Armour	Cllr David Brackenbury	Will the leader review and change as a matter of urgency the current taxi licensing policy that states taxi replacement vehicles need to be no older than 4 years?	It was the intention to review the policy two years after introduction. However, the Department for Transport released updated best practice guidance for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles to licensing authorities in November 2023. In light of that, the Authority will be reviewing the North Northamptonshire Council Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy during 2024. However, no commitment can be made to the outcomes of that review at this time. The Authority's policy will need to reflect the best practice guidance and maintain its commitments to the Authority's climate change agenda.
11.	Cllr Simon Rielly	Cllr Matt Binley	<p>The government allocated NNC additional Highways money to repair our road network, fix streetlights, repairs road signs and make our roads safer.</p> <p>Can the Leader reassure the chamber how the money will be used and will our current road network that is in desperate need of repair take priority?</p>	<p>We welcome the additional funding provided by the Government to repair and maintain our highways network. We will ensure this funding is used in the most cost-effective way so that we can make the very most of the additional funding for the benefit of our residents and road users.</p> <p>The additional funding follows the annual allocation of the Government funding that totals £9.768m for 2024/25 and was accepted by the Executive on 15th February 2024. This funding will be used to maintain the highway network to a safe standard and improve access for residents and visitors across North Northamptonshire in accordance with the</p>

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				<p>Northamptonshire Asset Management Plan, Local Transport Plan and Network Management Plan.</p> <p>The Government have provided a further £2.1m (£1.069m per year) to be spent during 2023/24 and 2024/25. This funding is part of the Government's eleven-year plan to invest in road maintenance and arises from the cancellation of the Northern HS2 line. We have already published a programme of works which have been enabled by this funding. This money will be spent on resurfacing roads, cycleways and footways and maintaining bridges, as well as preventing potholes and other road defects. We looked at the annual condition surveys of the highway network and used our highways asset management strategy to prioritise work based on the condition of the road, while considering other local factors such as: road importance; number of defects; number of customer complaints. This programme consists of additional road treatment schemes which will improve road surface and prolong the life of the road surface. Network North funding North Northamptonshire Council (northnorthants.gov.uk)</p> <p>Furthermore, the Council has allocated £9m within its own capital programme to boost our maintenance highways budget for the next three years. In total, as part of the Capital programme for 2024 – 2028 the Council agreed at its meeting on 22nd February to spend approximately £49.1m over the next four financial years on highways projects, the largest investment the council has made towards highways to date.</p>

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				<p>Most recently, the Government have announced a further £149m which will be provided to North Northamptonshire over the 7 years from 2025/26. This is to be spent on the Council's overall priorities for highway improvements, not just maintenance. Whilst the Government have confirmed the overall funding package, we are waiting to hear how the funding will be profiled over the 7 years, although it is clear that the majority of the funding will be in later years. The in-house highways team are now working to devise a programme of works which will seek to get the best value from this funding. Once that programme is complete, we will publish it on the Council's website.</p> <p>The full programme for maintenance and preventative works during 2024/ 25 will be outlined in the Highways Annual Plan, which we expect to finalise in early April; an Executive Summary of which will be circulated to all Members. These funding streams do not include the further funding confirmed by the Government for the Isham bypass, which is subject to the successful submission of the necessary business cases as well as planning permission, nor the work to dual the section of the A43 between Holcot and Sywell roundabouts. Work on both of these projects is progressing well.</p>

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12.	Cllr John McGhee	Cllr David Brackenbury	<p>Corby has a resident who has stolen land behind people's houses. The land is being turned into a hard stand and fires are being lit as well as rubbish being left there.</p> <p>As well stealing land neighbours are so upset with the constant disturbances and fires at their back gates. Why have we not in 2 years dealt with this? Is it a lack of resources?</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- Does Councillor Brackenbury agree with me that if we do not deal with this as soon as possible we will encourage others to do the same thing on our green land and on our green spaces?</p>	<p>Officers are aware of this particular case. Planning Enforcement, Environmental Health and Street scene teams are due to discuss the recent nuisance factors due to the nature of the complaints.</p> <p>We are aware of the encroachment into the amenity land at the rear, but the adverse possession of land is not within the enforcement remit of the authority. The council is aware who owns the land but all attempts to contact them, including several emails and calls have elicited no response. As this is ultimately a civil matter between the two landowners the Council would usually ask the landowner to deal with the encroachment, as it is their land, but as that has been fruitless the council has sought to help.</p> <p>Based on a further site visit this week, officers are now considering more formal enforcement action and will ensure the local ward members are kept up to date as this progresses.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- It is a bit complicated because the adverse possession of land as I explained in the answer is in fact a civil matter and it is not within the competence of the Council. However, I do know there is a lot of unpleasant environmental effects going on and we are taking a more proactive approach to work with enforcement to try and make the situation as clear as possible. I can also talk to you offline and am more than happy to keep an interest in this.</p>

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13.	Cllr Emily Fedorowycz	Cllr Helen Howell	<p>What is the full budgeted cost of implementing the temporary Kettering library facility and when will the permanent building be reopened?</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- Knowing that the library roof has been a known issue for over half a decade, how has it not been budgeted for and actioned before it has reached a critical point, and what will the Council be doing to make up for the fact that the library cannot celebrate its 120th anniversary in May 2024 with an open facility?</p>	<p>The additional cost to the service for the relocation to the temporary library facility in Kettering was £120 for external directional signage and £200 for a fire risk assessment to take place, (£320 in total). Everything else related to the move was managed in-house by the library team apart from the IT cabling, which cost £853 and has been covered within the allocated IT Services budget.</p> <p>The Replacement Roof project has been mobilised. It remains the intention to move the library back to its permanent home once the library roof is watertight, so long as it is safe to do so from a health and safety perspective. Project timelines at this stage indicate the earliest that might be is Spring 2025, but this is subject to change.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- I cannot answer on issues that happened prior to vesting day as the library was the responsibility of the County Council and the extension part of the library was also part of Kettering Borough Council's work as they went out for the funding.</p> <p>As for the celebrations, unfortunately there's not a great deal we can do about the library as the roof is needing replacement and I think that it is really critical that we ensure we protect that building for future generations. As soon as the library can be opened it will be.</p>

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14.	Cllr Emily Fedorowycz	Cllr Harriet Pentland	<p>What is the aim and impact of the council’s Climate Conferences? Has it impacted Net Zero and Carbon Footprint targets and actions?</p>	<p>The NN climate conference has now run for three consecutive years, with 32 speakers covering a diverse range of climate topics from climate-friendly farming, sustainable food production, nature recovery, sustainable tourism, renewable energy, and sustainable travel, to name just a few.</p> <p>The aim of the climate conference is to raise knowledge and awareness of sustainable initiatives and opportunities and foster collective action and build a sustainable future for the local community in the face of climate change challenges. We have seen our own carbon footprint targets influenced by these initiatives, as evidenced by the rollout of the carbon management plan in areas such as procurement, ICT, fleet, environment, and in Council owned buildings. A report updating on the Council’s carbon management plan progress and areas of focus will be presented to Executive in April.</p> <p>However, it is important to recognise the Council’s role in influencing carbon emissions in the area, with the Council being responsible for approximately 2% of carbon emissions within North Northants, but able to influence over 33% of all emissions across North Northants.</p> <p>Therefore, we play a crucial role in influencing carbon emissions in the local area by implementing policies, programs, and initiatives that promote sustainability and mitigate climate change impacts. Through initiatives such as the NN climate conference we can demonstrate both proactive leadership and community engagement on the importance of</p>

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			<p>Supplementary Question:- Regarding fostering collective action, how is a public broadcast anything more than a talking shop and how are we actually encouraging people to be engaged and generate collective action with our residents and our businesses?</p>	<p>sustainability now, and call on the convening power of the Council to draw sustainability partners together, support our Big 50 vision of giving the best life for all, and create a more environmentally sustainable future for North Northamptonshire.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer by Cllr Smithers on behalf of Cllr Pentland:- The Climate Conference is a really useful tool to getting people engaged locally about understanding what this authority is doing to reduce our carbon footprint. I think that the engagement that comes out of the online discussions that go on to YouTube is watched by quite a few people and it probably inspires some young individuals to think about their impact on the climate. We're progressively moving forward finding the baseline position here at the Council and we will continue to do so. We will continue to engage and I encourage the climate conference to continue throughout the coming years. It is a great tool to use to advertise hat we are doing.</p>
15.	Cllr Emily Fedorowycz	Cllr Helen Howell	<p>When will the consultant's business plan for the Kettering Leisure Village be available for the community to comment on, as well as a formal scrutiny committee agenda item to debate the options, as promised at full council in June 2023?</p> <p>Supplementary Question:-</p>	<p>The options review undertaken by a specialist Leisure management consultant is now finalised, and a report is being prepared to present to the Place & Environment Scrutiny Committee at the end of March. The report and feedback from the Scrutiny Panel meeting will subsequently be considered by Executive.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:-</p>

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			<p>What engagement with the KLV campaign group has taken place to get their input on this report and ongoing plan and have they been made aware of these meetings and this time frame so they can come and speak if they wish to?</p>	<p>The KLV support group has not been in contact with this Council at all. The paper is in its readiness now to go scrutiny as it states, which is a public meeting and they are able to attend and speak at that meeting should they wish to.</p> <p>The consultation paper was undertaken by an external consultant so it is their findings that we have received and are now assessing. By all means we would love the support group to come to scrutiny and then the Executive, they are more than welcome.</p>
16.	Cllr Jim Hakewill	Cllr Helen Howell	<p>What is the present position regarding the proposed disaggregation of the Library service between north and west and when will the next steps take place?</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- When will the proposals to be considered by the Joint Shared Service Committee be subject to scrutiny? My understanding is the Shared Services Committee is just six councillors.</p>	<p>Officers from both Councils have developed an options appraisal and impact assessment relating to further disaggregation of the library service, which is already 85% disaggregated. Currently there is no agreed position on disaggregation between NNC and WNC. If and when this is achieved the proposals will be taken through the Joint Shared Services Committee.</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- At this time there are no proposals coming forward so until we know what is coming and when, at that point there will then be an opportunity for members to call it in following the decision.</p>
17.	Cllr Jim Hakewill	Cllr Matt Binley	<p>How many £20 Green Waste rebates were issued to residents of</p>	<p>We were pleased to offer a rebate to those existing garden waste subscribers in the East Northants area who had loyally</p>

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			<p>the former East Northamptonshire District Council and how much did it cost to distribute them?</p> <p>Supplementary Question:- By my reckoning the residents of East Northamptonshire received £230k back as a rebate. Residents of Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby still pay for their green waste to be collected. Within the harmonised North Northamptonshire Council tax when will residents of Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough get our rebate?</p>	<p>subscribed to the service. We welcomed a total of 11,498 returning customers who all benefitted from the £20 rebate. The team worked hard to ensure the renewing process was as easy as possible for our customers. There were no additional costs to administer the rebates as the changes to the rate were applied as part of the online renewal process.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- It's important to note that I think people are confusing the harmonisation in the fact of who was paying what, where and when. I think we have to look at this in the fact that over 85% of councils in the UK are charging for the collection of green waste so we are not doing anything unusual. I would also add that we are one of the cheapest councils for charging for green waste.</p> <p>There are councils that are charging over £100 for the collection of green waste and we are nowhere near that so I think we have done this in a very fair and very reasonable manner to not overly burden any of the residents in North Northamptonshire. I also think it was right and proper to do what we did with regards to those loyal customers in East Northamptonshire.</p>
18.	Cllr Jim Hakewill	Cllr Jason Smithers	When do we expect an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team to be on site at NNC to give valuable external scrutiny on the Council's journey from April 2021?	The Leader and Chief Executive has already spoken with the LGA about a Peer Review as we welcome the opportunity for external peers to learn about our council, provide feedback and give recommendations to ensure continuous improvement.

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			<p>Supplementary Question:- When do we expect an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team to be on site?</p>	<p>A meeting has been scheduled with the Local Government Association to schedule a date in late summer.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer:- We will be having a conversation late summer and we will update you as soon as we know what the date is and as soon as the LGA fit us in.</p>

End of Cllr Questions