



COUNCIL

7.30 p.m. – 9.50 p.m.

25 January 2005

Present: Councillor Divers (Lord Mayor) (Chair), Paul King (Sheriff),
Councillors Alders-Dunthorne, Ahmed, Allison, Banham, Blakeway,
Blower, Borrett, Bradford, Brociek-Coulton, Castle-Green, Collishaw,
Cooke, Couzens, Driver, Elvin, Ferris, Gledhill, Goldfinch, Harper,
Hartley, Holmes, Hume, Lay, Lowe, Lubbock, Morphew, Ramsay,
Read, Rooza, Rumsby, Surridge, Thomas, Waters, Watkins,
Westmacott, Williams and Wood

Apologies: Councillor Morrey

1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor announced -

- (1) that John Bunker who had been a City Councillor from 1979 to 2003 had died earlier that week;

(The Lord Mayor then called for a moment's silence in tribute to the memory of John Bunker.

Councillor Ferris paid tribute to the services of John Bunker to the City Council. He had become a Councillor in 1979 and served as a Ward Councillor for Mile Cross Ward and on a number of Committees until his retirement in 2003 because of ill health. He was a 'Good Old Norwich Boy' who would be sadly missed.)

- (2) that 2005 would be the 'Year of the Volunteer', and reminded Councillors that they should make nominations for Civic Awards for Voluntary Service in Norwich and encourage others to do likewise;
- (3) there would be a memorial service for victims of the Tsunami and the reconstruction at Norwich Cathedral on 30 January 2005 at 3.30 p.m.;
- (4) that she wished Councillor Ramsay, the Spokesperson for the Green Group, a speedy recovery following his recent accident.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Head of Regulatory and Democratic Services declared a prejudicial interest in item 9 below.

3. PETITION

Allotments

Councillor Rumsby presented the following petition to the Lord Mayor -

'I ask this Council to accept the petition on behalf of the people of Bowthorpe who have asked for support for allotments in Three Score.

Members of the community would like the opportunity to grow vegetables and to have some green space of their own. Sadly for many people to live in the community they do not have this opportunity and often they do not have a courtyard let alone a garden. Allotments would not only give them the opportunity to participate in a hobby, which many of us take for granted. But it will promote their physical and mental well-being. Fresh vegetables are a healthy substitute for the canned variety and gardening in the outdoors will help to keep people mentally stimulated as well as giving a person an outlet to de-stress themselves from everyday concerns.

Therefore it gives the Labour Team great pleasure to support this petition, which is well supported within the community. We ask the Lord Mayor to help Bowthorpe in their quest for allotments in Three Score and accept this petition.'

Councillor Lubbock responded to the petition by thanking Councillor Rumsby and the Bowthorpe Community for their work in getting the petition together and stated that it would be passed to the Head of Green Spaces for consideration.

Community Wardens

Jill Smith, on behalf of the Heartsease and Plumstead Association, presented the following petition to the Lord Mayor and said that a total of 1,652 signatures had been collected -

'We call on Norwich City Council to extend the popular and highly successful Community Warden Scheme/ Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) into the Heartsease. We believe that working with the police, a local Community Warden team/PCSO's would help make this estate safer and reduce anti-social behaviour.'

Councillor Cooke thanked Jill Smith for the petition and congratulated her on gathering 1,652 signatures. The petition could not be received at a more appropriate moment as shown in the report on the Neighbourhood Wardens, to be considered later in the meeting, consideration of the extension of the scheme was imminent.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED to -

- (1) agree the accuracy of the minutes of the Council held on 30 November 2004 subject to Appendix A, Question 8, inserting the following sentence to Councillor Couzens' response to Councillor Read's supplementary question -

'Councillor Couzens assured Councillor Read that any potential disasters originating outside Norfolk's boundaries, but potentially affecting Norwich, would be considered in the course of the emergency planning processes and exercises that the City Council will be carrying out in 2005.'

- (2) receive the minutes of all Executive and Committee meetings held between 11 November 2004 and 12 January 2005.

5. QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Lord Mayor advised that questions had been received on which notice had been given in accordance with the provision of Appendix 1 of the Council's Constitution as follows -

- Question 1** Councillors Blower and Read to Executive Member for Housing and Revenue Services about Leaseholders and the CityCare contract.
- Question 2** Councillor Westmacott to the Leader of the Council regarding advertising the Government's initiative, the Child Trust Fund, in "The Citizen".
- Question 3** Councillor Driver to the Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Organisational Development about the amount spend on the hire of cars for staff use during the last 12 months.
- Question 4** Councillor Ferris to the Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Organisational Development regarding Theatre in the Parks.
- Question 5** Councillor Williams to the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee regarding flooding of the pavement outside Mousehold First School.
- Question 6** Councillor Banham to the Executive Member for Technical Services regarding Beaconsfield Road.
- Question 7** Councillors Lay and Gledhill to the Leader of the Council on the pulping and reprinting of "The Citizen".
- Question 8** Councillor Waters to the Chair of Scrutiny Committee regarding the progress made to the work programme for Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the questions and replies had been circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Details of the questions and replies are attached at Appendix A to these minutes, together with any supplementary questions and responses.

6. RECYCLING IN NORWICH

Councillor Lubbock moved and Councillor Ramsay seconded the report of the Waste Management Select Committee.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to receive the report of the Waste Management Select Committee.

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

Councillor Morpew moved and Councillor Waters seconded the report of the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Morpew said that he had declared an interest in the selection of tenders for consultants because of his connections with the Guild. Councillor Aalders-Dunthorne confirmed that Councillor Morpew had not participated in the selection process and that the procedures were the best that could be done to ensure that this important work happened.

RESOLVED, with a majority voting in favour, to receive the report of the Scrutiny Committee.

8. CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE

Councillor Couzens moved and Councillor Cooke seconded the report of the Director of Housing and Revenue Services.

RESOLVED, with a majority voting in favour, to -

- (1) approve the calculation of the council tax base for the year 2005/2006 as set out in the report;
- (2) pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2003, that the amount calculated by the Norwich City Council as its tax base for the year 2005/2006 shall be 37,890.44.

9. APPOINTMENT OF ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER AND RETURNING OFFICER

(The Head of Regulatory and Democratic Services declared a prejudicial interest in this item and left the chamber.)

Councillor Hartley moved and Councillor Hume seconded the report of the Chief Executive Officer.

Councillor Morpew, on behalf of the Labour Group, gave his heartfelt thanks to John Turner who was a highly respected officer in his field. Councillor Hartley endorsed this statement and said that John Turner's work was much appreciated.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that -

- (1) the Head of Regulatory and Democratic Services be appointed Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer as from 1 February 2005;
- (2) John Turner be thanked for his services to the City Council as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.

(The Head of Regulatory and Democratic Services returned.)

10. MOTION - NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS

Councillor Holmes moved and Councillor Gledhill seconded the motion.

Councillor Morpew moved and Councillor Waters seconded the following amendment to the motion -

‘Delete everything after the second paragraph and replace with -

Council believes that the impact on the people of Norwich should be fully and properly assessed so that Council can make a reasonable and responsible decision and help inform public debate.

Council therefore requests the Chief Executive Officer to present a full report for debate by Council within the next 6 months.’

On being put to the vote, with the majority voting against, 14 in favour and 1 abstention, the amendment to the motion was declared lost.

The motion was then put to the vote and it was -

RESOLVED, with a majority voting in favour, that -

‘In light of the appointment of local MP Charles Clarke as Home Secretary, a position that gives him responsibility for the proposed Identity Card Scheme, this Council notes -

That the Home Secretary is currently attempting to push an ID Cards Bill through Parliament. This Bill will have an effect upon all of the people of Norwich.

Council believes -

- That the disadvantages of such a scheme will outweigh any benefits to the people of Norwich.
- That the cards will do little, if anything, to prevent terrorism, crime or fraud. According to Government estimates, the cost of such a scheme could reach £5.5 billion, with independent commentators predicting costs of as much as five times that estimate. Norwich residents will be required to pay

an estimated £35 for a stand-alone ID card or £85 for a passport and ID card together.

Council therefore resolves to -

- 1) affiliate to the 'No2ID' campaign, which already includes MPs and several political parties;
- 2) make representations at every possible stage, reiterating this Council's opposition to ID cards;
- 3) take no part in any pilot scheme or feasibility work in relation to the introduction of the national identity cards;
- 4) make it a policy of the Council to ensure that national identity cards would not be required to access council services or benefits unless specifically called to do so by Act of Parliament;
- 5) only co-operate with the national identity card scheme where to do otherwise would be unlawful;
- 6) mandate the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary expressing these views and asking him to reconsider his decision to push forward this legislation.

11. MOTION - NORTHERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

Councillor Read moved and Councillor Goldfinch seconded the following motion -

'The Executive committed Norwich City during the last civic year (in December 2003) "to give support in principle for a Northern Distributor Road for Norwich, on condition that -

- a) significant resources are also invested in the Public Transport Infrastructure of Norwich; and
- b) such a road is used as a mechanism for improving alternatives to the car."

Since then, a great deal has changed. In particular -

- 1) The predicted cost of the road has escalated, to up to £140m.
- 2) Government transport policy has changed to favour the introduction of congestion charging and (in the longer term) a satellite tracking based system of road-user charging. These will act as a major break on the attractiveness of medium and long-range car journeys, and will reduce road usage.
- 3) As a consequence in part of (2), the Government has recently made clear that it will fund few major road schemes. It will not fund the A47 dualling scheme, for instance, which has some claim to being a national scheme. The NDR is only a local/regional scheme. The NDR is extremely unlikely now to attract Government/LTP funding.

- 4) The NDR was determined by the East of England Regional Assembly in Autumn 2004 not to satisfy the criteria as a regional priority. As a consequence, given that the Government is now only funding some national schemes, and few or no regional schemes, and given that the East of England Regional Assembly will have to prioritise which schemes to fund from a limited pot of regional transport money, it is unlikely that the NDR will attract more than token regional funding.
- 5) Developer contributions could only fund a small amount of the cost of the NDR. Considering the PFI fiasco that Norfolk's schools and hospitals have encountered over the last year, PFI funding for the NDR would surely be extremely unwise.
- 6) The NDR would need a large income stream to fund its building. Given points (1) to (5) above, this could only be provided by workplace parking charges, congestion charging or Council Tax increases. Norfolk County Council (and the Executive of Norwich City Council) have ruled out supporting workplace parking charges or congestion charging in the short to medium term. The upshot is that the bulk of the burden of paying for an NDR would fall onto the shoulders of the Council Tax-payers of Norfolk (including the shoulders of those who have no access to a motor vehicle).
- 7) Furthermore, the Environmental Impact Assessment Stage 2 report [http://www.norwichareatransport.org/traveltransport/ndr/pdf/env_assesment/split/S2EAR-Chapter5-5.pdf] published in Autumn 2004 identifies very serious environmental arguments against building the NDR, on any route. It is for this reason that a large number of wildlife and environmental groups subsequently came out in opposition to the NDR. In particular, the 'green' and 'orange' Western routes, widely recognised to be the only practicable routes for the road (the others, being 'too far west', would, according to the traffic predictions, carry insufficient traffic to merit building the road), both score "very large adverse impact" on environmental criteria. This is the worst category of negative impact available within an EIA.

These 7 points suggest that it is time to review whether the conditions the Executive laid down for supporting an NDR can be satisfied. It is evident that condition (a) cannot be satisfied, for the financing of the road could only be achieved by devoting so much Council Tax funding to the NDR that there will be little cash left for the public transport infrastructure of Norwich (or of anywhere else in Norfolk). For the same reason, condition (b) is unlikely to be satisfied.

Therefore, noting the 7 changes mentioned above that have occurred over the last year -

Norwich City Council urges Norfolk County Council to scrap its plans to build an NDR.

Council also urges the Executive to -

- 1) request the County Council and local planning authorities to investigate small-scale link/loop roads for connecting new major housing developments in outer Norwich to the built up area;
- 2) request the County Council and local planning authorities to ensure that governmental or developer contributions towards transport for serving major new developments in the Norwich area support environmentally sustainable transport measures on top of any small scale link/loop roads;
- 3) support the development, funding and application of an intensive and long-term package of sustainable transport measures for the Norwich area. This would include high quality public transport, walking and cycling networks and “smart choices” for changing travel behaviour, which have recently been proven to have huge (and good value-for-money) scope for reducing unnecessary demand for transport;
- 4) support the active investigation of a wider range of demand management measures in line with national government and regional policy for reducing congestion, “locking in the benefits” and creating a revenue stream for sustainable transport measures.

Council believes that this approach would assist social inclusion, protect the local and global environment and support the local economy.'

RESOLVED, with 5 voting in favour and the majority against, the motion was lost.

12. LENGTH OF MOTIONS

Councillor Cooke requested that the Constitution Working Party should consider the length of motions to Council.

LORD MAYOR

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS TO EXECUTIVE MEMBERS/COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Question No. 1

Councillor Blower to the Executive Member for Housing and Revenue Services -

For over 18 months the Labour team and I have been battling for a fair deal for leaseholders against a wall of silence and sometimes misinformation. The damage to the reputation of the City Council and your administration has been enormous but pales into insignificance when considering the intense worry, anger and frustration felt by ordinary leaseholders, many of them elderly people. That said I personally cautiously welcome the new spirit of consensus and a desire from the administration to work constructively to solve this complicated and difficult situation. Can the Leader assure Council that the process which has begun to be set in motion to investigate and consider options to bring sanity to this problem will involve all members of this Council, be open and truly transparent?

Councillor Cooke, Executive Member for Housing and Revenue Services' reply -

It is a shame that Councillor Blower wasn't present at the meeting of the Executive on 19 January when we spent over an hour going through the Chief Executive's very full and detailed report with the active involvement of leaseholder representatives and in the presence of the local press. I can think of no precedents for such openness and transparency in previous Labour administrations. I am happy to assure him that openness and transparency is an integral part of liberal democratic philosophy – it permeates our whole approach as an administration and will continue in this and every other aspect of the Executive's work.

Had he been present at the meeting or spoken with his colleague Councillor Banham he would know of the assurance given to leaseholders that they and tenants will be kept informed every step of the way and their views taken into account.

The Chief Executive's report makes it clear that the Director of Housing has already moved to making compensation to leaseholders on an individual case-by-case basis.

As he rightly says, this was a complicated and difficult situation. It is regrettable that the first Councillors who raised concerns were informed, by the Portfolio holder, with regard to the CityCare contract that '*...We explained to residents that our position was still as stated in the letter to all leaseholders in June 2000.....The letter explains that due to the partnering arrangements with CityCare we will not be supplying two competitive estimates for each repair. However, our legal advice is that we have acted reasonably and within the law. We acknowledge that this is a difficult area and hence our letter to leaseholders to set out the position in full.....*'. Councillor Blower may not be aware that the Councillor raising concerns on behalf of leaseholders was Liberal Democrat Ian Williams and the Portfolio holder was Labour's very own Bernard Smith.

I hope that Councillor Blower and the labour 'team' will now assist us to inform leaseholders of the good news that has resulted from the determination of this administration to find a constructive solution.

The Executive is here every fortnight dealing with the many important issues that face the City and the Council, observed by the public and the press. All Councillors are aware of the dates and times of our meetings, have ready access to the agendas and reports, and are more than welcome to attend.

Councillor Blower by way of a supplementary question referred to the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 and asked why the new powers concerning procurement under this legislation had been ignored. **Councillor Cooke** in reply said that the Act was not retrospective. He recognised the distress of the leaseholders and had personally been seeking a solution to the problem with the contract with CityCare for 4 years. It was only now that CityCare were willing to forgo their exclusive rights that progress could be made. The Leaseholders Forum was being set up as a Leaseholders Association and they would continue to be involved.

Councillor Read to the Executive Member for Housing and Revenue Services -

As a result of the negotiations between the Council and CityCare over leaseholders' payments to CityCare, a pause for tendering has been agreed with the result that no work will be done on flats in 2005-6, except work already in progress. Will the Executive investigate other options such that those living in these flats will not have to wait over a year for maintenance or improvement work? Such options could include: facilitating locally/community-based co-operative/self-repair, or continuing to undertake high priority repairs under the old payment arrangements and offering further ex-gratia payment where necessary to offset any financial disadvantage thus incurred by leaseholders.

Councillor Cooke, Executive Member for Housing and Revenue Services' reply -

Firstly let me clarify that the only work to flats that is affected is planned maintenance to the external fabric and common areas, including windowing. If Councillor Read had read in full the Chief Executive's report to the Executive, he would be aware that the Director of Housing and Revenue Services has examined the proposed programme and advised that the work can be deferred for up to 12 months. If any high priority repairs emerge during the period, then the Director of Housing and Revenue Services will make arrangements for the necessary works to be done.

The top priority for the Council staff dealing with this issue is to work with external advisors to establish the tendering process in compliance with EU procurement regulations, complete negotiations and enter into new contracts, taking into account the views of leaseholders and tenants. Facilitating community self-help or co-operative repairs is a worthwhile aim but major planned maintenance and improvement works to tower blocks, deck access and other flats is probably not the best place to start.

Councillor Read referred to the CityCare fiasco and said that this proved that privatisation did not work. **Councillor Cooke** replied that this was a different

question entirely to the original one and that probably a subject for discussion by the Council. Some privatisations could go well and some did not. It would not be responsible to condemn privatisation out of hand.

Question No. 2

Councillor Westmacott to the Leader of the Council -

Two weeks ago the Government launched the Child Trust Fund, which is designed to ensure that every child in our country has assets and wealth to use when they are aged 18. It will surely improve financial awareness and strengthen the savings culture. I understand over 2 million vouchers have been sent to the parents of children eligible for the Child Trust Fund, some of which will live in our City of Norwich. Will the Leader support and encourage this initiative through advertising it in 'The Citizen'?

Councillor Couzens, Leader of the Council's reply -

It is important that residents are made aware of, and are able to benefit from any initiative that could be to their advantage, whether introduced by the Government or ourselves. If 'The Citizen' can contribute to this process, then I am happy to encourage the inclusion of information in the magazine whether for this or other initiatives.

In reply to **Councillor Westmacott's** supplementary question, **Councillor Couzens** confirmed that he would be happy to pass on his comments to the editorial team of 'The Citizen'.

Question No. 3

Councillor Driver to the Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Organisational Development

Will the Leader inform Council how much has been spent on the hire of cars for staff use during the last 12 months?

Councillor Hartley, Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Organisational Development's reply -

The Council spent a total of £339, 000 on the hire of cars for staff use in the last calendar year, as follows -

- £269,000 on hire charges;
- £50,000 on insurance (premiums and excess);
- £20,000 on fuel.

This was within the budgeted spend and was less than previous years.

Question No. 4

Councillor Ferris to the Executive Member Arts, Culture and Organisational Development -

Would the Executive member explain why the highly successful Theatre in the Parks programme has been cut, just after its 12th year, and why she had no input to the decision which she herself has said "maybe a change of policy"? Surely councillors should still routinely be consulted on any matter where there is a change of policy?

Councillor Hartley, Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Organisational Development's reply -

Thank you for your question and I welcome the opportunity to put the record straight. Theatre in the Parks has not been cancelled.

The highly successful Marsh Children's Theatre Festival continues this year. There will be a cabaret night featuring the best of local performers, including the Nimmo Twins, in July at the Whiffler Theatre. Crude Apache will be performing at the Whiffler as part of the Lord Mayor's celebration and will be doing performances in other parks in the summer and we are supporting them in this.

We will be using this year to invest in developing the Theatre in the Parks Festival and we are devising a training and development programme this year for companies who wish to be involved with the view to re-launch the festival in 2006.

The festival last year only had two local companies involved and we needed to take a step back to look at the reasons why to ensure the festival continues in future years. The festival is a partnership between the council and local theatre companies. We consulted and held meetings with participating companies who have made suggestions about development.

These include:

- developing a broader festival to celebrate local theatre both venue based and in the parks;
- look at some specific training;
- re-launch of a bigger better festival in 2006.

Councillor Ferris by way of a supplementary question asked why the Communications Team had not corrected the local press regarding Councillor Hartley's knowledge of the change in policy. **Councillor Hartley** explained that she had been approached by the press whilst shopping. The Communications Team had sent press releases to correct the statement but these had not been published.

Question No. 5

Councillor Williams to the Chair of Planning Applications Committee -

Can the Chair of Planning Applications Committee tell me when work to prevent flooding of the pavement outside Mousehold First School will be carried out?

Councillor Lubbock, Chair of Planning Applications Committee's reply -

The drainage of the footway outside Mousehold First School has been an issue for a while, with previous attempts to resolve the matter proving unsuccessful. Highway officers are attempting to design a solution that retains the tree adjacent to the footway without creating a step from the school onto the highway.

Action to resolve this issue will commence early in the new financial year.

Councillor Williams said that he had tried to obtain a response to his question in through the usual channels without success and asked as a supplementary question if there was a definite date for the works to be done. **Councillor Lubbock** said that she would approach the Highways Manager for a date when work would be done and see if she met with more success.

Question No. 6

Councillor Banham to the Executive Member for Technical Services -

In light of the possibility of litigation what action is the Council taking to co-ordinate repairs and assist residents affected by subsidence in Beaconsfield Road?

Councillor Lowe, Executive Member for Technical Services' reply -

The City Council has closed Beaconsfield Road and made the highway safe to protect residents.

We have co-ordinated our services to ensure that such things as waste collection for residents of Beaconsfield Road has not been affected.

The City Council will re-instate the highway. Subject to investigation of the evidence a claim may be made against Anglian Water to recover the cost of so doing. Contractors that will be appointed by the insurers of the affected properties on Beaconsfield Road will be able to carry out appropriate repair works in a co-ordinated programme with the highway reinstatement.

Councillor Banham asked if there was a date yet when the road would be open again. **Councillor Lowe** said that she appreciated that the residents of Beaconsfield Road were inconvenienced by this event. The design process for the repair of the road had started. It would be unwise to give a firm date at this state. She asked Councillor Banham to relay to the residents that the Council was taking it very seriously, had their best interests at heart and would try to resolve issues as soon as possible.

Question No. 7

Councillor Lay to the Leader of the Council -

How much did it cost to pulp and reprint the pre-Christmas issue of 'The Citizen'?

Councillor Couzens, Leader of the Council's reply -

It cost £5,000 to pulp and reprint the pre-Christmas issue of 'The Citizen'.

Councillor Lay referred to the article in the 'Eastern Daily Press', which reported that the costs were considered to be minimal, and asked the Leader if he considered £5,000 as 'minimal'. **Councillor Couzens** replied that he did not consider that sum minimal. The situation was regrettable but must be considered within the context of a major reorganisation happening in many departments across the Council. At such times the normal checks and balances were removed. The mistake was most unlikely to happen again. The reorganisation of staff throughout the Council would save Council taxpayers thousands of pounds.

Councillor Gledhill to the Leader of the Council -

A report in the Eastern Daily Press informs us that 60,000 copies of 'The Citizen' magazine were recently pulped after errors were found. How extensive were the errors and why was it decided to pulp the magazines rather than including an insert correcting the mistakes?

Councillor Couzens, Leader of the Council's reply -

I don't know how extensive the errors were, but I am sure that in the judgement of the Head of Communications and Research, they were too extensive to consider using an insert as an alternative. He has apologised for this and is obviously highly embarrassed by what happened. Mistakes unfortunately happen and lessons have to be learned from them.

Question No. 8

Councillor Waters to the Chair of Scrutiny Committee-

What progress has been made to the work programme for Scrutiny Committee?

Councillor Morpew, Chair of Scrutiny Committee's reply -

The role of Scrutiny Committee is to hold the Executive to account, make sure that decisions are implemented and contribute to policy development. In a council with no party having an overall majority Scrutiny should play an important role in helping to maintain stability and questioning what goes on in ways which separate the party political from the good governance issues affecting the council.

The work of the Scrutiny Committee has started to reflect this, although I am sure some members have difficulty with getting their minds around such a split. What is becoming increasingly clear is that the delays in the system for getting things moving mitigates against the effectiveness of Scrutiny and potentially set up difficulties and differences that are avoidable. I will say more about wardens later in the meeting, but

that is a good example of an issue where we should have been close to a conclusion but are still only at the beginning of the investigation. Scrutiny will also examine the issue of leaseholders – what happened and whether the new conclusions reached are sufficient and satisfactory. That will be time consuming, but if members are to understand what happened and learn the lessons, as well as reassure the public we are on the case, it must have a priority.

Whilst I do not favour the establishment of a huge resource for Scrutiny, it is increasingly my view that to gain the full potential for members of all persuasions, get through its planned work programme and at the same time being able to respond to the issues that arise from time to time, more resources will need to be dedicated to scrutiny. I will be taking suggestions to the Scrutiny Committee and subsequently the Executive in due course. Meanwhile I hope members will support our continued efforts to carry out our functions in a timely way, with improved cooperation from officers and members alike.