

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

Question from Mr R

Chair, Leaders of the Council, ladies and gentlemen — thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

I am here today because the Essex Regiment Museum Collection holds deep significance for this county town, city, county and for many families, including my own. The decision to end the longstanding loan agreement, I believe the public deserves a clear understanding of how this outcome was reached. I will therefore keep my remarks brief and focus on five essential questions. I have included additional detail in my submitted statement, that might wish to review:

1. Rationale for Ending the Loan

What specific reasons and evidence led the Council to conclude that it was unable to sustainably continue the loan of the Essex Regiment Museum Collection, as stated in the Cabinet Meeting 25th November?

- Please outline the operational, curatorial, strategic, or resource-based factors behind this assessment.

2. Consideration of Alternatives

What alternative options were examined before deciding to end the loan, and why were these options rejected?

In particular:

- Why was an agreement not pursued in which the primary collection remained in its existing gallery, with selected elements transferred to the Royal Anglian Regiment?
- Why is a reduced display of Essex Regiment artefacts considered acceptable?

3. Engagement With Stakeholders and Community

If lack of external support was judged a critical constraint — despite a known 25-year review point — why was support not sought from the local community, veteran organisations, or heritage partners?

- Please confirm whether any outreach or consultation was attempted.

4. Absence of a Public Plan for the Collection's Future

Why, nearly two years after the agreement between the Council and the Trust, is there still no communicated plan describing the future location, scope, content, or timeline for the Essex Regiment Collection?

- When will a publicly accessible plan be provided?
- Did Cultural Services not consider this an important part of the negotiation?

5. Civic Duty and Heritage Stewardship

How does the Council reconcile its legal position on ownership with its broader civic duties to safeguard county heritage, especially when other city councils — Norwich, Leicester, Northampton, Lincoln; manage similar regimental collections within their counties, in partnership with their regimental trusts?

Closing Statement

To conclude, the Council must provide clear justification for a decision of this

significance. Managing a museum is not only about the collections the Council legally owns — it is also about meeting its broader civic duties to this county's history and the communities it serves. The Essex Regiment's legacy cannot be treated as secondary or separate. Transparency is owed to the public, and I expect direct answers to the questions raised today.

Thank you
