

Minutes of the Suffolk County Council Meeting held on 10 December 2015 at 2.00 p.m. in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, Ipswich.

Present: Councillors Jane Storey (Chairman of the County Council), Sarah Adams, Jenny Antill, Helen Armitage, Nick Barber, Sonia Barker, Trevor Beckwith, Mark Bee, Peter Beer, Peter Bellfield, Kathy Bole, Michael Bond, Tony Brown, Stephen Burroughes, David Busby, Peter Byatt, Kim Clements, Terry Clements, Janet Craig, Mary Evans, John Field, James Finch, Jessica Fleming, Julian Flood, Sandra Gage, Mandy Gaylard, Tony Goldson, John Goodwin, Michael Gower, Gary Green, Derek Hackett, Matthew Hicks, Beccy Hopfensperger, Christopher Hudson, David Hudson, Len Jacklin, Gordon Jones, Richard Kemp, Michael Ladd, Inga Lockington, Tim Marks, Sandy Martin, Guy McGregor, Bill Mountford, Alan Murray, David Nettleton, Graham Newman, Colin Noble, Patricia O'Brien, Penny Otton, Caroline Page, Keith Patience, Chris Punt, Bill Quinton, Andrew Reid, David Ritchie, Bryony Rudkin, John Sayers, Stephen Searle, Reg Silvester, Richard Smith MVO, Colin Spence, Joanna Spicer, Sarah Stamp, Andrew Stringer, Julia Truelove, James Waters, Robert Whiting and David Wood.

38. Thought for the Day

Council received a thought for the day from Barbara Gale, Chief Executive of St Nicholas Hospice at Bury St Edmunds.

39. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed councillors, officers and members of the public to the meeting and made the following announcements:

Outstanding achievements

Beverly Baker of Thomas Gainsborough High School at Great Cornard, Sudbury had been named Careers Educator of the Year in the 2015 UK Career Development Awards organised by the Career Development Institute. The Chairman reported that judges had recognised Beverly's tireless efforts over many years and her enthusiastic and innovative approach. This had included the creation of a career hub at her school where students can get guidance, work with employers and develop research skills, and the introduction of portfolios for each student capturing their experience.

Tim Earl, the Council's Head of Legal Services, was named Legal Professional of the Year at the Lawyers in Local Government Awards in London on Friday 20 November. The award recognised Tim's exceptional contribution to the arena of child protection and his wealth of knowledge in a number of areas, strong communication abilities and a willingness to guide and advice.

The Chairman reported that Tim was an assessor for the Law Society's children panel and the past chair of the Suffolk Family Justice Board and a Deputy District Judge. The Chairman continued that Tim had recently been Lead Lawyer for all the local authorities involved in the judicial review of foster care arrangements, a case of national importance and that Tim had recently been granted his Higher Rights qualification which not only recognised his skills but allowed him to save money for the Council by conducting his own high-level advocacy.

The Chairman also congratulated Deborah Cadman, the Chief Executive, for being ranked 17th in the Local Government Chronicle top 100 most influential figures in local government across the country.

Council shortlisted for awards

The Chairman announced that the Council had also been shortlisted for several Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards in 2016 and reported that following a presentation to a panel of LGC judges in late January, the awards would be made on 16 March 2016. The awards included Effective Health and Wellbeing Board, Health and Social Care, Digital Council and Team of the Year.

Staff Member leaving

The Chairman announced the retirement of Shirley Osborne, the County Community Safety Co-ordinator and County Lead for Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls, after 22 years with Suffolk County Council. The Chairman thanked Shirley who had led on domestic abuse for many years working closely with Cabinet Members (mostly Colin Spence, Joanna Spicer and Jenny Antill) and other partners.

The Chairman concluded her announcements by referring to the fact that Councillor Richard Kemp had been nominated as an 'unsung hero of the East' for his work in football and cricket in Long Melford over a period of 62 years, and wished him luck for the award.

40. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from James Crossley, Mark Ereira, Peter Gardiner, Bert Poole and Brian Riley.

41. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

The following declarations were made:

Councillor Jenny Antill declared a local non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8, Motion 2 as she was a Governor of Gainsborough House in Sudbury.

Councillor Andrew Stringer declared a local non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8, Motion 2 as he was a voluntary Director of the John Peel Arts Centre.

Councillor Graham Newman declared a local non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8, Motion 3 as he was a member of the Ipswich Transport Society and of Felixstowe Travel Watch.

42. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Councillor Richard Kemp asked that the minutes of 17 September 2015 record reference to the fact that he had a non-pecuniary local interest in Motion 1 as he was a retired magistrate on the West Suffolk Bench.

Council agreed the amendment to the minutes of 17 September 2015 which were then duly signed by the Chairman.

43. Public Questions

In accordance with Rule 28.2 of the Council's Rules of Procedure (Part 2 of the Constitution), the Chairman reported that three public question had been received. Each member of the public had been provided with a written response to their question. The member of the public who was at the meeting was able to ask his question and one supplementary question arising from the response. A copy of the questions and answers can be found at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

The Chairman then took the rest of the Agenda in the following order:

44. Motions to Council

At Agenda Item 8, in accordance with Rule 3.1, three Motions were received. They were considered and resolved in the order of receipt.

Motion 1 - Proposed by Councillor Sarah Adams and seconded by Councillor Sandy Martin

This Council believes that the current situation in adult social care will continue its downward spiral with further predicted cuts. This will further endanger the lives of many vulnerable elderly and disabled residents of Suffolk. Home Care services are failing to meet the demand of patients awaiting discharge from hospital. Residential care homes have already closed and more will follow unless a more sustainable funding regime is found.

This Council calls on the administration to

- (a) Publish a coherent plan for reducing delayed discharges from hospital;*
- (b) Ensure a sustainable level of funding for all county residential placements.*

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Adams referred to home closures, an increasing number of Local Government Ombudsman's complaints and the number of homes that were categorised either as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' and expressed her hope that if cases are referred to adult safeguarding and serious case reviews, there was learning from them. She referred to a Healthwatch report about people's perceptions of hospital discharge and gave examples of comments about poor quality information and advice, lack of support and confused messages. She emphasised that elderly people should not be discharged from hospital unless appropriate care was available.

Comments from councillors referred to proposed budget savings due to major transformation programmes such as Supporting Lives Connecting Communities, home carers, working conditions and pay, patients being clinically fit for discharge but unable to leave hospital and also meeting the needs of those with learning disabilities.

Other councillors referred to the high quality of officers for whom safeguarding was a priority, working with communities and partners, outreach services, investing in services for the future, the need for whole system collaboration, outcomes of stronger regulation, choice and flexibility of the service, staff training and development and ensuring care packages were appropriate for needs. Other comments from councillors encouraged people to give more attention to people in their local community and recognised that funding needed to be managed differently to meeting increasing needs.

On a vote being taken, 32 Councillors voted in favour and 37 councillors voted against the motion.

Decision: The Council rejected motion 1.

Reason for decision: The majority of councillors did not support the motion.

Alternative options: None were considered.

Declarations of interest: No declarations were made.

Dispensations: None were necessary.

Motion 2 - Proposed by Councillor Bill Mountford and seconded by Councillor Tony Brown

“The Chancellor has stated that making “deep cuts” to the arts and culture budget is a “false economy”. The arts, culture and heritage in Suffolk contribute large sums to the local economy and social infrastructure, supporting County Council priorities. Does this Council agree that rather than proposing very deep cuts to the arts and culture budget, the Administration should instead, follow the Chancellor’s lead and support the county’s arts and culture organisations?”

In proposing the motion, Councillor Mountford referred to cuts in funding to arts organisations and the economic impact on arts and cultural organisations, and their reduced ability to match fund and attract tourists to Suffolk.

Comments from Councillors referred to arts organisations and projects supporting education, economic growth, inclusion of children and vulnerable people, stimulating new ideas, interest and skills, reducing isolation and loneliness.

Councillor Stamp proposed and Councillor Brown seconded an amendment to the Motion as follows:

“The Chancellor has stated that making “deep cuts” to the arts and culture budget is a “false economy”. The arts, culture and heritage in Suffolk contribute large sums to the local economy and social infrastructure, supporting County Council priorities. Does this Council agree that rather than proposing very deep cuts to the arts and culture budget, the Administration will therefore follow the

Chancellor's lead and continue to financially support the county's arts and culture organisations?"

Councillor Mountford accepted the amendment which then became the substantive motion.

The Council had regard to of the following points made in the course of discussion: the vibrant and diverse sector, phased reductions in grants balanced with honest, open and ongoing dialogues, new ways of working and collaboration and non-financial support from the Council such as guidance from officers. Members also referred to the valuable work of specific organisations such as Suffolk Artlink, Suffolk Sport, the Theatre Royal at Bury St Edmunds the impact of the Olympics and Paralympics, the ability of the Council to fund specific projects that meet the council's priorities, supporting protected landscapes and opportunities for councillors to encourage activities that do not require funding such as geocaching and folk musicians. Members recognised the contribution arts and culture make to social wellbeing and cohesion, the ability to lever in funding and the positive impact on the economy,

On a vote being taken 44 Councillors voted in support of the Motion, 1 voted against and there were 23 abstentions.

Decision: The Council **agreed** that rather than proposing very deep cuts to the arts and culture budget, the Administration would therefore follow the Chancellor's lead and continue to financially support the county's arts and culture organisations.

Reason for decision: The majority of councillors agreed the motion.

Alternative options: Councillors could have rejected the amended motion.

Declarations of interest: Councillor Jenny Antill declared a local non-pecuniary interest as a Governor for Gainsborough House in Sudbury.

Councillor Andrew Stringer declared a local non-pecuniary interest as he was a voluntary Director of the John Peel Arts Centre.

Dispensations: None were necessary.

Motion 3 - Proposed by Councillor Guy McGregor and seconded by Councillor Graham Newman

"Suffolk County Council considers the temporary withdrawal of passenger services last month between:

- Felixstowe & Ipswich,*
- Sudbury & Marks Tey and*
- Ipswich & Peterborough*

to be unacceptable, and calls upon the Secretary of State for Transport:

- To investigate and make the findings publicly available why this happened,*
- To get assurances from the Train Operating Company that this serious failure will not reoccur in the remaining life of the Franchise,*

- To ensure that the new Train Operating Company, as part of its conditions of service, has robust plans to prevent such failures under the new Franchise.”

In proposing the Motion, Councillor McGregor referred to a long period of cancellations, the high volume of cancellations, the lack of information given to passengers, delayed passenger trains while freight trains were still running, limited rolling stock, maintenance programmes and concerns about manpower, delays in repairing stock, far away repair facilities and the lack of suitable alternatives such as in other areas. He stressed the importance of rail to Suffolk economy, and urged for investment in more rolling stock, local repair facilities or better maintenance to avoid unacceptable disruption to businesses and students.

Other comments from councillors referred to the number of cancellations being significantly higher in Suffolk than elsewhere, reliability issues, daily disruption, reduced facilities on the train, old and handed down rolling stock, failure of Network Rail, and the need to raise issues with senior MP's.

On a vote being taken 65 councillors voted in favour, there were nil votes against and nil abstentions.

Decision: Council agreed to call upon the Secretary of State for Transport:

- a) To investigate and make the findings publicly available why this happened,
- b) To get assurances from the Train Operating Company that this serious failure will not reoccur in the remaining life of the Franchise,
- c) To ensure that the new Train Operating Company, as part of its conditions of service, has robust plans to prevent such failures under the new Franchise.

Reason for decision: Councillors present agreed with the motion.

Alternative options: None were proposed.

Declarations of interest: Councillor Graham Newman declared a local non-pecuniary interest as he was a member of the Ipswich Transport Society and a member of Felixstowe Travel Watch.

Dispensations: None were made.

[Council stood adjourned for 15 minutes and reconvened at 4.40 p.m. at which point Councillor Colin Spence took the Chair]

45. Annual Report of the Audit Committee

Council received a report at Agenda Item 9 by Councillor Michael Bond, Chairman of the Audit Committee, which provided the Council with a review of the work undertaken by the Audit Committee.

In introducing the report Councillor Bond referred to the important role of Councillor leadership, emphasising that councillors should strive to set an example and satisfy themselves in dealings with officers at all levels that ethical

and governance standards in the council were set high. He referred to the funding uncertainties, devolution and complication of third party spending and referred to the external auditors being pleased with papers giving an unqualified opinion of the accounts, and praised the performance and leadership of Geoff Dobson and Louise Ainsley and her team.

Other councillors referred to the non-partisan spirit of the Audit Committee, the diligence and incisiveness of the Chairman, the fees paid to external auditors in the light of the excellence of the Council's audit record and the audit of Energy from Waste plant prior to investment.

Decision: Councillors unanimously agreed to accept the report.

Reason for decision: All councillors present supported the recommendation.

Alternative options: None were discussed.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

46. Annual Property Report 2015

Council received a report at Agenda Item 10 by the Director of Resource Management which set out how the Council is using its property assets effectively as a resource and how those assets are supporting the Council's overall objectives.

In proposing the report Councillor Richard Smith referred to the calibre, dedication and specialist knowledge of Councillor Robert Whiting in his role as Member with Special Responsibility for Property and his contribution to sharpening the decision making process, reducing the time surplus property stood empty saying that capital receipts pay down debt and fund other parts of council's capital programme.

Other councillors referred to property assets as a resource, shared property use such as the Riverside campus, and the surplus assets disposals policy document that provided a useful guide to members and officers and for decisions made by the Corporate Property Board. Members also commented on the disposal of county farms for non-farming use, use of former schools sites, land not appropriate for use of farmer tenants, sites reserved for future potential development and the Council's Grow Your Future programme – encouraging farm tenancy. One member commented that other councillors should be able to look at property policy in scrutiny, and another that the Audit Committee would be reviewing property in the New Year.

Decision: The Council unanimously agreed to

- a) note that the property assets of Suffolk County Council (the Council) are being used effectively as a resource; and that those assets are supporting the Council's overall priorities and objectives; and
- b) the proposed focus and direction of approach for property assets including the Single Public Sector Estate (SPSE) and the One Public Estate initiative (OPE).

Reason for decision: All councillors present supported the recommendation.

Alternative options: None were considered.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

47. Annual Scrutiny Report

Council received a report at Agenda Item 11 by the Director of Resource Management which provided an update on scrutiny activity since the last report to Council on 18 December 2014.

In her introduction, Councillor Mary Evans expressed her appreciation of the support and advice of the Vice Chairmen of each of the Scrutiny Committees and emphasised the vital role of scrutiny as underlined by the failure of scrutiny in Mid Staffordshire and Rotherham councils who were criticised for their failure to ask, interrogate and investigate on behalf of the most vulnerable citizens. She felt that by acting as a critical friend, considered recommendations should be valued and considered by officers, however, expressed disappointment that recommendation of July 2014 to bring in outside expertise to the contract management board had still not been actioned. She referred to the selection of topics to add value and had talked to senior officers about concerns and where scrutiny could add value. Future work included setting up task and finish groups and working with other local authorities in Suffolk where there were overlaps or links such as infrastructure and planning and gypsy and traveller sites. She referred to an omission in the paper in that Councillor Sandra Gage had been a member of the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Sub Committee and concluded by paying tribute to the diligence and commitment of officers supporting scrutiny; Theresa Harden, Katherine Bailey, Paul Banjo, Rebekah Butcher Susan Cassedy and Linda Pattle.

Other comments from councillors referred to scrutiny amplifying the voice and concerns of the public, and driving improvement, a request that future reports have a sharp focus and quantitative data, concern over the way call-in recommendations are considered, training for all councillors on the subject of Child Sexual Exploitation, the Multi Agency Safeguarding Team, improved cross party scrutiny, superb officer support, robust scrutiny recommendations, more development opportunities for scrutiny councillors, pro-active scrutiny and a new task and finish group on winter pressures.

Decision: The Council agreed to note the report and to endorse the development activities detailed in paragraphs 28 – 34 of the report.

Reason for decision: Councillors made comments on the report and supported the development activities.

Alternative options: None were considered.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

48. Amendments to the County Council's Constitution

Council received a report at Agenda Item 12 by Geoff Dobson, Director of Resource Management, which set out proposals from the Constitution Working Party for changes to the Council's Constitution.

In introducing the report, Councillor Christopher Hudson emphasised the reasons for the recommendations that were included in the report. Comments from councillors made reference to the approval of loans to third parties up to the value of £500k by the Director of Resource Management and stressed the need for input from the Cabinet Member for Finance. One councillor suggested that there be further consideration by the Constitution Working Party but a further comment emphasised the need to provide delegations which allow for reasonable timeframes for decision making and being in line with other organisations of this size.

Decision: Council agreed to:

- a) confirm that the Corporate Property Regulations should be contained outside of the Constitution (Paragraph 10);
- b) adopt the revised Corporate Property Management Framework detailed in Appendix 1;
- c) adopt the amendments to Officer Delegations detailed in Appendix 2;
- d) adopt the amendments to the rules for public speaking detailed in Paragraph 26);
- e) the amendments to the Public Speaking Guidance (Appendix 3);
- f) adopt the changes to Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures detailed in Paragraph 33 regarding the granting of loans; and
- g) authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary changes to the Constitution, where appropriate.

Reason for decision: Members wished to clarify and confirm procedure.

Alternative options: None were considered.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

49. Cabinet Member Reports and Questions

The Council received the reports by each Cabinet Member at Agenda Item 7. Under Rule 7.3 a period not exceeding 60 minutes was allowed for questions and answers and it was noted that the following Councillors had submitted their question in writing to the Monitoring Officer prior to the 10:00 am deadline two working days before the date of the Council meeting. Councillors were only allowed to ask one question during that period, but they were entitled to one supplementary question arising directly out of the original question or reply.

Question 1 to Councillor James Finch from Councillor David Hudson

"Could the Cabinet Member reassure this Council that the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management policy will not impact unfairly on Suffolk's

rural communities and especially those remote agricultural communities that make an important contribution to UK food security.”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“I would like to state very clearly that I can reassure you the highway infrastructure asset management approach which we are developing to manage our highway infrastructure will not have a detrimental impact to any particular sector not least on Suffolk’s rural communities as was presented at the Cabinet meeting on 10 November. We had a policy approved at that meeting.

Part of the approach to asset management over the coming months will be to develop a Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan. This document will be open to full consultation so you will be able to have an impact on that, offering the opportunity for all stakeholders to understand the approach and offer their comments.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor David Hudson

“Velocity patching machines by all accounts are an efficient way of repairing potholes, therefore, does the Cabinet Member believe that this method of repair is being sufficiently implemented by the Highways contractor?”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“You are quite right Councillor Hudson the velocity spray patcher is a very useful tool in our armoury and in fact it is a particularly useful tool for rural roads. It is not a particularly useful tool for urban roads as Councillor Gage can confirm. We have actually moved on from the original technology we used and the velocity spray patcher system which we will be using next year includes more technology and actually reduces the number of people involved, the number of men involved in implementing it. So that will be a tool well used, it is a tool which will actually be used not only for specific potholes but preparing the highway for surface dressing following its use and that actually makes a more efficient use of how we maintain our highways.”

Question 2 to Councillor Colin Noble from Councillor Sandy Martin

“In his Autumn Statement the Chancellor introduced a Social Care Precept to allow local authorities to increase Council Tax by up to 2% above the threshold, to spend exclusively on adult social care. Is it the intention of this administration to increase Council tax by up to 2% above the threshold to spend exclusively on adult social care. Is it the intention of this administration to increase council tax by 2% above the threshold try to alleviate the increasing pressure on the adult social care budget?”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“Well as Councillor Martin knows full well, this administration came to power on the promise of four years of zero council tax increases, after three zero council tax increases which makes seven years of zero council tax increases and we will hold that pledge. Now the Social Care Precept is something new and is something the Government has introduced and we have to think about our costs, unlike Councillor Barker who thinks that the world is a static place. We

have increased demand, we have an ageing population and we have the new National Living Wage which I am sure across all sides of this Chamber we all agree with which puts some £6m into a system, not necessarily our costs, we always have increased costs. And across the country, ourselves like other upper tier authorities are looking at our costs, thinking about the implications of the Social Care Precept, a precept that the Government has already indicated in the Autumn Statement has to be specifically spent around adult social care. And we will wait, as is prudent, to hear the details of what is proposed. We will then work that into our budget consultation process and from that we will consider, and we will make our decision.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sandy Martin

“How does the Leader of the Council propose that this council can set a council tax of 2% above the threshold when we are already each year 2% lower than the threshold that was allowed by the Chancellor. It’s a question about the meaning of the word ‘threshold’ because clearly he didn’t say zero he said threshold and the threshold was already 2%. It can’t be 2% above the 2% threshold if you haven’t got the first 2% in the first place.”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“Very interesting, I would suggest it is down to culture. The culture of ‘do you believe people should have their own money in their own pocket to go and spend for themselves’ or do you believe that councils should evermore increase and take money off people and we know the culture across the floor, we know the dark years of their administration and the constant increases of the council tax but I won’t repeat them on the basis of repetition. So we will consider the new Social Care Precept. We came to power on that we would not be applying any increase to the council tax that’s what we stood on the doorstep, that’s what we won on, that’s why we are the administration and you are not and that holds true. Our culture is about delivering value for money, is about living within your means and it is about protecting the good people of Suffolk by allowing them to spend their money in the way in which they want to and may that culture long continue.”

Question 3 to Councillor Colin Noble from Councillor Sarah Adams

“Councillor Noble in 2010 you announced your “Ministry for Old People” to the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, stating your intention “to enable older people to live independent, longer and more fulfilling lives”. Could you Councillor Noble explain to us what so far has been accomplished in that endeavour?”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“It is not very often that you get the opportunity to look at the blogs you have done, look at them in detail and go through them and go hmmm.....2010, I have been in office for one year, wow, we’ve done that, wow, we did that, we’ve done that, we’ve done that, we’ve done that and we’ve done that and we’ve done that and it is summed up in something called ‘Supporting Lives, Connecting Communities’.

Now of course I appreciate that Councillor Martin hasn't read that document but that document is about how organisations work together. Across Suffolk we all know in our communities that there are many organisations that do not connect to Suffolk County Council but are out there and doing good things in our communities and one of those is our churches and they are out there and when I gave that blog, and when I gave that speech, it was to the diocesan church and they were setting up church elders and they were working with their own vicars their own church wardens and everyone else around on how they could do it. And it was frankly one of the building blocks for how we now go about supporting lives and connecting communities taking those organisations not directly supplied by the County Council and how we merge them and bring them together to deliver the support within our communities. And that is exactly what I spoke of in that blog and that ministry is one of the many, many aspects of how we now net together through supporting lives and connecting communities."

Supplementary Question from Sarah Adams

"If indeed that is the case could you explain to us how in the recent Healthwatch Suffolk report on the support to live at home scheme which identifies bullying, neglect, misinformation and communication and confusion in social care currently supplied by Suffolk's private contractors, what will you do Councillor Noble to make to make sure Suffolk's older people live independent, longer and more fulfilling lives please?"

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

"Well that report was actually very interesting because it talked about the aspect of how the private market place exists and what it does. Because the Care Act that has just been adopted actually places a duty on us to inform and I am pleased to report through our website through our 'My Life' portal, we are fulfilling that and we are currently looking, and I know Councillor Hopfensperger is looking, at the different methodologies as to how we can be that point of access so as that report talked about leaflets and talked about the way in which to care it is really important to us as to how we supply the information to people. One of the problems within this system, of course, is that we are all self-selective we all do not see information until we need that information so a lot of information flows past all of us but until we need it, until we reach that crises point, until something happens we are not aware of it and actually one of the things that is coming together now is how you bring all this information so if you think about how the church works, you think about how the community groups work, you think about how this system nets together and it's a question of 'so at the point I need a service where is that information, how do I get that information' and I know through things like 'My Life' that is exactly the type of thing that we need."

Question 4 to Councillor Tony Goldson from Councillor Janet Craig

"Cllr Goldson will be aware of the forced closure by the CQC by court order in mid-October of two medical centres across Lowestoft - Oulton Medical Centre & Marine Parade Surgery also known as Kirkley Mill Surgery. Health East has worked with two existing surgeries to add to their already heavy workload

another 5,000 patients. I have been informed that this contract will be for a period of three months and there will then be a `dispersal` of patients to other surgeries across Lowestoft. Can Cllr Goldson confirm this?"

Response from Councillor Tony Goldson

"Can I confirm this? The simple answer is "yes", however, that is being flippant. I do understand the parochial concerns of people of Lowestoft and the extraordinary actions taken by the CQC. I have never heard of it, never before. Anyhow, as you know, on Tuesday, 13 October, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) took the urgent legal action to protect the safety and welfare of patients at the Oulton Village and Marine Parade Practice. This resulted in the immediate closure of the Oulton Village surgery site, whilst Victoria Road Practice continued to run the Marine Parade site, based in the Kirkley Mill Health Centre.

This has been a worrying time for patients, but NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS England have been working together to make sure that stable services are resumed for patients as soon as possible from permanent GP practice. Following the CQC action, cover arrangements that were immediately put in place for patients have now been extended for a further three months.

These cover arrangements are:

Patients from Oulton Village Practice NR32 postcodes will continue to be cared for by the Bridge Road GP Practice. Patients from Marine Parade surgery post code NR33 at the Kirkley Mill Health campus will continue to be seen there, cared for by staff from the Victoria Road Surgery.

Some patients have chosen to re-register with other practices, but there is no need for them to do so at the moment. There is a GP service looking after patients at Bridge Road or Marine Parade in the Kirkley Mill Health Centre. Patients do, of course, have the option to register with a different practice at any time if that practice is open for new patients. No one will be left without a GP as a result of these changes.

The focus now is on what happens next. The CCG and NHS England will make sure there are solid and permanent arrangements in place to look after every patient affected by this urgent CQC action. NHS England has sent a letter to all patients who were registered at the practices to explain exactly what has happened at that practice.

Over the next three months, work will continue with all the Lowestoft practices to find a permanent solution for all the Oulton and Marine Parade patients. By working with the practices we will be able to find a solution for every patient and provide them with a high quality GP services. All the staff in the Lowestoft practices have been outstanding in their response to this very urgent need."

Question 5 to Councillor Christopher Hudson from Councillor Mandy Gaylard

"On Friday 30 November on the Mark Murphy show, you stated, in reply to a challenge from Councillor Martin about the appalling congestion in St Helen's

Street, Ipswich, that there would be a very welcome announcement about that from the administration by the end of the month. Two months have now passed, and there has been no announcement, nor any improvement in the congestion. Can Cllr Hudson tell us what announcement he had been talking about, and whether there is anything going to be done about St Helens Street before 2017.”

Response from Councillor Christopher Hudson

“You may have said 30 November it was actually 30 October just a small point. 30 October no it isn’t quite 2 months you are right there. The bottom line with this as we all know, I won’t go into a great history, we live and breathe those streets and how congested they are but of course it is the season now of good tidings and behold I bring you good news. The good news is this that my colleague the Cabinet Member for Roads and Transport in a specific reply to the question from Councillor Gage has advised that work is planned to amend the traffic management arrangements at this particular junction and we all know that the blocking of this junction is leading to hold ups further east. The work is scheduled to be carried out by the contractors in March 2016, I admit that is not within the 2 months that I said. I regret that accordingly, and need to say that to you, but the work that is scheduled will be carried out with the most disruptive work being carried out in the Pascal holidays.

The revised junction arrangement will allow traffic from the St Helens Street direction to enter Woodbridge Road with a free flowing merge rather than having to give way. It is anticipated that this will have a significant beneficial effect on traffic flow in this corridor and indeed we are hoping to reduplicate the miracle that is now called the Kesgrave Roundabout.”

Supplementary from Councillor Mandy Gaylard

“As I am the County Councillor for the area in question I would appreciate to be fully informed of what is planned and when it is planned and to have it in writing please and even for a meeting because I am totally confused about what you are saying because these have been said in the past and nothing has happened so I would appreciate that. But I would like to ask a supplementary, is there anything planned in Ipswich before 2017 which Councillor Hudson knows about?”

Response from Councillor Christopher Hudson

“Well I haven’t got any crystal balls, unfortunately, but some think I have but I haven’t, but what I can do I would like to give you an assurance Councillor Gaylard that I will write to you accordingly with any developments in your division so you are kept fully abreast with whatever is being considered there because I think it is right and fair that you know exactly what is planned. But you know what I would advise the Councillor, Mr Chairman, is that the great plans that are coming forward with the Ipswich Vision are literally appearing before our eyes, even before I know them, many ideas are coming forward and we are going to improve the traffic flow and we are fixed on that but I thank her very much for her questions and I will make sure she is informed.”

Question 6 to Councillor James Finch from Councillor Sandra Gage

“Well there appears to be a bit of a theme going on here. Councillor Finch, what is the basis for the announcement that Travel Ipswich is ‘completed’?”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“There is a bit of a theme, I think I have had this question before and probably the answer I gave you, you didn’t like but I will continue with the same message. Travel Ipswich as you well know, the scheme commenced in September 2012. And the aim of the scheme is to support the growth of Ipswich and to reduce forecast increases in congestion by making improvements that would benefit all road users. In other words the scheme made improvements for not only vehicles but also for walking and cycling. And the refurbishment of the town's bus stations and the provision of real time bus information system, as well as the introduction of the UTMC, I'll just give you just one acronym, with significant capabilities of improving that traffic efficiency.

Now that urban traffic management system, doesn’t suddenly happen, you can’t turn it on and turn it off, you know that more than I do and that needs developing and in my own closest town in Colchester that particular system took about six months to settle down. Some of those schemes have not been done related to St Helen’s Street because that just hasn’t been done but that will be included in that.

What you know and what I know of course is that the project is complex and has consisted basically of a large number of smaller elements that are planned to combine together to deliver the scheme benefit overall. Before my time these details of some of these elements have changed. I now consider this scheme basically to be complete not least because the Government’s money of £21.5 million given to us has been spent and the effectiveness of it.

Delivery has taken longer than we intended because of additional consultation on some schemes, and a decision to avoid working in peak times, and I made one decision in the Autumn to delay one of those, but also to avoid having disruption during the Christmas shopping period. But the important thing is that we actually think about disruption to the residents of Ipswich and that is exactly why some of those have been put back.

What I have also said before and I will repeat again, the County Council has additional work to do that will enhance the value of the Travel Ipswich scheme including a proposal to re-model the road near the former Odeon cinema to provide a simplified junction layout, and the pedestrianisation of Princes Street and Queen Street. There are a number of other ones which are planned which I am sure you know about, I have got Nacton Road and Ransomes Way.

There is an additional work which is being planned that will bring significant transport improvements to Ipswich. It is a £5 million project, partly funded by the New Anglia LEP and to address congestion at other pinch points. I won’t go on, but in conjunction with Ben Gummer you will also know of the new crossing which is being planned for the longer term which will bring significant traffic relief to the town.

Feasibility work is also planned to consider the need for additional road capacity to the north of Ipswich so that the local road network can cope with the additional development planned for that area.”

Supplementary Question from Sandra Gage

“I am going to have to apologise in advance because yes, I did have a fairly short supplementary but the response that I have just had as is often the case of Councillor Finch leaves me a little bit surprised. My question was about Travel Ipswich not about any other schemes that are in the pipeline elsewhere for our county town, nice though it is for you to give us a snapshot of all of that. And it does bring me back to Councillor Gaylard’s comments that she made to Councillor Hudson in her supplementary about the need for local communication at least with the local councillors if not more than that, the people of Ipswich, and it is very pertinent that she mentions it because your response actually helps to highlight the example of the muddle we have in terms of communication on what exactly is happening to our transport system in Ipswich. £21m was the Travel Ipswich budget and you spent the Department of Transport’s money and that is £18m so I ask you the £2m committed by the County Council has not been spent. I was told it was not spent and therefore I would suggest that Travel Ipswich is not completed. With the mixed messages can you tell where and on which date that £2m will be spent on Travel Ipswich, not Nacton Corridor not the other things you mentioned which are not Travel Ipswich.”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“I can’t tell you that answer and I will re-ask the question of my officers. I am only giving you the information in terms, I don’t have the detail how all those various projects are added up, but I support the fact that there should be communication and I think it is very important that actually you as councillors do come and ask specifically for the information you require, and also I will ensure when there are projects that you councillors will be asked and be informed of those projects.”

Question 7 to Councillor Matthew Hicks from Councillor Keith Patience

“I have read your email which came out this morning but my question is will Cllr Hicks genuinely listen to people’s views at Ipswich Area Committee meetings regarding proposed cuts to the fire service?”

Response from Councillor Hicks

Throughout the development of our Integrated Risk Management Plan I have been very clear that we intend to establish an effective and robust approach to the 14-week period of consultation and to ensure that interested parties have ample opportunity to reflect their views on our plan and the associated proposals.

To support this, the Authority will be hosting five public engagement events, one in each directly affected areas. In addition to this we are attending other standing public meetings on the request of the hosts, and these do include five Ipswich Area Committees in January and February next year. Unfortunately, incorrect dates originally provided to us do mean that two of these area

committee meetings now clash with other consultation events we subsequently arranged, however we are making arrangements for an attendance to be provided at all five of the meetings. We have also engaged Opinion Research Service, an independent research organisation, who will be facilitating six independent stakeholder workshops across the county.

Alongside the views in these and the other forums, and through the completion of the consultation questionnaire, which I ask you all to please complete, I can assure Councillor Patience that the recommendations that I bring back to Cabinet in 2016 will take account of the views expressed throughout the consultation.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Keith Patience

“Given the less than overwhelming attendance at the public consultation meeting on the budget last night, will Councillor Hicks consider holding meetings in popular public venues across Lowestoft like the Ipswich Area Committees rather than stuck in a room in the Council offices in Lowestoft?”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“We have said at the very beginning if anyone would like us to come to any meetings we are happy to, if you contact me after we are very happy to set up meetings. We are open, transparent and wish to get around as much of the county as possible.”

Question 8 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Councillor Helen Armitage

“Given that George Osborne has now confirmed that by 2017 eligible parents will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds, can you confirm whether there will be sufficient places available in Suffolk for parents to make use of this offer?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“The Early Years and Childcare Service within the Children and Young Peoples Directorate will meet the Council’s duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare. “

There was no supplementary question from Councillor Helen Armitage.

Question 9 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Councillor Peter Byatt

“Despite some excellent teaching and leadership across Suffolk and an increase of 1% to 53% (provisional) for Suffolk’s average 5 A*-C GCSE results, there are areas of the county where pupils are still underachieving at KS4. Can Councillor Jones explain what he is doing to ensure that the 14% below average 5 A*-C GCSE results in Lowestoft are improved and that schools in the town are supported to ensure that pupils receive the education they deserve?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“Improving outcomes for children, including those in Lowestoft, is a priority for the Council. Targeted support is in place at the underperforming maintained schools in Lowestoft. New leadership and strong governance commissioned by the Council is securing improvement. Recent HMI visit reports have been positive about progress at the school.

The two other underperforming schools in the town are sponsored academies and Councillors and Officers have challenged the Department for Education, the responsible body for performance in these schools, to ensure standards are improved and children in Lowestoft receive an education they are entitled to.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Byatt

“George Osborne in his Autumn Statement made it quite clear that it is the intention of Central Government to take control or rather should I say encourage all schools to become academies, in other words to be controlled from London. The 65% average 5 A-C target by 2017, August, stated by the former Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Councillor Lisa Chambers, is I presume still a key target of this administration. Can he confirm this is still a target and also how he intends to achieve it in areas of Suffolk that are currently underachieving at Key Stage 4 particularly as we see the haemorrhaging of control of our schools in to the pernicious grasp of your friends at Westminster?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“I think I am right in saying the Chancellor said that was the aim by the end of Parliament. We’ve got a long way to go we know. I have been in post a couple of weeks now I have already arranged an early meeting with the Regional School’s Commissioner and I will be visiting any of those academies where I am invited and actually I am quite happy to go to any of the academies with any other member in their local community. Because actually we have got to work together, I think we all want the same thing, we want the best education we can possibly have for our children so this is a request to everybody, let’s work together and let’s try and achieve that because I will put all my efforts into doing so.”

Question 10 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Councillor Sonia Barker

“Does Councillor Gordon Jones share his predecessor Lisa Chambers’ ambition for all Suffolk Schools to be rated as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by 2017?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“Yes I do.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sonia Barker

“Given that the council’s own data shows that in the last two years it has only achieved one rank place higher and nearly one in four schools still needing improvement or are in the inadequate category according to Ofsted, what does Councillor Jones think the county can do which it is not already doing to ensure that these schools can make the very rapid progress needed in order to meet this challenging target?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“We are seeing improvements that show that we are moving in the right direction and more Suffolk pupils are now attending a ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ school as a result of the hard work of the teachers, Governors, staff and local

authority officers. We must maintain the pace of this improvement and must keep our resolve that securing good or better learning in good or better schools is what the pupils of Suffolk deserve. Our aims for raising the bar in 2015-2017 remain unchanged. In partnership with education providers, families, communities and businesses we will enable every child to achieve their full potential, every child to attend a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' provider and every child to have the best preparation for life before and beyond school and I refer back to the comments in the previous question, working together, let's try and achieve that."

Question 11 to Councillor Tony Goldson from Councillor Derek Hackett

"James Paget Hospital have appointed a Patient Discharge Officer to deal with the timely discharge of long term patients, in order to free up beds in the hospital.

Can the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing assure this Council that there are sufficient beds available locally in high standard Nursing Homes to accommodate patients discharged early and that the closure of Community Hospitals in the Waveney area will not adversely affect the availability of beds?"

Response from Councillor Tony Goldson

"Following the Shape of the System consultation the CCG is working with local clinicians to design local out of hospital services which are designed to meet local patient needs. These needs are in Great Yarmouth and Northern villages this means that an out of hospital team of 62 staff is now in place and seven beds with care have been purchased in local care homes to support patients to enable them to remain at home where possible and to support patients to stay in their own homes during a crisis and remain independent.

The team is made up of community nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, rehabilitation support workers and social workers and operates 24/7, treating patients at home. They also offer advice and support to family and carers. The team will also 'reach in' and provide specialist care for patients in beds with care. The team works alongside a patient's own GP to provide intensive, short-term care. Patients in crisis are assessed within two hours of referral and, as well as carrying out nursing and rehabilitation, the team can organise and equip to make their life at home more comfortable should the patient need it.

The new out of hospital services are being developed to look after the growing number of patients in the area and in their first month of full operation the North Out of Hospital team has supported 120 patients in their own homes compared to the 15 community GP beds which would have been available previously in Northgate Hospital. The new services also offer a greater degree of flexibility and responsiveness to individual patient's needs.

Therefore we believe that the new system offers more capacity than the previous community model.

In Southwold they now commission two care beds and the new team is being recruited and is operational, Beccles will be fully operational on Friday of this week with all 19/20 beds open the Patrick Stead has got 10 beds and they are

at this moment all occupied and in the North of the county in the Great Yarmouth area there are 7 vacant beds.”

There was no supplementary question from Councillor Derek Hackett.

Question 12 to Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger from Councillor Kathy Bole

“The Independent Living Fund has been made the responsibility of Suffolk County Council but it has not been ring-fenced to support individuals in receipt of it. Can the Cabinet member explain to us, in a couple of sentences and in her own words, how the County Council intends to provide adequate support to people who were in receipt of funding from the Independent Living Fund so that they may continue to receive sufficient services to enable them to continue their independent lives?”

Response from Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger

“I can confirm that it is in fact our legal duty under the Care Act 2014 to meet the needs of our customers. So following a full review of all recipients of the Independent Living Fund, they have now all received revised personal budgets, care and support plans and have received full transfer of funds from the ILF to them to meet their needs. I can confirm this happens on a regular basis with regular reviews to ensure that their needs are met in future.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Kathy Bole

“Can Councillor Hopfensperger tell us all the meetings she’s had over the past couple of months with representatives of disabled people’s groups in order to discuss the county’s plans with impact on their lives?”

Response from Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger

“I confirm that officers have met and reassessed and have spoken to anyone that is in receipt of the Independent Living Fund as it is their job to do so, as social workers do general reviews, and I regularly receive updates on the progress of those reviews and the level of funding required.”

Question 13 to Councillor Christopher Hudson from Councillor Len Jacklin

“Nationally, the current gender pay gap stands at 19.2% - that means that women are earning on average 19.2% less than a man doing the same job. Can the Leader please inform the Council what the current pay gap is in Suffolk?”

Response from Councillor Christopher Hudson

“Councillor Jacklin refers to the 19.2% difference which is very sizeable and for all we know could be slightly greater than that or slightly less because there is a margin of error who knows. I have got some figures here so far as the County Council is concerned. If Councillor Jacklin would indulge me both with some of the figures and then a more general point if I may? We have provided below average full time earnings difference across the SCC Corporate staff we have 4,257 ladies working here and 1,887 gentlemen employed. On average we pay

16.41% more to male employees, 16.41 Councillor Jacklin, slightly less than the figure you gave me but still a considerable difference. We can also provide some specific job breakdowns in helping to answer your question related to males and females doing "the same job". This gives an indication of the comparisons which are always odious between roles. It is planned that eventually we will give an equality statement during this financial year on pay in the 2016/17 pay policy statement. For example if you will indulge me:

Corporate SCC staff for example we may have a female staff at a salary of £25,383.49, gentlemen earning £29,548.90. I am very happy to share these figures with the member obviously afterwards as well so that he can sleep on them and look at them.

Moving across to something like a Firefighter, we have only 31 female Firefighters at £28,670.29 whereas for male Firefighters £28,157.85 a 0.32% difference, so as you can see there is a mixed bag occurring here Councillor Jacklin.

And indeed with Social Workers 419 female workers, £29,569.41 with a figure for the male workers, 52, of £29,307.13 but that is probably not so surprising that there is in effect a point 0.89% in favour of female workers, that's down to the nature of the work one presumes.

Home carers - 266 females £16,527.77 whereas for males for whom there are 16, £16,272.13 down 1.55%.

So you get the picture, I am very happy to come back later."

Supplementary Question from Councillor Len Jacklin

"Nicky Morgan the Minister for Women and Equalities as well as the New Anglia LEP have expressed a view that as soon as you can't begin to remedy a problem, so you understand it, obviously you have done some research in to Suffolk County Council's differentials which are quite surprising. 16.2% is quite worrying, you know when you have got people doing the same job and in the interests of building a stronger economy in Suffolk is the Leader willing to commit this Council to an annual survey on gender pay and inequality?"

Response from Councillor Christopher Hudson

"Obviously, this evening Councillor Jacklin I can give you no guarantees but I'll give you an assurance that I think as we look at these figures and I will just very, very, briefly Mr Chairman with your indulgence, I know you are waiting with the bell, but when one thinks of it could be my own great grandmother who died in childbirth having had 8 children and a degree in music, died at the age of 29 didn't have the opportunity to earn much money professionally, too busy, if you like, having children at the time in South Yorkshire, that your point is made very, very, strongly to me and I hear what you say and I think within our lifetimes we must all work and I give you this assurance we will work, it's not just an aspiration, I think we must really work, equal pay for equal money and I assure you accordingly."

Question 14 to Councillor Colin Noble from Councillor Julian Flood

“9 Members of the Cabinet recently received media training at a cost of the tax payers of £4,000. How many of them have repaid in full the cost of that training to this Council?”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“Well that wasn’t quite the question printed on the paper, the first part was a leak to the East Anglian Daily Times which I will correct because it wasn’t a leak to the East Anglian Daily Times, the East Anglian Daily Times read the Ipswich Spy website, they simply asked a series of questions which we answered so certainly not a leak. In terms of repaying, why would they repay? Across this Chamber the Labour Group have a training budget, the Conservative Group, even your group, Councillor Flood, have an actual training budget and so do departments and there is a conference attendance training budget and like any council that seeks to be an exemplar we have a training budget, every other council has a training budget and it is from those budgets that we all have access to training.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Julian Flood

“Sometimes we go on a course and we discover that really having looked at it we will be ashamed to look our residents in the face on Monday morning. I recommend paying the Council back in those circumstances, it painful but its cathartic. This information would not have come to light had it not been for a internecine struggle in the Conservative Group. Normally this sort of expense is hidden. Will Councillor Noble back UKIP in our call for full transparency of Councillors costs, all their costs including matters like this?”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“I’m sorry Councillor Flood I just don’t quite get where you are coming from sometimes. We have training budgets, your group has a training budget, the Labour Group has a training budget we go on different courses from the LGA, this particular course is one that has been used by many, many, Councillors over a long period of time and we go on training. I appreciate you don’t value training. I appreciate that you don’t value the conferences that across the Chamber, we go to so we network and we understand what goes on in other councils so we are fully informed> I appreciate that you don’t actually value that but I think most of us across the Chamber do.”

Question 15 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Councillor Penny Otton

“Rattlesden Primary school has a GOOD Ofsted and Church judgment, but has recently been rated as RED (at risk of failing) by Suffolk County Council. This was done without a visit to the school and did not take into account certain issues; class sizes, the number of SEN of children with English as a second language. However when a visit took place the school was re-rated GOOD.

Can you explain why the initial ratings are published without any proper review and ability for the school to challenge the results?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“The risk rating process is based upon the national measures for attainment and progress for the pupils attending the school. It is applied evenly and fairly to all schools. It identifies strong schools as well as those that might not achieve at least a good judgment at their next inspection. The risk that is being assessed is whether a school would get a good or better Ofsted judgement based upon pupil performance now, not historically. It uses DfE published validated data and available unvalidated data to arrive at the rating.

A schools previous Ofsted judgement is a snapshot in time and pupil attainment and progress information change from year to year. It is important to note that the risk rating is a starting point for a conversation with a school, the contextual factors for a school are considered as part of that conversation. No ratings have been published by the Council. Until now they have only been shared with individual schools. The Information Commissioner, following an FOI requests from the media, decided that the risk ratings should be provided to the media in spite of challenge from the Council.”

Supplementary Question form Councillor Penny Otton

“My understanding is that Suffolk County Council has actually developed this negative and emotive system whereby children who are supposed to exceed expected progress only 1% nationally will do so. Suffolk primary heads have long been questioning the validity of this system. How do you intend to work with these hard working teachers to develop a far better analytical system?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“Ofsted criticised the Council for not intervening earlier enough in schools that might decline. The current risk rating approach was developed as a response to this criticism. The process was amended at the start of this academic year following extensive consultation with headteachers. The risk rating does a number of things, it identifies the strongest schools where children are achieving well and making strong progress. These schools are in a good position to support other schools. It also identifies schools where attainment and/or progress are not yet strong enough. It does this early so that the appropriate support and challenge can be put in place and this supports the Raising the Bar ambition to see all Suffolk children attending a ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ school and, as an additional point, actually I am attending one of the schools in your division tomorrow on this very point.”

Question 16 to Councillor James Finch from Councillor Kim Clements

“Given the level of anger from the public and from District Councillors and MPs, will the Cabinet member for transport reconsider his decision to stop all financial support for Park & Ride in Ipswich, almost certainly forcing it to close?”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“First of all no decision has been taken to close the Park and Ride, I think the Park and Ride is a good service and I would like to see it continue to operate. However, Suffolk Council tax payers currently provide a subsidy gross of £712k. Now the budget proposals outline the option to reduce this subsidy during 2016/17, with a view to the service becoming self-sufficient by 2017/18. Now at a time when we are reducing expenditure in all areas of the Council we

cannot afford, in my opinion, to continue subsidising the Ipswich Park and Ride users by £3.27 for each journey they make.

We are in discussions by the way, with a lot of people in Ipswich, our Ipswich. I have a meeting with the Ipswich Central group, the Ipswich Vision, I have met and spoken to our MP, Ben Gummer, who have indicated their willingness to work with us and we are looking at ways to actually keep the Park and Ride operating but at a significantly lower cost to the Suffolk Tax payer.”

There was no supplementary question from Councillor Kim Clements.

Question 17 to Councillor Matthew Hicks from Councillor Bill Mountford

“In 2012 BBC News announced a “New £300,000 Flood Defence for Kirkley Stream”. Recent Freedom of Information Requests have revealed that in August 2013, the Environment Agency produced the business case for a “Kirkley Stream Project”. In November 2014, Atkins Water and Environment submitted a quote to Suffolk County Council and the Environment Agency, for a “Lowestoft Integrated Modelling Study” with a completion date in March 2015. The business case, at some later date had: “Not Progressed – combined with SCC surface water project” hand written in red on every page. The buck seems to stop with Suffolk County Council, so would you please confirm whether any of the £300,000 has actually been spent on Kirkley streams flooding problem and what has happened to the remainder of these funds?”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“To date £90,000 from the £300,000 has been passed from the Environment Agency via Suffolk County Council to Anglian Water who have commissioned Atkins to develop a model for 10 flood risk areas across the whole town of Lowestoft, along with options that could reduce the risk of flooding from all sources (river, sea and surface water). This model is nearing completion and will form part of a town wide Flood Risk Strategy. The production of this Strategy will enable us to draw-down on substantial funds from a number of sources – which you will be aware is currently £25m which is ring-fenced (£3m of that is coming from Suffolk County Council). The funding will enable a town wide approach to reducing the risk of flooding from the sea, rivers as well as surface run off.

The reason for the organisations within the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership taking the decision to use some of the available funds allocated in 2012, is that a changing picture in national funding revealed the opportunity to secure a much larger sum to reduce flood risk across the town rather in just the one location.

The Environment Agency is using the remaining funds to plan and undertake works in the Carlton Colville area to reduce flood risk locally. If any funds do remain when this work is complete they will contribute to the implementation of the town wide project.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Bill Mountford

“There have been invoices released by Councillor Hicks, not to me but I have them anyway, for a company that the work has been done in 2013 - £50,000

was spent. Since then there are more recent invoices on the work sheets for sums which amount to literally hundreds of pounds. We are still about £¼m short. Carlton Colville Council and lots of residents have asked me to find out what is happening to this money and when is it going to be spent because houses are still getting flooded. So any information you are able to provide will be gratefully received.”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“As you are aware, I presume the invoices referred to are the ones released by Anglian Water showing the work which has been carried out which was requested at the meeting up in Lowestoft in October. The papers have been released showing where the money has gone. As you know £90,000, as I said earlier, of the £300,000 has been spent and there is a much bigger piece of work now happening and so things have moved on and there is a huge project of £25m now being spent on Lowestoft and things have moved on from the original discussions back in the early days. But that is where the money sits.”

Question 18 to Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger from Councillor Inga Lockington

Councillor Lockington was not in attendance and had requested a response in writing.

Question 19 to Councillor Christopher Hudson from Councillor Bryony Rudkin

"Can the portfolio holder for Ipswich tell council what proposals he has for directly engaging and consulting with Ipswich residents?"

Response from Councillor Christopher Hudson

“Well the short answer is that I will engage with them in exactly the same way as you do I expect. But I would like to say that during 2016 we will be undertaking a survey of Suffolk Residents which will include hundreds of responses, at least 400 from Ipswich; I know that the population is much more.

The survey will be asking for views on how satisfied people are with their local area, the services provided within it and views on where County Council funding is and should be spent. In addition to this we will once again be undertaking a Travel to Work survey where we anticipate responses from over 3500 Suffolk employees which should cover Willis, BT and the County and Borough Councils.”

Supplementary from Councillor Bryony Rudkin

“Thank you, that sounds like a very interesting and perhaps representative sample. Would you say that was more representative than just dismissing the views of a few people who write on the bottom of the Evening Star articles?”

Response from Councillor Christopher Hudson

“Well, I never dismiss anyone’s views funnily enough, I know you get some strange ones on the Ipswich Star which is always entertaining but because we are into the period of Advent I would like to make you an offer if I may Councillor Rudkin. I am very happy to go along to any public meeting you like

or any venue, and perhaps we could have several public meetings to discuss these issues, and I think I am in favour of everything being held in public, the courts, everything. I am out there with people like you are and I am very happy to share that forum with you where we can discuss all the issues that remain in Ipswich.”

The meeting closed at 6:36 p.m.

Chairman

Suffolk County Council Thursday 10 December 2015

Agenda item 6 – Public Questions

Question 1 to Councillor Colin Noble from Sue Monks

“In light of the impending Government cuts across all departments being asked for by the Chancellor I, and many other people are concerned about the consequent knock on effect this will have to all local front line services across the county and country beyond.

In Suffolk we are very lucky to have a pretty stable and affluent environment, but there are vulnerable people in Suffolk, the old, the young, the sick, the mentally ill. These people need us and we are their voice. If they do not have access to help and support locally, we are condemning them to a lost and pitiful existence and that is not something we can all easily defend or be proud of.

Are the Council able to lobby the Government as a whole on these proposed cuts either as an individual Council or by combining forces with other Councils in similar situations or is it a divide and rule process down to each department/Council fighting their own cause?”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“Thank you for your question.

It is true that the Chancellor has made a firm commitment to reduce the deficit and return this Country to a sustainable financial position.

In order to achieve that objective, reductions are required across all areas of public spending. Local government accounts for 25% of public spending and therefore it is right that we play our part.

We are in constant dialogue with government about spending plans as a County Council, in partnership with other Councils and through the Local Government Association.

Suffolk County Council is a member of a number of national organisations such as the LGA, the County Councils Network (CCN) and Chief Officer networks such as the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), Society of County Treasurers (SCT) and Association of Directors of Children Services (ADCS), and I can therefore assure Sue Monks that Suffolk County Council, in partnership with these bodies, lobby the Government continuously on many matters, including on the financial provision made for the Groups mentioned in her question.

I agree with you that Suffolk is a wonderful place to live and work. We are all lucky to live in this great County.

I also agree with you that there are vulnerable people in Suffolk. And that is why this administration has made the protection of vulnerable people one of our 5 political priorities.

At the County Council meeting on 17th September 2015, a paper from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Councillor. Beccy Hopfensperger, was debated on the unfunded pressures facing social care in Suffolk. The contents of the paper were

agreed and copies were sent to the National Care Association, the Suffolk Association of Independent Care Providers and local MPs.

My Colleague Councillor Richard Smith – Cabinet Member for Finance - has made it clear throughout the budget setting process that we will do everything we can to protect front line services for vulnerable people in Suffolk.

I am a member of the Local Government Association Community Wellbeing Board and the CCN spokesman for Health and Social Care.”

There was no supplementary as the questioner was not present at the meeting.

Question 2 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Angela Wiltshire

“When Suffolk County Council axed Brett River Children's Centre in January this year, Councillors were quoted in the press at the time as being '80% sure' that children's centre services would remain in Hadleigh and delivered from the Leisure Centre. Brett River Children's Centre was open daily between 9-4 before its closure, now services for Hadleigh amount to (on average) just under 11 hours per week. These comprise

6.5 hours of weekly sessions

7 hours fortnightly- a 'course' (between East Bergholt and Hadleigh) and

3.5 hours monthly.

This represents a reduction from 35 hours to under 11 hours weekly. The ability to 'drop in' has been virtually removed and from a quick look through the Facebook page of the Brett River Centre, it is clear that not all sessions run, due to staffing and infrastructure problems.

Do the Council intend to restore the level of service for Hadleigh, as stated at the time of the closure of Brett River Centre, and when will that be?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“Since the building closure in April 2015, there have been some staffing pressures which have prevented the centre in being able to offer a full range of outreach services as planned. During this time the centres priorities have included ensuring staff maintain contact with the most vulnerable children and families requiring a home visiting service. Since April, the centre has a new manager and staffing team who have been working hard in developing an action plan and building good working relationships with partners, in particularly health. This has resulted in an improved service for families, such as jointly run clinics, where families with very young children are automatically introduced to the centre and its services while providing an important opportunity to identify the needs of families early. This is demonstrated the centres data, which shows that 65% of children under 3 are registered with the centre.

Outreach is currently being delivered in a variety of locations which includes the health centre and village halls. The centre hires the leisure centre for 2 days a week which is offering families both a universal and targeted support service. For those families whose needs are unable to be met at a group service, they are receiving a home visiting service which currently makes up approximately 60% of the staffs working week.

There are plans to increase both the universal and targeted service for families living in the Brett River reach area for January 2016. These include baby signing, living with toddlers, ready steady preschool, Early Days post-natal group and a targeted support group for women experiencing depression, anxiety and stress.”

There was no supplementary as the questioner was not present at the meeting.

Question 3 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Paul Carter

“Does the cabinet member for children's services, education and skills believe that the recently resigned governing body of Murrayfield Primary School was either ambitious, skilled and experienced, aware of the school's strength and weaknesses, decisive in cooperating with the local authority to tackle issues and discharged its statutory duties satisfactorily or was it insufficiently strong, not focussed on pupils' needs, failing in its key roles and choosing not to cooperate with the local authority?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“The Murrayfield Governing Body worked hard for the school, and discharged its statutory duties satisfactorily. However, they were unable to secure the essential improvements needed to secure a good education for the pupils. For too long, children attending this school have had only a satisfactory or requiring improvement education, as judged by Ofsted. The LA was concerned enough about the school to give a great deal of professional support before and after it became necessary to issue the governing body with a Warning Notice in March 2015. The recent Ofsted Inspection, judging the school to be unsatisfactory, confirmed our concerns. We were pleased that the Governors were recognised in the inspection report as knowing the school well, and discharging correctly their duties in relation to safeguarding. Whilst Inspectors found that the Governors had an ambitious vision for the school, it is essential that this vision is realised in practice. This had not yet been secured.”

Supplementary Question from Paul Carter

“Whilst I am pleased that the Councillor, in that answer, acknowledges rather more of the strength of the Governing Body than was implied in the press release, would Councillor Jones be prepared to meet with us so we can discuss why we felt it necessary to resign and suggest ways in which the local authority might better work with governors in the future?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“Having myself been a governor for about six years, Chair of Governors for four years, I am fully aware of the contribution that a good governing body makes to a good school. I will be delighted to meet with yourself and your fellow governors, as I am pleased to meet with any governors as they so require.”

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