

Minutes of the Suffolk County Council Meeting held on 17 March 2016 at 2.00 pm 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, Kathy Bole, Michael Bond, Tony Brown, Stephen Burroughes, David Busby, Peter Byatt, Kim Clements, Terry Clements, Janet Craig, James Crossley, Mark Ereira, Mary Evans, John Field, James Finch, Jessica Fleming, Julian Flood, Sandra Gage, Peter Gardiner, 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, Sandy Martin, Guy McGregor, Robin Millar, Bill Mountford, Alan Murray, Graham Newman, Colin Noble, Patricia O'Brien, Penny Otton, Caroline Page, Keith Patience, Bert Poole, Chris Punt, Bill Quinton, Andrew Reid, David Ritchie, Bryony Rudkin, John Sayers, Steve Searle, Reg Silvester, Richard Smith MVO, Colin Spence, Joanna Spicer, Sarah Stamp, Andrew Stringer, Julia Truelove, James Waters, Robert Whiting and David Wood.

57. Thought for the Day

Council received a thought for the day from The Reverend Katherine Valentine Priest in Charge: Stowlangtoft, Priest in Charge: Hunston, Priest in Charge: Pakenham with Norton & Tostock and Priest in Charge: Great Ashfield.

58. Chairman's Announcements

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

County Councillor Robin Millar

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Robin Millar on his election as a County Councillor for the Newmarket and Red Lodge Division and welcomed him to his first meeting as a Suffolk County Councillor and referred to Robin also being Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Families and Communities at Forest Heath District Council.

Senior staff leaving

Anna McCreadie

The Chairman announced that Anna McCreadie, the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services, had decided to leave Suffolk County Council to pursue a new business venture. The Chairman referred to Anna's background

and experience in the NHS, her specialism in community nursing and later in community health services management. She paid credit to Anna's pioneering work throughout her career in primary care and at the Council which she joined in 2007 as Access and Partnership Director for Adult Social Care. As an Interim Director, Anna had taken on a wider portfolio of corporate responsibilities leading an extensive programme for change. These included the development of a number of social firms, alongside significant commercial deals and encouraging staff to innovate in service models including being amongst the first social work practice pilots for adult services with the Department of Health.

The Chairman made references to Anna's achievements as Director of Adult and Community Service including her enthusiastic leadership, the development of a new model of social care delivery, Supporting Lives, Connecting Communities, her ability to determinedly pursue strong, credible and professional relationships with NHS Chief Officers and Clinical leaders in order to build health and care integration across a number of areas in Suffolk and her role as vice chair for the regional branch of ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) and regional lead for Workforce Development and Adult Safeguarding and would continue as an ADASS Associate.

The Chairman congratulated Anna on her exemplary service to the Council and the people of Suffolk, and wished her all the best for the future.

Council stood and applauded Anna's contribution to the Council.

Carl Francis, Area Commander

The Chairman announced the retirement of Area Commander Carl Francis from the Fire Service at the end of March after serving 30 years in Suffolk Fire and Rescue. The Chairman reported that during this time Carl had served as an operational Firefighter and Officer at various locations across the county including working at headquarters to help shape and lead the service. The Chairman paid tribute to Carl's work ethic, experience and professionalism which would be missed in Suffolk Fire Service and thanked him on behalf of the County Council and wished him well in his retirement.

Local Government Chronical Awards

The Chairman referred to the announcements of the awards the previous evening, saying that although the Council was not judged to be outright winner, it was a significant achievement to get shortlisted across four categories: Digital Council of the Year, Effective Health and Wellbeing Board, Health and Social Care and Team of the Year.

East Anglia Devolution Deal

The Chairman made reference to the previous day's announcements about the Devolution Deal for East Anglia and invited Councillor Colin Noble to briefly summarise what this meant for Suffolk.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Noble for the important update and congratulated him and all the other leaders and officers involved in getting to the current stage.

59. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Bellfield, David Nettleton and Brian Riley.

60. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor Patricia O'Brien declared a local non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8 as she was the Chairman of the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel.

61. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 11 February 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

62. Public Questions

In accordance with rule 28.2 of the Council's Rules of Procedure (Part 2 of the Constitution) the Chairman reported that 4 public questions had been received. Each member of the public had been provided with a written response to their question. The members of the public who were at the meeting were able to ask their 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.

63. Petition

In accordance with Rule 27.1 of the Council's Rules of Procedure (Part 2 of the Constitution), the Council had received the following petition which had received more than 3675 signatures, the minimum required to enable the petitioner to present the petition to Council:

"The full Suffolk County Council should vote on fire cuts, not just the 9 Cabinet Members."

Separately, the paper based petition stated:

"We need YOUR help

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service are looking to make the following cuts:

- 50% reduction of Fire Engines in Ipswich (from 6 to 3)*
- Closing Wrentham Fire Station*
- Removing a Fire Engine from Lowestoft*
- Removing a Fire Engine from Bury St Edmunds*
- Downgrading 1 of Sudbury's Fire Engines to a smaller vehicle (details unknown)*

Not only do we oppose these cuts, we also oppose the fact that only the 9 members of the Cabinet will vote on the outcome of the consultation.

A vote for cuts of this severity MUST be made by FULL Council, so all residents of Suffolk are represented.

We the undersigned wish for the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service I.R.M.P. to be voted on by the full Council."

The Chairman advised the meeting on the procedure to be followed in terms of receiving the petition and the order in which Members would be permitted to address the Council before Councillor Matthew Hicks, as the Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection would respond to the petition.

The Petition was presented by Mr Steve Hayward on behalf of the petitioners who objected to the proposed cuts to the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and the decision making process.

The Chairman invited comment from representatives of opposition groups and Councillor Sandy Martin, Councillor Bill Mountford, Councillor David Wood and Councillor Trevor Beckwith spoke in support of the petition.

In response to the petitioner, Councillor Matthew Hicks acknowledged the petition and the views of the opposition groups and confirmed that those, and the wider public feedback, would be fully considered by the Cabinet when it met on 17 May to discuss the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

64. Police and Crime Commissioner

Council received an oral report from Tim Passmore, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk. Councillors had been invited to submit any questions in advance of the meeting to enable Mr Passmore to cover these in his update.

The Chairman thanked Mr Passmore for attending the meeting and for the update he had provided to the Council.

65. Motions

At Agenda Item 9, in accordance with Rule 3.1, two Motions were received. They were considered and resolved in the order of receipt.

Motion 1 - Proposed by Councillor David Wood and seconded by Councillor Sandy Martin

“This Council believes that the reductions in fire appliances and crews as recommended in the Suffolk Fire Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015 – 18 would pose a serious threat to the safety of the residents of Suffolk, their homes and their businesses.

This Council therefore calls upon the Cabinet to approve an IRMP which excludes the following proposals:-

Bury St Edmunds Proposal:

To remove one on-call fire engine from Bury St Edmunds Fire Station, and make consequent reduction to associated on-call firefighter posts.

Ipswich Proposal:

To remove two fire engines from Princes Street Fire Station and one fire engine from Ipswich East Fire Station, and make consequent reductions to associated whole-time and on-call firefighters posts.

Lowestoft Proposal:

To remove one on-call fire engine from the Lowestoft South Fire Station, and make consequent reductions to associated on-call firefighter posts.

Sudbury Proposal:

To replace one of the fire engines at Sudbury with a rapid response type firefighting vehicle, and make consequent reductions to associated on-call firefighter posts.

Wrentham proposal:

To close Wrentham Fire Station and remove the fire engine, and make consequent reductions to associated on-call firefighter posts.”

In proposing the motion, Councillor Wood advised that all Councillors were members of the Suffolk Fire Authority and as such questioned whether they should allow Cabinet to make the drastic cuts as set out in the IRMP. He raised concern about whether the consultation had been meaningful and if the decision had already been made. Councillor Wood considered that if the cuts were to be implemented it would put at risk the safety of the people of Suffolk. Councillor Wood made reference to his admiration to the on-call firefighters but stressed that this service was also under pressure and would not be able to cover the shortfalls.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Martin stated that petitions had previously come in to the Council which had been ignored even when they had shown the will of the people of Suffolk and the only way in which other councillors could speak on a petition was to put in a motion at the same time. Councillor Martin questioned the decision making process and stated that the people of Suffolk would not forgive the Administration for using procedural arguments to stand in the way of having a safe fire service.

Reference was made by other councillors to the short sightedness of the proposals and the increase in population and future developments across Suffolk represented more risk alongside high rise flats, an aging population and extreme weather. Reference was also made to the IRMP being based on financial consideration rather than risk and that the drop in demand over the last 10 years was due mostly to pro-active community work carried out in the main by full-time fire fighters which in itself was a service that would be cut. Councillor's comments included reference to people with mobility problems being frightened by the prospect of the less fire fighters attending fires in future, and reliance on neighbouring counties who would take longer to arrive at the scene. A councillor commented that there should not be any constitutional reason why the County Council could not make the decision.

Other councillors referred to an excellent, extremely robust and detailed consultation, a comment that the consultation model was considered to be the gold standard by councillors and emphasised that the outcomes of the consultation should not be prejudged before the findings had been published and considered. Reference was also made to the difficult economic situation of

the Council in which there could be no areas exempt from examination, scrutiny and difficult decisions.

On a vote being taken on the motion, 35 councillors voted for, 36 councillors voted against and there were nil abstentions. Therefore the motion was lost.

Decision: The Council rejected motion 1.

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

Alternative options: Members could have accepted the motion.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

At 5.08 pm the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

At 5.29 pm the meeting was reconvened.

Motion 2 - proposed by Councillor Sandra Gage and seconded by Councillor Len Jacklin

“Rural campaign groups, such as the Rural Services Network and Campaign for Better Transport, state that a lack of transport provision is a primary cause of social isolation and economic exclusion. Rural transport enables people to access employment, training, services and leisure opportunities. Those on low incomes, with limited mobility and without access to a car, are particularly vulnerable if rural transport is cut.

This council believes that the planned 50% cut to County Council subsidy of Community Transport Operators (CTOs) over the next four years, with a move away from community based services, will have a negative impact on their ability to sustain an adequate level of provision in rural areas.

Furthermore, we believe that removing the opportunity for the Council to provide minibuses to smaller operators will reduce the ability of small operators to provide a service.

The Council’s new bus service model is being introduced without any attempt to consult communities and passenger needs.

Therefore, this Council calls on the administration to:

- A. Reverse the decision to reduce Council subsidy to Community Transport Operators by 50% over the next 4 years*
- B. Review the Rural Bus tender to ensure that the service remains a community led rather than commercially focused business.*
- C. Retain ownership of the Council fleet of minibuses*
- D. Set up a community transport user led performance group, to run from the start of the contracts, with the power to shape and agree the services provided through each of the contracts now awarded”*

In proposing the motion, Councillor Gage stated that community transport was one of the cheapest services in Suffolk whilst noting the significant social,

economic and financial benefit and had been proven to reduce the effects of loneliness and isolation experienced by the elderly and improve their health and wellbeing. Councillor Gage explained that the primary concern was that the community transport budget was to be halved and yet somehow the same level of service was to be maintained, stating that there had been no explanation or rationale from the Administration on its proposals and no effort to seek the views of the service users or providers and had not explored other options.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Len Jacklin stated that contractors were being asked to provide a service which was already under financial strain whilst reducing the funding to them to provide it.

Reference was made by other councillors to community transport providing vital access to a range of services for all groups living in rural communities and the concern now felt by those for which the service was intended. Councillors commented that the Administration could now put the blame on the contractors rather than the Council.

Other councillors, in recognising the importance of rural transport to rural communities, referred to the policy panel that found several areas of the service were in need of improvement with the current service not reaching all parts of Suffolk and being difficult to understand. It was pointed out that both the operators and the users had been consulted and officers had risen to the challenge of developing a new much more joined up customer focused approach emphasising that it was the contractual model changing, becoming more efficient and not the service delivery.

On a vote being taken on the motion, 31 councillors voted for, 35 councillors voted against with no abstentions. Therefore the motion was lost.

Decision: The Council rejected motion 2.

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

Alternative options: Members could have accepted the motion.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

66. Pay Statement 2016/17

Council considered a report at Agenda Item 10 'Pay Statement 2016/17' by the Director of Resource Management which sought the Council's approval to the proposed statement.

Decision: The Council agreed by general assent to:

- a) Approve the Pay Statement for 2016/17, and
- b) Authorise the Director of Resource Management to amend the Pay Statement to take account of the cap on exit payments (paragraph 56) and the gender pay gap information (paragraph 58) once clarity on the requirements is received.

Reason for decision: Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to produce a Pay Statement for each year.

Alternative options: None were considered.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

67. Amendments to the Constitution

Council considered a report at Agenda Item 11 'Amendments to the County Council's Constitution' by the Director for Resource Management which set out proposals from the Constitution Working Party.

In introducing the report, Councillor Hudson, Chairman of the Constitution Working Party set out the proposed changes.

Decision: The Council agreed by general consent to:

- a) adopt the amendments to Officer Delegations detailed in paragraph 13;
- b) adopt the amendments to procedures for public questions when the questioner was not present detailed in paragraph 17;
- c) adopt the amendments to procedures for e-petitions detailed in Appendix A; and
- d) authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary changes to the Constitution, where appropriate.

Reason for decision: Councillors wanted to clarify and confirm procedure.

Alternative options: None were considered.

Declarations of interest: None were declared.

Dispensations: None were given.

68. Cabinet Member Reports and Questions

The Council received the reports by each Cabinet Member at Agenda Item 12. 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 a.m. 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 from the original question or reply.

Question 1 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Councillor Tony Brown

"With the closure of Children's Centres across the county, has there been a negative impact on the numbers of families and children accessing these services?"

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

"Although 9 of the Children's Centre buildings were closed between April and August last year, the registration rate of all the centres has not declined, based on an attendance record 8 of them are in line with the other Suffolk centres. Haverhill continues to be below the current Suffolk average as it always has and an action plan has been developed by the Head of Service to try and

address this and also where there is any flat lining of registration in other centres.

With the alternative delivery method this has freed up staff and has enabled more outreach work instead, such as delivery of a Stay and Play group in Clare by the team formerly based in Glemsford in response to a request from Parents and Carers in Clare.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Tony Brown

“The report to the Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee was very unspecific and somewhat vague in a number of areas. Has the demographic of the users of the Children Centres changed, and are the centres attracting the families that really need their services given the longer journeys and transport difficulties of many?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“As you will recall one of the reasons for the redesign and using less buildings was actually so we could get out into the community. That we are doing and as part of Making Every Intervention Count we have brought the health visitors in. There is still work to be done for the implementation but when that is carried out in the next few months we will get a much better delivery and we will get an increased performance.”

Question 2 to Councillor Colin Noble from Councillor David Hudson

“Of the 14 directors on the Board of the New Anglia LEP, only 6 have been elected by the people in democratically held elections; the rest have been appointed or selected by a system that is not entirely clear to most people. On top of this the LEPs are not subject to Freedom of Information legislation.

Given the ever increasing power of the LEPs and the role that they are to play in any devolution deal, does Councillor Noble agree with my sentiments that this is very dangerous to local democracy?”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“When the Coalition Government invited local areas to submit proposals to establish Local Enterprise Partnerships their guidance was as follows:

‘To be effective partnerships, it is vital that business and civic leaders work together. We believe this would normally mean an equal representation on the Boards of these partnerships and that a prominent business leader should Chair the Board.’

So to clarify your point, the New Anglia LEP website does actually say that there are 16 members of the Board, not 14, but we won’t go there.

Of these 16 members:

8 are business leaders
6 are local authority
1 is a representative for the region's colleges and 1 from the university sector.

And the education/ university sectors are considered to be public sector rather than business hence we are exactly in line with the requirements and the spirit of the guidance - it is equal. Those private sector representatives wishing to apply to sit on the Board are invited to apply through an open process that is widely advertised as and when vacancies become available.

Business leaders are limited to a fixed one term on the Board whilst public sector representatives are not. I can also assure you that New Anglia LEP has also agreed to comply with the principles of the Freedom of Information Act. Indeed, the New Anglia LEP has also participated in not one but two separate Scrutiny meetings considering its activity, both of which you have attended. The open approach, the balanced Board and the close working relationship we have with New Anglia LEP does not give me any cause for concern at all."

There was no supplementary question from Councillor David Hudson.

Question 3 to Councillor James Finch from Councillor Caroline Page

"Norfolk is conducting a review of its HGV routes because of high-profile TV coverage of HGVs taking inappropriate routes and causing damage.

Suffolk County Council's route hierarchy has not been reviewed in the round for 30 years or more. In light of Suffolk's current and future expansion and development, and the continuing increase in the size of HGVs, will the Cabinet Member agree to conduct a similar review for Suffolk, with the purpose of ensuring that as many HGV movements as possible are made via main roads rather than using unsuitable routes through rural villages and small towns such as Woodbridge - which continue to struggle with such traffic movements?"

Response from Councillor James Finch

"Actually I have a lot of empathy with this question. It is acknowledged that the Lorry Route Network was developed some years ago, I am not sure it was thirty years ago. The reason why I am standing here today is that I met, prior to my election, a lady called Councillor Gage and Allan Thorndyke. It wasn't even Councillor Gage then, Officer Gage, on this very subject, and it is a very, very difficult subject. I actually believe that the current routes as they are, were very much helped by Councillor Gage and are, in broad terms, very good. It is the enforcement of those routes which is the challenge. Now I am quite content to consider whether there are some changes locally and we would welcome those changes but I think to say a complete review would not be a good use of our resources because it was a very big job when we did it last time. The other thing I would say is that there is a lorry watch scheme which was introduced some time ago and I would like perhaps to discuss with you to think about re launching that to start to help overcome some of these challenges."

There was no supplementary question from Councillor Caroline Page

Question 4 to Councillor Matthew Hicks from Councillor John Field

“Can Councillor Hicks give evidence that demonstrates that the Council took all practical steps to ensure that the incinerator project achieved the delivery of waste heat to local business or to residents? This was an objective of our waste policy and one of the key issues at the approval of the incinerator project. Did the Council ensure that all practical action was taken to insure that issues like necessary archaeological investigations did not jeopardise the project schedule?”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“Cllr Field, thank you for giving me the opportunity to reaffirm my commitment to explore every possible avenue to deliver Combined Heat and Power from our Energy from Waste plant and I am very keen on both the glasshouse project and other heat use opportunities. The actions we have taken:

- Included exploring the possibility of Combined Heat and Power as part of our contract with Suez and the planning conditions placed on the development. We chose Suez a contractor which was committed to working with us to explore the option.
- The exploration of possibilities with Snoasis, Orbit Housing and St. James Business Park.
- Our contractor has pursued options to date with a rigour that I would applaud. Suez shares our enthusiasm for the Combined Heat and Power and they have worked hard to date most notably with Sterling Suffolk to make it a reality. I might add that Suez has carried out this work at not inconsiderable cost to themselves.
- Suez, our contractor, working with ourselves and Sterling, secured a planning permission for the site.
- The County Council has worked with DEFRA and specialist advisers to further support the project.

The archaeology requirements that Sterling had to fulfil is taking a little longer than expected but it is not the case that it has derailed the project as it is still very much alive. The most important point I want to stress is that Sterling Suffolk are very clear that they consider that their glasshouse project is continuing to move forward. Can I assure the Council whichever heat source is eventually chosen Suffolk County Council will continue to be extremely supportive of this very green and job-creating project. Sterling are considering other eco- friendly heat sources, such as biomass and ground source heat pumps and they have my very best wishes in their endeavours.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor John Field

“I totally agree with the thoughts that Sterling Suffolk have a sterling job. It’s a project that locally I am sure the vast majority of people would very much favour

seeing going forward and I don't want in any way to jeopardise. My supplementary is, I wonder if you can confirm my estimate that you are losing some £1.8m per annum in ROCs is a correct number or provide an alternative estimate?"

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

"I don't have the figure with me here today but I am more than happy to get that back to you later or early next week."

Question 5 to Councillor Colin Noble from Councillor Bill Mountford

"My question was in relation to Freedom of Information compliance and if I heard correctly I think Councillor Noble may have already answered that?"

(Councillor Mountford went straight to his supplementary question)

Supplementary Question from Councillor Bill Mountford

"It seems that you are our only somewhat tenuous link to the Local Enterprise Partnership, I therefore request that henceforth you report to this Council on the deliberations and decisions of the LEP and submit yourself to questions on this. Will you please do this?"

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

"The Leader was always the link to the LEP Board. The LEP on two separate occasions has made itself available to the Scrutiny Committee. We have a process of scrutiny at this Council and I am sure on future occasions if the Scrutiny Committee wishes for it to come before them again, I am sure they will."

Question 6 to Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger from Councillor Inga Lockington

"Will the portfolio holder for Adult Care tell this Council how many Homecare Assessments have been done month by month over the last year and how many assessments are waiting to be done?"

Response from Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger

"As part of the implementation of the new Support to Live at Home contract all customers receiving home care received a light touch review of their assessed needs. When I say light touch, having said that I did sit in to my 93 year old father-in-law's review of his home care as he is a user of the service and in fact it was done very sympathetically and given the time appropriate for him to make his decisions on the process going forward. The process actually involved 3157 customers and all these reviews were completed by the end of 2015. I won't go through them month by month but I can certainly supply those to you, for those 3157 customers. Over the period to September 2016 work is underway to ensure

all customers receiving care support in their own home will have a full review of their needs resulting in an agreed plan with clear goals to ensure they can be as independent as possible.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Inga Lockington

“Will the Portfolio Holder now let us know how long a time it takes after an assessment for a care package? I am thinking of new customers coming in for an assessment and if the agreement is that they can have a care package, how long a time will it take for the care package is put in place?”

Response from Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger

“The time taken to provide a care package would completely depend on the individual assessment, according to their needs and complexity of their care packages. But if you want to know rough time scales I can provide that to you in writing.”

Question 7 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Councillor Keith Patience

“In January the Minister for Skills, Nick Boles, announced new plans to ensure apprentices make up a minimum of 2.3% of the workforce of public sector and local government employers. As this is ‘Apprenticeship Week’, does the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills welcome this announcement, as the Labour Group does?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“Apprenticeships are an important route into employment and for progression once in work. The Labour Group will be aware that this administration has shown a strong commitment to Apprenticeships over the last three years. In 2013 we committed an investment of £1.5million to grow Apprenticeships in Suffolk and as a result the numbers of Apprenticeships has grown by 820 in the first year of the programme for 14/15 and we are still awaiting that data. Our investment has also meant that young people in every secondary school in Suffolk are now part of the advice and guidance programme for Apprenticeships, so are better able to make informed choices about their future and over 1500 young people are being actively supported to find an apprenticeship through our online support service.

We therefore welcome Government plans to continue to invest in and promote Apprenticeships across the private and public sectors and support the principle that every employer should do what they can to offer opportunities to young people taking their first steps into work. And on a personal note its 50 years this year since I signed my articles to be a Chartered Accountant which is really a glorified apprenticeship. So I fully support the apprenticeship route.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Keith Patience

“The number of Suffolk County Council staff, part time and full time is 6,013 of that number just 25 or 0.24% are apprentices. At current staffing levels the

number of apprentices will need to increase to 139 in order to meet the new quota. Clearly a radical change on how the Council goes on about recruiting apprentices is required. Is the Administration prepared for that radical shift and could you please explain how you will reform the Council recruitment?"

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

"Driven by the productivity agenda the Government is committed to achieving 3 million apprenticeships by the summer of 2020. If achieved this will be a 35% increase compared to the previous 5 years aiming to also increase the quality of apprenticeships in England. The Government is putting in place the apprenticeship levy which will be rolled out in April 2017 and paid by 2% of UK employers with a payroll of over 3 million per annum. The 2.4% mix sector target for apprenticeships in the workforce is being introduced as part of the apprenticeship reforms. It will not be in force but it is a target and we are working with plans to try and reach that target. It is a challenge but we have plans in place to do so."

Question 8 to Councillor Gordon Jones from Councillor Sonia Barker

"As the Portfolio Holder for Education will know, Suffolk County Council recently pledged to give a £600,000 cash injection in to the Challenge Fund. How does the Cabinet Member rate the project's performance so far against the investment made?"

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

"The Challenge Fund is part of the Council's overall Raising the Bar Strategy to improve education outcomes for children and young people across Suffolk. I am delighted to share with councillors the good progress we are now making as a result of Raising the Bar:

A greater proportion of Suffolk children are starting school with a good level of development than across England. Suffolk's Year 1 phonics tests have improved more quickly than the rest of England and are now in line with national rates. The rate of improvement in Suffolk for 11 year olds' attainments is not only greater than the national improvement but the strongest in the East of England. As GCSE results continue to improve with Suffolk jumping from 125th (out of 152) to 106th in the national ranking. At 18 years all Suffolk measures are now above national averages.

This accelerated progress across the board is down to many factors and I wish to take this opportunity to recognise the dedication and hard work of staff and leaders in our schools and all other education settings for their contribution.

Our investment in innovation is part of this success story and I am pleased to report that, in total, 103 schools are currently involved in 15 projects through the first phase of the Raising the Bar Challenge Fund. These projects all involve partnerships of schools working together and are focused on raising attainment in

a variety of ways. Each project is focused on impact through agreed stretch targets which unlock the full funding agreed for the programme.

The majority of the projects funded under the Challenge Fund are still in the early phases of their implementation and are yet to report on final outcomes and impact. Early indications from the first three projects to have been agreed are positive, I am pleased to say.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sonia Barker

“How many schools rated red by the Council’s own snap shot rating system have been in receipt of sponsorship from the Challenge Fund and how much money has been allocated to these schools?”

Response from Councillor Gordon Jones

“If you could give me the question in written form I will give a written response to you as I don’t have that information to hand.”

Question 9 to Councillor James Finch from Councillor Mandy Gaylard

“Does this Council consider itself to be patriotic?”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“Yes.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Mandy Gaylard

“In that case, I am glad to hear it, so perhaps you can explain why the Cabinet Member for Transport has decided not to publicise that this Council is not charging communities to hold the Queen’s birthday parties? Don’t we want our people to celebrate? And by the by, the deadline for people to put in a request for a street party is next week.”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“This Council does support community celebrations but if possible we would like them to take place off the highway in suitable locations. Where this is not possible and the community wishes to hold a street party then we would encourage them to go into cul-de-sacs. If this is not possible the Council will process the Special Events Order to close the road at no cost to the community.

There was a clear decision not to overtly shout about this because, not the funding, not the money, but the logistics of how you do it because it is quite a lot of workload alongside all the other maintenance jobs. So there is an opportunity for those who want to do it. It was not done on the measure you indicated at all.”

Question 10 to Councillor James Finch from Councillor Peter Byatt

“Is there any likelihood that work will start on Lowestoft’s Third-Crossing before May 2017?”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“All I can say is this will be a big project and an application has already been placed to allocate this a nationally significant infrastructure project. Work has started but if you define work as putting spades in the ground I am afraid the answer would be no.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Peter Byatt

“I would respectfully suggest that the efforts of all those over the generations to get that bridge done are recognised, I mean it is a great achievement and I think it will lift the spirit of the people of Lowestoft but I wonder if this will be completed coincidentally in time for May 2020? Is this design for another bascule bridge as shown in the Lowestoft Journal the definitive answer or will further options be considered? As Baldrick might say I have a cunning plan for a fixed bridge.”

Response from Councillor James Finch

“All I can say, Councillor Byatt, is that there are several hurdles to go through which obviously included the planning process so I will say no more.”

The meeting closed at 7.07 pm.

Chairman

Suffolk County Council Thursday 17 March 2016

Agenda item 6 – Public Questions

Question 1 from Sue Monks to Councillor Colin Noble

“An additional Rural Services Delivery Grant of £1.6m was specially allocated to Suffolk this year in recognition of the spread of the population in remote and rural areas and to aid SCC in servicing and supporting these citizens and locations. Can the Leader of the Council tell me what consultations Suffolk County Council are holding, and what plans that may be in the offing on how to spend the money that has been allocated for this very specific purpose?”

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

“Thank you for your question.

In setting out the background, the Rural Service Delivery Grant was previously included in the Council’s Revenue Support Grant (RSG) which is a general grant that provides some support to the overall funding of Council Services.

For 2016-17 RSG contributes 14% to the overall funding of the Council’s net budget of £492.4m

The council tax makes up the largest proportion of this funding of £271.1m (55%).

From 2016-17, the government has decided to remove the Rural Services Delivery Grant from RSG and show it separately to emphasise that council’s in ‘super rural areas’ do receive money to offset the higher costs of providing services in rural areas.

It is not a ring fenced grant, but money to partially recognise those extra costs of providing services in rural areas.

When the government announced the Provisional 2016-17 Local Government Finance (Grant) Settlement on 17th December 2015 informing local government how much money they were providing to support local services, the Rural Services Delivery Grant was given as £0.5m (0.1% of the Council’s net budget).

Over the following four weeks, during the consultation period on the Provisional Settlement, there was a great deal of lobbying from Shire Authorities, including myself who met with The Rt. Hon. Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to persuade the government to overturn the distribution mechanism that has been introduced at short notice which severely reduced the funding to Shire Authorities including the County Councils.

As a result of this lobbying, when the final Local Government Grant Settlement was published on 9th February 2016 some transitional changes were made to the funding of those Councils who were hit the hardest from the distributional changes announced in the provisional settlement.

Whilst the grant distribution remained the same, the government increased the Rural Services Delivery Grant for some authorities for 2016-17 and 2017-18 only and introduced some transitional funding too, and again only for 2016-17 and 2017-18 to smooth the impact of the grant reductions in those years.

This resulted in the County Council receiving an extra £1.6m in Rural Services Delivery Grant in 2016-17, making it £2.2m for 2016-17 before falling back to £1.7m in 2017-18, then £1.3m in 2018-19 and rising back to £1.7m in 2019-20).

So whilst this temporary increase is, of course, welcome it is part and parcel of the council's overall funding to support local services. It is not additional money to be spent on new projects - rather it is helping to preserve existing services.

The Council conducted a comprehensive consultation on its budget during Autumn 2015 and there are no current plans to carry out any further consultation, other than that through the recent Residents Survey which has just closed.

Thank you."

Supplementary Question from Sue Monks

"Councillor Noble can you tell us precisely which local services and rural areas the Council will be spending this money on such as community transport for instance or this money will go towards the addition money held in reserves?"

Response from Councillor Colin Noble

"So what I was trying to explain there was the Government has actually stripped out an element of the Revenue Support Grant to highlight to shire areas such as ours that element that they felt was made up of rural support so it goes back in to the general funds that we spend on all the services. So that does include community transport and it includes everything and is a recognition by Government that we do have rurality issues but as I said in my answer to the first question it's not new money."

Question 2 from Ellen Murphy to Councillor Matthew Hicks

"My question relates to the proposed reduction to fire cover in Sudbury. Sudbury is quite a close knit community, where it is virtually impossible to walk through the town without someone wishing you a good day. The proposed developments of Sudbury will go some way to destroying the community spirit that exists. Keeping our second pump will instil in local people the belief that they still have some control over their town. Can I ask the Cabinet Member to exclude the proposal to remove the second pump from Sudbury?"

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

"Thank you for your question about the Fire Authority's recent Integrated Risk Management Plan consultation, and the proposal related to Sudbury in particular. The proposal is to replace the current second fire engine at Sudbury fire station with a smaller rapid response type fire engine.

As I've said repeatedly throughout the consultation, I recognise that these are a challenging set of proposals about a fire service that councillors and the public hold in extremely high regard. To ensure that the views of the public and all interested

parties are properly considered we established an extensive and thorough 14-week consultation, including three public meetings in the Sudbury area.

The consultation closed on the 22nd February and the findings are currently being independently collated and assessed and will be published in the coming weeks. In advance of the Cabinet meeting in May the consultation responses will be duly considered and will inform the recommendations that will be brought to the Cabinet about each of the proposals.”

Supplementary Question from Ellen Murphy

“Why employ a company at great expense to the tax payer to decipher 4,000 plus on line and written surveys when the public view has already been expressed at various consultations, and I beg your pardon, but are you hiding behind paper exercises to placate us?”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“Yes we did use the services of Opinion Research Services who was appointed to help us with the consultation. I would like to point out that they provide a range of extremely professional services that include personnel and telephone interviews, postal and online surveys and they are extensively qualified and are specialists in consultation advice. If we did not carry out a consultation in the manner in which we had we would be criticised and I am duly proud of the advice they gave us and the consultation we have carried out.”

Question 3 from Phil Johnston to Councillor Matthew Hicks

“After visiting Wrentham Fire Station and being provided with more accurate data on incidents, response times and availability for Wrentham and its surrounding stations than what was previously given by Councillor Matthew Hicks or supplied within the IRMP document; Therese Coffey, MP for Suffolk Coastal, has stated that it is appropriate for the Council to reconsider the closure of Wrentham Fire Station, particularly in the light of the lack of availability of crews in other stations (nearby and afar) and that at the very least, the Council should consider the closure of Wrentham Fire Station when and only when there is a consistent higher availability of crews at nearby stations. To do so otherwise would add unnecessary risk for a limited saving. Do the Council agree with the recommendation from the Member of Parliament?”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“Thank you for your question about the Fire Authority’s recent Integrated Risk Management Plan consultation, and the proposal related to Wrentham in particular.

The data provided in the Authority’s Integrated Risk Management Plan consultation has been the subject of rigorous analysis over an extended period and provides a robust basis upon which the consultation has been founded. The consultation proposal for Wrentham fire station has been discussed at length with the firefighters at Wrentham and was the subject of a comprehensive and well attended public meeting in Wrentham in January. We have also engaged in correspondence and discussion with a number of interested parties outside of the formal meetings, including with Dr Therese Coffey as the local Member of Parliament.

The consultation closed on the 22nd February and the findings are currently being independently collated and assessed and will be published in the coming weeks. In

advance of the Cabinet meeting in May, all of the consultation responses will be duly considered and will inform the recommendations that will be brought to the Cabinet about each of the proposals, including that for Wrentham.”

Supplementary Question from Phil Johnston

“Will the closure of Wrentham Fire Station have a detrimental effect on Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services’ mantra of ensuring we have the right firefighters and fire engines at the right place, at the right time, and delivering the right standards of response to emergencies in Wrentham and the surrounding area as stated in the previous Integrated Risk Management Plan document of 2014/17.”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“The proposals for Wrentham make up the larger IRMP. We believe these are a set of proposals that leave Suffolk with an effective fire service. I would not want to prejudge the results of the consultation, I have not seen them yet, but once the results come back and we have had an opportunity to collate and analyse the results I look forward to taking the paper to Cabinet with each set of proposals including Wrentham.”

Question 4 from Kevin Driver to Councillor Matthew Hicks

“Given that Fires, Casualties and Fatalities in Suffolk over the last 2 years have INCREASED, Dwelling Fires have INCREASED by 7%, Fire Casualties have INCREASED by 70%, Special Service Casualties have INCREASED by 32% and Special Service Fatalities have INCREASED by 60%, and coupled with the fact that Princes Street Fire Station is the BUSIEST Fire Station in Suffolk attending over twice as many Fire Calls as the next busiest Fire Station (figures have been taken from SFRS IRMP 2015-18), does it then make sense to reduce the Fire Cover in Ipswich by 50% and the Fire Engines at Princes Street by 66%?”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“Thank you for your question about the Fire Authority’s recent Integrated Risk Management Plan consultation, and the proposal related to Ipswich in particular.

The proposals for Ipswich have been developed after very careful consideration, the detail of which was summarised in the consultation documents and has been discussed at length in various public meetings through the 14-week consultation.

The nature of the proposals in Ipswich reflect the fact that the town has 2 fire stations, 6 fire engines, 76 full time firefighters and 32 on-call firefighters. This is significantly more firefighting resource than is in place anywhere else across the county. The proposal would maintain the 2 fire stations, 2 full time and 1 on-call fire engine in the town and would ensure that Ipswich remains the best resourced of all of the towns in the county – reflecting the fact that it presents the area of greatest risk.

Throughout the consultation we have been very clear in our documentation and in public meetings that the overall trend in fires, deaths and injuries over a 5 to 10 year period is significantly down and this reflects the national position for fire and rescue services. We have further been clear that in the last 2-3 years this overall reduction is starting to plateau after a long period of a downward trend. This is in no small part due to the excellent work of firefighters across the country increasingly focussing on

preventing fires and other incidents happening in the first place. We have been clear in our consultation that we want to continue to focus on our Prevention work and will increasingly seek to do this in partnership with other organisations and services.

The consultation closed on the 22 February and the findings are currently being independently collated and assessed and will be published in the coming weeks. In advance of the Cabinet meeting in May the consultation responses will be duly considered and will inform the recommendations that will be brought to the Cabinet about each of the proposals, including those for Ipswich.”

Supplementary Question from Kevin Driver

“Doesn’t the County Council have a duty of care for its residents. Why should the residents of Ipswich have their fire cover reduced to a lower level just because as you hint in your words other small towns and villages with less risk have less cover. Princes Street has twice as many full time fire engines as any other fire station as it responds to over twice as many fire calls than any other fire station. After your cuts Princes Street, the busiest fire station in the County will become the worst resourced fire station in the county. How does this reflect that it is in the middle of the biggest risk area in the county?”

Response from Councillor Matthew Hicks

“I think it is really important to point out that in the Integrated Risk Management Plan officers have reviewed all 35 fire stations and each of Suffolk’s 47 fire engines together with the support functions and the managerial overhead. At this stage I would not want to say what will or will not happen in Ipswich. The consultation results have not come back and I look forward to hearing more details of what has been said when they come out in two weeks and taking that to Cabinet in May.”

This page is intentionally blank.