Minutes of the Council meeting held at Riverside, Canning Road, Lowestoft on Wednesday, 23 March 2016 at 6.30 pm.

Members present:


Officers present:

S Baker (Chief Executive), A Charvonia (Strategic Director & Monitoring Officer), A Jarvis (Strategic Director), I Johns (Planning Policy Officer) and N Wotton (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

At the start of the meeting, the Chairman held a minute’s silence as a mark of respect to those affected by the recent terrorist attacks in Brussels.

1. **APOLOGIES**

   Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Barnard, G Elliott, J Groom and R Neil.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

   There were no declarations of interest made.

3. **MINUTES**

   **RESOLVED**

   That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 February 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. **COMMUNICATIONS**

   The Chairman took the opportunity to remind all Councillors to check their pigeon holes for post.

5. **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE / LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

   **Leader of the Council**

   **Officer time spent on the Sanyo Project**

   The Leader of the Council reported that at the last Full Council meeting on 24 February 2016, there had been a Supplementary Question from Councillor N Webb regarding the costs accrued in officer time, working on the Sanyo Project. It was noted that the total staff costs for the project were £1,867.00. The Sanyo Project Board had met on 8 January 2016 and there had been unanimous, cross-party agreement that the contract should be terminated.

   Councillor S Barker requested personal clarification on this point, as she had been in attendance at the meeting and she stated that her notes from the meeting did not correspond with the official minutes from the meeting. There followed some discussion in this respect and it was confirmed that the Board had agreed to cancel the contract with Sanyo on 31 January 2016, as Sanyo were in breach of the contract, as they had not cleared the site by the agreed deadline.
Chief Executive

There were no announcements on this occasion.

6. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

A Notice of Motion had been received from Councillor S Barker:

*Historic items and gifts previously on display in the Town Hall, Lowestoft:*

“This Council believes that it is the role of the Full Council to make any decision on the disposal of any of the historic items and gifts in the care of Waveney District Council. Further, that no disposal either by gift, sale or long-term or permanent loan shall take place without the express permission of the Full Council.”

In accordance with the Council’s Constitution, the Notice of Motion was proposed and seconded and Members then voted on whether or not to discuss the Motion immediately. On being put to the vote, it was resolved not to discuss the Motion immediately. Therefore there would be no debate on the Notice of Motion at this meeting.

**RESOLVED**

That the Notice of Motion would not be discussed this evening and would instead be referred to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

7. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

With the agreement of the Council, the Chairman changed the order of business to enable the reports to be considered prior to receiving Members Questions.

8. **PETITIONS**

No Petitions had been received.

9. **QUESTIONS FROM THE ELECTORATE**

The following questions from the electorate had been received:

(a) **Question from Mrs J Hinton to the Cabinet Member for Resources & Welfare Reforms**

Relating to the Council’s current debt of £100.52 million as per February’s Full Council meeting, and as per your response to me in your letter dated 24th February, can you please inform me as to how much interest is paid monthly on these loans? Is there any way these can be reduced earlier than the term of the loan?

**Response from Councillor C Law**

The total interest payable on the Council’s loans for the financial year 2015/16 will be £2,652,908.23 (£2,261,601.96 relates to the Housing Revenue Account and £391,306.27 relates to the General Fund), these are paid on prescribed dates throughout the year, with the average monthly amount being £221,075.69.

The fixed rate loans have a set amount of interest to be paid over the term of the loan, any premature repayment or refinancing of the loans would incur a penalty amount to be repaid. The Council continually reviews the loan position with its external advisors to identify where any savings could be made. Any rescheduling of debt would be reported to both Cabinet and Council. The variable rate loans are currently the most attractive value for money rate that the Council could achieve; this again is continually reviewed by the Council’s external advisors.
Secondly, the investments made to UK banks & Building societies on your approved lists, can you assure me these institutions invest in low risk investments?

Response from Councillor C Law

It is beyond the Council's control who the Counterparties invest with, however each is subject to credit ratings by the three largest credit ratings agencies, Moody's, Fitch and Standard & Poors and must satisfy the Council's prescribed criteria as set out in the investment policy. The Council receives daily updates on any changes in the credit rating and for any Counterparty that falls below the Council's prescribed limits within the policy are suspended from the Council's investment list.

Finally, in the Budget and Council Tax 2016/17 report, in Appendix C - General Fund Key Variances, it mentions Additions - Pension Fund Back funding. This figure of 213k, can you please inform me how many more years is this item going to appear on the accounts? How much extra has been paid into this fund since 2000? How many more years will Waveney be contributing to this pension pot?

Response from Councillor C Law

As Waveney District Council is a Local Government Authority, it has a statutory responsibility to provide its staff with a Local Government Pension Scheme and the District Council is part of the Suffolk Local Government Pension Scheme. The District Council will continue to be part of this Scheme until a time Government legislation changes this.

It is a statutory requirement for a valuation to be carried out every three pensions of the Suffolk Local Government Pension Scheme. The triennial review by the scheme’s Actuaries monitors the assets against the current value of the liability of the pension benefits earned to date to determine whether there is a surplus or deficit. The triennial review also reviews the employers contribution rate, taking into account the funding strategy assumptions and principles adopted by the Fund.

The Employers Superannuation contribution rate, which is a percentage of salary, covers the future service costs of the Pension Scheme in relation to existing membership only, based on an implicit assumption of a stable population and therefore a flow of new entrants to the scheme replacing leavers and retirees. The resulting percentage is adjusted for death in service costs, expenses and member contributions to arrive at the required future service employer contribution rate before allowance for surplus or deficit contributions payments (detailed below).

The annual Superannuation Deficit Back Funding lump sum payment covers the shortfall in employer contribution rates in relation to previous costs for all scheme members (known as past service costs). Again, the value of liabilities is based on financial and demographic assumptions, such as investment returns, rate at which salaries increased in the future, future price inflation as this affects salary and pension increases, probability that pensions will be paid and under what circumstances e.g. death, deferred pension, early (voluntary and ill-health) and normal retirement and life expectancy of pensioners.

The main factors which will affect how long Waveney District Council has to pay the Superannuation Deficit Back Funding payments (resulting from the triennial review) include the length of the Recovery Period set by the Pension Scheme, the Rate of Return on Assets and Contributions in the Fund compared to the assumptions made, Membership Experience (ill health retirements, deaths, salary / pension revaluation / pension increases, leavers and transfers to other Pension Schemes), redundancy exercises, bulk transfer of members to newly established companies or outsourced services.
As there are so many factors which impact on the surplus or deficit of the Pension Scheme, it is not possible to say how many more years the District Council will have to pay deficit back funding payments or what the value of the deficit back funding payments will be.

(d) **Question from Mr R Chilvers to the Cabinet Member for Resources & Welfare Reform**

At a previous Council meeting Councillor Barnard stated that we would be pleasantly surprised as to the future use of the Town Hall site but that the only issue would be the maintenance bill for any new incumbent having to abide by the planning regulations including its large stain glass window. Could the Council please provide the current position as to the future use of the Town Hall as we do not want to see a situation similar to Ipswich Town Hall or Crown Street Hall?

**Response from Councillor C Law**

The Council is currently considering the future use of the Town Hall site in two parts.

When the decision was taken to move the Council’s headquarters a commitment was made that a use would be found for the listed part of the Town Hall that would respect its history and retain it for community use. The Council is continuing to explore options that will deliver this commitment; this includes exploring the role this building may have in the outcome of the planned Community Governance Review of the unparished areas of Lowestoft.

With regards to the rest of the site, the Council has long been pressed to find ways of bringing life back to the top of the High Street. The Council is engaged in discussions with a number of organisations on a proposal that has the potential to make this a reality. It would not be appropriate to say more at this stage, but of course if a change of use is involved then this would require planning permission and so the matter would be dealt with in the normal transparent way including public consultation.

(e) **Question from Mr R Chilvers to the Leader of the Council**

In answer to a recent question from Councillor Gooch it was reported that this Council was prepared and willing to do its part in welcoming Syrian refugees. Can you please explain why this Council has been named by Keith Vaz as one of a number of Councils with no arrangements in place, despite the Council's message of support for any central government initiative?

In response, and failing any directive with appropriate funding, is it not in the power for WDC, and in keeping with Waveney's proud record of support for children fleeing Nazi programs, to use its publicity arm to request private individuals step forward who are prepared to offer safe havens for lost children and other refugees fleeing from war and which would be a far more humane response than the £10 a night only charge which has been allocated for safe keeping to outsourced firms such as Serco and Q4S by the Home Office?

**Response from Councillor C Law**

I thank Mr Chilvers for the question and wholeheartedly agree that Waveney has a proud record of welcoming and protecting vulnerable people to the district.

However, I'm afraid I cannot explain why Mr Vaz chose to single Waveney out as a council with no arrangements in place to welcome refugees. To be honest, I found his comments somewhat mystifying, very misleading and factually incorrect.

Waveney is one of nearly 200 councils which has yet to see refugees accommodated. However, as we have already explained, and as part of the Government’s Syrian Vulnerable Person Scheme, political leaders across Suffolk’s public sector have unanimously agreed to take up to 200 Syrian refugees over the next five years.
A task group including representatives from local authorities, health, police and the voluntary and faith sectors has been set up to put in place appropriate housing, education, health and support services provision in the county.

Due to the location of suitable housing, health, education and support services the refugees will be settled predominantly in the greater Ipswich area and housing will predominantly be via private sector landlords. Members of the task group are working with the Home Office to agree the families which come to Suffolk, based on the services and facilities we are able to offer.

We have publicised the Suffolk response and we have also told our communities via the council’s website and news releases that their support is welcome. To repeat though, for more information about what Suffolk is doing to support Syrian refugees, including a series of FAQs and details of how to donate furniture or electrical items, people are asked to visit the Refugee Support website at www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk or call Suffolk County Council’s Contact Centre on 03456 031 8422.

10. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF THE UN-PARISHED AREAS OF LOWESTOFT

The Leader of the Council presented the report, which sought approval of the draft Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review of the un-parished areas of Lowestoft. Members noted that in 2008, the Cabinet and Full Council had decided that there should be a complete review of the democratic position within Lowestoft. However, this work was never completed as it was superseded by the start of a full Boundary Commission Local Government Review (LGR) of Norfolk and Suffolk. The LGR was designed to establish new unitary council structures within the counties. The LGR was later abandoned by the current Government in 2010. Although the question of the democratic position for Lowestoft was not immediately re-opened, the Cabinet remained concerned that a review should still take place.

At its meeting on 23 September 2014, the Cabinet had recommended that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the issues in preparation for a Community Governance Review (CGR) of the un-parished areas of Lowestoft; and to develop draft terms of reference for such a CGR. A Task & Finish Group of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee met on 30 October 2015 and 24 February 2016 and had recommended the Draft Terms of Reference for consideration by Cabinet and Full Council for approval.

The Leader reported that Town and Parish Councils were the building blocks of local democracy and Lowestoft had not been able to benefit from a local dimension to local government. The residents of the un-parished areas of Lowestoft deserved to have their particular interests represented via a Council or Councils, who were invested practically, emotionally and financially only in Lowestoft. The rural parts of Waveney were already aware of the many benefits which parishing could bring and were clear advocates of local representation. The Community Governance Review had also been included within the Councils new East Suffolk Business Plan, as a key action to improve the local area.

The draft Terms of Reference, which were attached as Appendix A to the report, clearly set out how the review was proposed to be conducted. If approved, the review would immediately commence and letters would be sent to all 28,000 households in the un-parished areas of Lowestoft. A cross-party working group would also need to be established to oversee the review.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Law and seconded by Councillor Ardley who stated that he reserved the right to speak until later in the meeting. Councillor S Ardley then took the opportunity to call for a Recorded Vote in respect of the first recommendation. 24 Councillors stood in favour of the Recorded Vote.
Councillor Graham raised a point of order at this stage in the proceedings, as Councillor Ardley had requested a Recorded Vote immediately after reserving the right to speak. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that procedures had been followed correctly.

A Member raised a concern, as they had not received Annex's B, C and D, which were mentioned within the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix A to the report. It was confirmed that Annex’s B, C and D had not been included within the agenda papers, however they would be made available once the consultation process was underway.

With regards to the consultation timetable, reassurance was provided that it was indicative only and may be subject to change.

A Member reported that care would need to be taken due to the large number of democratic processes which would be taking place during 2016. This included the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May, the EU Referendum in June, a public consultation regarding a possible merger with Suffolk Coastal District Council in July and a further public consultation on parishing Lowestoft during July to September. It was confirmed that it was critical that the public were kept informed, to ensure that the public consultations were meaningful. The Council also had a duty to keep the public updated on the developments.

Members discussed the benefits of parishing Lowestoft and it was reported that the new Council or Councils would be able to decide how their precept was spent and make decisions regarding their local area. Those Councillors with experience of being Town and Parish Councillors offered to share their knowledge and provide assistance as required. With regards to the precept, a Member queried how the precept would be set, as many parts of Lowestoft suffered from high levels of deprivation and would not be able to afford any significant increase. Confirmation was provided that it would be up to any new Parish or Town Council to decide on their level of precept, so that they were able to take account of local variations in circumstance. In general, the level of precept would be dependent upon the size of the Parish or Town and would also be affected by what that Town or Parish Council wanted to do locally.

A Member queried whether the review would look at the Town Hall and whether it could be a future meeting place for a new Town Council. It was reported that the consultation process involved looking at all of the assets listed within the area and that would include the Town Hall.

With regards to any possible future merger with Suffolk Coastal District Council, clarification was provided that there would be no direct impact on the parishing of Lowestoft. However, if the two Councils were to merge, it may enable Lowestoft to have a larger Town Council, as the current regulations did not permit a Town Council to contain 50% or more of the electorate of the whole district. The final size of any Town or Parish Councils would be decided by the public consultation process. In respect of any future merger, it was noted that it would be vitally important for the Lowestoft area to have sufficient democratic representation, so that the Councillors would be able to represent the area alongside all of the other Towns in the District.

A Member commented that parishing Lowestoft would provide additional power and control for the unparished areas, as the Lowestoft Charter Trustees had no authority and performed a purely civic and ceremonial function.

As agreed earlier in the meeting, a Recorded Vote then took place in respect of Recommendation 1.
Councillors who voted For Recommendation 1 (42)


Councillors who voted Against Recommendation 1 (1)

K Patience

Councillors who Abstained (0)

RESOLVED

1. That the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix A, for the Community Governance Review of the unparished areas of Lowestoft be adopted and published on 24 March 2016.

2. That the following seven Councillors be appointed for the year 2016/17 to a Community Governance Review Working Group, in accordance with paragraph 5 of the report: Councillors M Bee, J Ceresa, G Elliott, T Gandy, S Logan, B Provan and C Topping.

11. WESTERN END OF LAKE LOTHING CONCEPT STATEMENT

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management presented the report, which sought approval for the Western End of Lake Lothing Concept Statement. It was noted that the Concept Statement supported the delivery of the Local Plan (formerly the Local Development Framework), which the Council had a statutory duty to produce.

The Western End of Lake Lothing Concept Statement would build on the policies contained within the Area Action Plan and other related Local Plan policies. The Concept Statement provided a vision for the mixed use redevelopment of the south side of the western end of Lake Lothing containing residential, employment and tourism uses. The different uses were distributed appropriately throughout the site and new developments would be expected to provide high quality design, which was sensitive to the surrounding area and sought to minimise flood risk. The Concept Statement would also improve the road layout, increase off street parking and, where possible, increase access to the waterfront.

It was noted that during the preparation of the Concept Statement, there had been consultation with local residents, businesses, landowners and statutory consultees. The Concept Statement would also be a material consideration when deciding planning matters.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management took the opportunity to thank Ian Johns, Planning Policy Officer, and Robbie Cook, Planning Technician, for their hard work in producing and designing the Concept Statement.

Members discussed the Concept Statement and agreed that the document would help to assist with the redevelopment of a neglected and unsightly area. However, concerns were raised that significant funding would be required in order to regenerate such a large and important area. Infrastructure would also need to be updated in order to be able to accommodate additional traffic from any regeneration or redevelopment of the area.
The need for adequate public space, pavements, cycle routes and roads were discussed, in order to facilitate connectivity throughout the area. It was noted that work would also be required in order to ensure that all parties involved in the development of the site worked together to ensure the best possible outcome for the site.

A Member reported that they were concerned by the lack of open spaces contained with the Concept Statement. The Planning Policy Officer confirmed that a modest amount of open space had been allocated, however that would be supplemented by additional landscaping and green space throughout the site as the development progressed. The Concept Statement was not meant to be too prescriptive and the Planning Officers would work with the developers and landowners to ensure that the development provided a high quality environment, with adequate parking and improved infrastructure.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management welcomed the Concept Statement and it was noted that planning applications for Oswald’s Boatyard and Brooke Peninsula had also been approved, therefore there would be significant development in this area in the coming years.

RESOLVED

1. That the Western End of Lake Lothing Concept Statement be adopted.

2. That the Western End of Lake Lothing Concept Statement Supplementary Planning Document, the statement summarising the main issues raised during the consultation and how these have been addressed in the SPD, and the necessary adoption statement are published and made available in accordance with the required regulations.

12. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Leader of the Council presented the report, which sought approval to make two amendments to the Constitution, which had previously been considered by the Audit & Governance Committee last week.

The first proposed amendment was to increase the delegated authority level for the Head of Legal and Democratic Services. Her current level of authority was to authorise sums up to £10,000 and it was proposed that she should be able to settle legal claims on behalf of the Council, up to the Key Decision threshold of £100,000. Although such claims were rare, it did mean that she was prevented from being able to settle matters, as a legitimate tactic, at the ‘door of the court’. This was because the Council was unlikely to be in court for a sum less than £10,000 and to obtain delegated authority would require the preparation of a report for Cabinet, to be considered at a formal meeting. For practical reasons, it was therefore proposed to increase this delegated authority. Members were reassured that these powers would only ever be exercised in the best interests of the Council.

The second proposed amendment was to the process by which the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee was selected. Currently the Constitution was confusing and written so that the Committee should be chaired by an Opposition Member ‘where practical’. This left the Constitution open to doubt and different interpretations as to when it would or would not be ‘practical’. This had also led to the perception of the Committee being politicised.

It was noted that in recent times, the Committee had been chaired by the Leader of the main Opposition Group. The Constitution also stated that the Committee could not be chaired by a Cabinet Member or Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee and it was proposed that this should remain unchanged.

The amendment would also ensure that the Committee was the same as all the other Council Committees, where the best Councillor for the role that year was appointed at
Annual Meeting in May. It was important that the Council had a strong and effective Overview & Scrutiny Committee to act as the important check and balance for the decisions taken by the Cabinet.

A Member queried whether the two recommendations in the report could be voted upon separately, and it was confirmed that they would.

There followed some discussion in this respect and it was confirmed that this element of the Constitution had been in place since the Cabinet and Executive Arrangements had come into force as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. Some Councillors felt that changing the current wording of the Constitution would politicise the role of Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and that the Chairman for the 2016/17 year would be a Member of the Administration.

The Leader of the Labour Group reported that there had been a significant revamp of the way that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee operated, which enabled it to be more Member led and responsive to the concerns of Waveney residents. The Committee also adhered to the good practice and guidance issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. It was then suggested that the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Labour Group should meet prior to Annual Council in May to consider who would be the most suitable person to be nominated for the position of Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the position was extremely important, particularly at a time when there were so many significant changes for the district, such as the possible merger and parishing of Lowestoft. The Committee would benefit from independence, different perspectives and constructive challenge from its Members, in order to be a critical friend.

A Member suggested the Constitution be Amended to replace the word ‘practical’ with ‘possible’ so that it would read:

‘5.1 The Council has adopted the convention that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee should be chaired by a member of an Opposition Group wherever possible.’

The Monitoring Officer provided clarification at this point in the meeting, that the suggested amendment would effectively negate the recommendation contained within the report and the proposed Amendment would therefore not be accepted. It was noted that the proposed amendment contained within the report would remove the presumption of an Opposition Chair and would open the opportunity up for the best Councillor for the position.

After some further discussion, it was confirmed that a separate vote would be undertaken for the two recommendations. Following separate votes, it was then

RESOLVED

1. That Paragraph (3) of the delegations to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, as set out in the Scheme of Delegated Authority to Officers in the Council’s Constitution, be amended to increase the threshold to settle legal claims to a maximum of £100,000 in any one case.

2. That Paragraph 5.1 of the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules in the Council’s Constitution be amended to read: “Annual Council will appoint the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee each year. In accordance with paragraph 2.1 any Councillor can be appointed as Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, apart from any current members of the Cabinet and the Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee.”

13. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

(a) Question from Cllr L Gooch to the Cabinet Member for Housing

It was reported in the Lowestoft Journal on Friday, 19th February 2016 that Norfolk and Suffolk could face a home shortfall by 2026 of 28,000. Sarah McMonagle, Head of External Affairs for the Federation of Master Builders stated: “Councils aren’t doing enough to remove the barriers to SME [small and medium-sized enterprise] house-
builders and empower them to build more new homes." What are we doing to remove these barriers?

Response from Councillor S Allen

An SME was categorised as fewer than 250 employees and therefore most housing development in the district was delivered by SME builders, most of which were far smaller than 250 employees. Waveney has a developer forum attended by local small and medium building companies and so there is good liaison and support to assist them in navigating the planning system and feeding in their views on Local Plan making. As part of the Council's processes for collecting Community Infrastructure Levy, the Council has an instalments policy to assist developers with cash flow. Lastly, the Council is helping to address the skills shortage in the area through partnership working with Lowestoft FE College to place construction students with local employers for 2 days a week practical work experience.

Supplementary Question from Councillor L Gooch

Is the Council able to anticipate the barriers which stop building developments?

Response from Councillor D Ritchie

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management reported that the Council held regular meetings of the Developers Forum. This enabled local developers to meet with officers from the Council to discuss planning issues. The events were very successful and had led to closer working and the completion of additional projects.

(b) Question from Councillor J Murray to the Leader of the Council

The increase of £5.00 for a Band D Council Tax is agreed will not bring in enough money to completely cover the growing pressure on vital services to care for the elderly and disabled. How are the cuts to Waveney District Council’s services being prioritised to ensure that those who are the most vulnerable will be protected?

Response from Councillor C Law

Thank you Cllr Murray for your question. However, it may have been more appropriate for you to have put your question to Suffolk County Council who provides social care.

At Waveney we do provide indirect services for elderly and disabled people. These include:

Sheltered Housing - although this is provided by the Housing Revenue Account and so not impacted by Council Tax changes.

Disabled Facilities Grant - again this is outside of Council Tax as it is a dedicated budget provided directly from government and which I am pleased to be able to report has been increased significantly by government in 16/17.

Through our Community Enabling approach we are working closely with health and social care colleagues to help people to remain well for longer as they live for longer. Our approach is a preventative one that aims to enable individuals to be able to remain independent through self management, particularly of long term conditions, and to enable communities to provide a range of support for people with different health and wellbeing needs. These are new services/activities and there are specific actions relating to this in our new Business Plan.

More generally though, as was set out in the budget we approved at the last Council meeting, the council is not making cuts. You are right that our financial challenges are not getting any easier. Our new Business Plan clearly sets out on pages 8 and 9 the council’s strategy to becoming financially self sufficient. This is not about cuts. It is about continuing to be the most financially efficient council we can be. It is about continuing to adapt and develop different service models that mean services can be protected and
improved at lower cost to the tax payer. And it is about increasing our overall income to be able to invest in further services for our residents. The increase for next year of £4.95 in the council tax was therefore just one small part of this and we all need to continue to work harder and smarter together for our electorate, and especially our most vulnerable residents.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor J Murray**

The poor and vulnerable in society are being disproportionately affected by all of the cuts and the additional charges for the collection of green waste. What can the Council do to ensure that the needy and vulnerable are protected?

**Response from Councillor C Law**

The Council is doing the right thing for residents by exploring the possibility of merging with Suffolk Coastal, in order that the Council is sustainable, financially viable and is able to continue providing a good level of service to the local community.

**Question from Councillor S Barker to the Leader of the Council**

It was reported in the Eastern Daily Press on 8.3.16 that the proposal to merge three east coast colleges: Lowestoft FE College, Lowestoft Sixth Form College and the G.t Yarmouth FE College to create a new three campus institution have been described as ‘an innovative solution’. The decision to merge was made to ‘create an organisation with a solid financial footing at a time when public funding is under increasing pressure’. Can Cllr Law outline to the Council how this proposed merger will enhance the local offer to the Waveney community so as to raise education, apprenticeship and skill levels?

**Response from Councillor C Law**

It’s not surprising that we have another instance of merger being considered and implemented, this time by the three local colleges. The benefits have some synergy with our own.

In light of Cllr Barkers role at SCC as shadow member for education it is surprising she is directing the question to a district council with no responsibility for the delivery of education. On this matter, I would have expected her to be advising us with regards to the benefits.

The key benefits of the merger will be:

- Increased Financial Resilience
- Commercial opportunities relating to recent announcements in the offshore sector
- Knock on effect on apprenticeship growth across the supply chain
- Funding Opportunities supporting hard to reach groups
- Vibrancy impact of combined vocational/academic offer

The benefits of a merger include shared staff specialisms, access to state of the art equipment and intelligence networks. This is specifically important in high impact sectors such as, engineering, renewable energy, Ports and Logistics and construction. A knowledge hub will develop which can respond effectively and swiftly to growth areas which in turn will draw in business growth and allow the continuation and development of commercial models e.g. income from maritime and offshore courses which serves the UK and international markets.

The Renewable industry with the recent announcements from Scottish Power and RWE will have an impact on the creation of technical and higher level course provision aligned to their skills’ needs and see an increased apprenticeship offer across a number of frameworks/standards.

A merger of the colleges will ensure first rate provision is offered and delivered by drawing from an experienced knowledge based infrastructure. In addition the merge will
allow the Colleges to bid for funding opportunities to support continued growth and develop programmes for hard to reach groups.

In conclusion a stronger more vibrant Post 16 economy will raise aspirations and attainment levels and a combined vocational and academic/HE offer will benefit both students and the business community.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor S Barker**

How will the students in North Suffolk be able to access the education that they need, particularly those from the rural areas, when there have been reductions in bus services?

**Response from Councillor C Law**

That question should be for Suffolk County Council to answer.

**(d)**

**Question from Councillor S Logan to the Leader of the Council**

In the light of the March Budget announcement by the Government, would the Leader of Waveney District outline to the Council the financial support given to infrastructure in the Waveney District by the Chancellor?

**Response from Councillor C Law**

The Chancellor has allocated £77.5m towards the total cost of delivering the 3rd crossing which is likely to cost around £80 - £100million. Suffolk County Council will work to source the remaining money from local funding sources and the LEP.

In addition to that momentous achievement further financial support for infrastructure will come through the devolution agreement. However, at this time, even outline details of the levels of funding relevant to the District are unavailable. Details of proposed infrastructure improvements are to be provided in the form of a non-statutory strategic infrastructure delivery plan to be produced within 6 months.

Despite the legacy of debt left by the previous Labour government, with a Conservative Government and Peter Aldous MP, things will get done eg the 3rd Crossing, North Oulton Broad station modernisation, the Northern Spine Road and Beccles Southern Relief Road.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor S Logan**

There was no Supplementary Question on this occasion.

**(e)**

**Question from Councillor A Green to the Cabinet Member for Tourism, Economic Development & Rural Affairs**

Would Cllr Ladd outline to the Council the future plans for the East Point Pavilion once the Tourism Information facility shuts?

**Response from Councillor M Ladd**

Councillor Ladd took the opportunity to clarify his answer to Councillor Green’s question from the previous Full Council meeting. The Tourist Information Centres would be closing at the end of April 2016, not March 2016 as stated at the meeting.

In consultation with the current tenant, the Council was considering a number of options for the future use of space within the East Point Pavilion. We are in contact with a number of retail and leisure operators and initial investigations suggest a suitable tenant or tenants will be identified to enhance the offer at this site. The Council intends to re-market the entire property including the former TIC. A formal marketing campaign will commence shortly.
Supplementary Question from Councillor A Green

How many local businesses have expressed an interest in hosting the Visitor Information Points (VIPs) so far?

Response from Councillor M Ladd

Currently 15 businesses in total had expressed an interest in hosting the Visitor Information Points, in both Lowestoft and Southwold. Unfortunately not all the businesses were able to be hosts, however those who had been selected had been contacted. Those businesses which had been unsuccessful would be able to hold some tourist literature to help raise awareness of what was on offer in the area. The successful businesses were widely spread to ensure good coverage and it was hoped that the initiative would have a very positive impact on visitors to the area.

The meeting was concluded at 8.15 pm

Chairman