

Minutes of the Council meeting held at Riverside, Canning Road, Lowestoft on **Wednesday, 23 September 2015 at 6.30 pm.**

Members present:

B Provan (Chairman), S Allen, S Ardley, P Ashdown, E Back, S Barker, M Barnard, M Bee, N Brooks, G Catchpole, J Ceresa, M Cherry, Y Cherry, J Craig, G Elliott, J Ford, T Gandy, T Goldson, L Gooch, I Graham, K Grant, A Green, J Groom, L Harris-Logan, M Ladd, C Law, P Light, S Logan, F Mortimer, T Mortimer, J Murray, R Neil, L Nicholls, M Parsons, K Patience, M Pitchers, C Punt, T Reynolds, D Ritchie, M Rudd, J Smith, L Smith, K Springall, C Topping, N Webb, S Webb and S Woods

Officers present:

S Baker (Chief Executive), A Charvonja (Strategic Director & Monitoring Officer), P Gore (Head of Environmental Services & Port Health), H Javadi (Chief Financial Officer), A Jarvis (Strategic Director), S Taylor (Finance Manager for Compliance) and N Wotton (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Cackett.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G Elliott declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest in Item 11 – Joint Food and Health & Safety Service Plan 2015/16 – as he has a registered food business within the District.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 July 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications from the Chairman on this occasion.

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

Chief Executive

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive on this occasion.

Leader of the Council

Statement of Accounts for 2014/15

The Leader of the Council was pleased to report that the Audit & Governance Committee had just approved the Statement of Accounts for 2014/15. The external Auditors had issued an unqualified opinion for the 6th consecutive year. The report showed that all of the appropriate arrangements were in place, the General Fund balance was healthy and no issues had been raised. The Leader took the opportunity to thank the Chief Finance Officer and her team for all of their hard work and support over the past few years, which had seen the Council dramatically improve its procedures and processes.

Members Room

The Leader reported that computer and telephone facilities had been installed in the Members Room, to enable Members to work in there more easily and all were encouraged to make use of this improved work space.

6. NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor N Webb had submitted the following Notice of Motion:

This Council supports the retention of the Lowestoft Magistrates Court, the County Court and the Family Court in the light of the proposed closure of the Court Complex by the Ministry of Justice, which would undermine both local justice and local businesses. The Council calls on the administration to use all necessary influence and resources to support local businesses and the local community in their campaign to ensure that the Ministry of Justice's proposals to close the Court Complex are challenged so that this valuable facility is retained.

The Notice of Motion was proposed and seconded and Members then voted in favour of discussing the Motion immediately.

Councillor N Webb then gave a speech outlining the reasons why the courts should be retained in Lowestoft. He reported that it was vital that the public had confidence in the law and that justice would be upheld. Access to a local court was important, as many people including witnesses would not be willing or able to travel long distances or be able to afford the associated costs of travelling to Ipswich or further afield. The proposed court closure could lead to unintended social costs, as many people would feel that justice was too costly to achieve or would simply give up on the process. The significant cuts to legal aid had also exacerbated the difficulties for many people in trying to seek justice and it was very important that justice did not become a commodity that only the rich could afford. Justice was at the heart of a healthy, democratic society and everyone should be encouraged to take part in the consultation and fight to keep the courts open in Lowestoft.

The Leader of the Council reported that he had written to the Ministry of Justice on behalf of the Council, requesting that the proposals be reconsidered. The Public Sector Leaders Group, Police & Crime Commissioner and Member of Parliament had all been working and campaigning in support of retaining the Lowestoft Courts. He reported that Lowestoft was the second largest town in Suffolk and should have a local court, particularly as the Lowestoft Courts had recently been refurbished at a cost of £1.2million, in order to ensure that they were fit for purpose and met the current required standards. He also reported that a link to the online public consultation document would be added to the Council's website and everyone would be encouraged to submit a plea in favour of retaining the courts in Lowestoft.

Councillor M Bee reported that in 1990, there were 12 Courts within Suffolk and now in 2015, the Ministry of Justice was proposing that this be reduced to 1. If this were to happen, Suffolk would be the worst county in England for access to a court, as there would only be 1 court servicing 1,400 square miles. Suffolk's court provision would be significantly worse than nearby Norfolk and it was important that Suffolk retained sufficient services in order to function properly. The socially deprived would be the most affected if the proposed closure were to go ahead and local access to justice was vital for Suffolk. A clear message needed to be sent to the Ministry of Justice that the closure of Lowestoft Courts was not acceptable.

RESOLVED

That Council supports the retention of the Lowestoft Magistrates Court, the County Court and the Family Court in the light of the proposed closure of the Court Complex by the Ministry of Justice, which would undermine both local justice and local businesses. The Council calls on the administration to use all necessary influence and resources to support local businesses and the local

community in their campaign to ensure that the Ministry of Justice’s proposals to close the Court Complex are challenged so that this valuable facility is retained.

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 G Douce to the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

I am concerned about the rumours of increased use of zero-hours contracts at Waveney Norse. What is the Council doing to ensure that the use of zero-hours contracts is not exploitive and also not at the detriment of permanent Staff?

Response from Councillor S Ardley, Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

There is a very limited use of casual contracts within Refuse at Waveney Norse with only 11 out of the company’s 282 contracts being on this basis. Waveney Norse are aware that some staff are happy with this type of contract and some would prefer the certainty a fixed hours contract brings. Waveney Norse are actively trying to decrease the number of these contracts and have kept UNISON aware of their intentions. Waveney Norse do have highly seasonal demands in workloads which cannot currently be met without this additional flexibility. Waveney Norse try, wherever possible, to forward plan cover so staff know when they will be working in the week ahead. During peak season these roles will be full time. There has been a steady decrease in the use of casual contracts over the last 2 years and this is expected to continue.

(b) Question from A Skipper to the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

It has been brought to my attention that it appears that permanent staff in refuse collection at Waveney Norse are being assigned to green bin rounds and other staff placed on blue and black bin rounds. Naturally I am concerned that this appears to be posturing for a possible redundancy process when the green bins are cut. As a partner in the joint venture with Waveney Norse, what is the Council doing to ensure that no more jobs are lost in Waveney through the cutting of the green bin service?

Response from Councillor S Ardley, Cabinet Member for Operational Partnership & Lowestoft Rising

Waveney Norse employs refuse drivers and loaders, depending on workloads they may be allocated any type of work at any time. Waveney Norse has a track record of not having made any staff redundant in the last 2 years whilst still delivering £1.19m of financial benefits to Waveney District Council. The public sector faces enormous financial challenges ahead and unfortunately no ‘forever’ promises of employment can be given. Waveney Norse expects there to be a small reduction in work, in overall terms, in collecting organic waste when charging is introduced. It is expected

that this will be managed through natural wastage and redeployment elsewhere in the company if required.

(c) Question from A Cousin to the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

What provision is in place for the collection, re-deployment, re-cycling or disposal of unwanted green bins? Please tell us what the cost and impact of this cut will be in terms of the environment, redundancy packages, administration, billing and enforcement action in the event of non-payments?

Response from Councillor S Ardley, Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

Suffolk Waste Partnership are still discussing the adoption of a countywide approach with District Councils to the treatment of any surplus green bins. Clearly a proportion of householders may want to retain their bin for an alternative use and a proportion will be returned or collected. Excess bins may be reused, sold for reuse or as a last resort sold for recycling. Plans are being established to manage this process once final decisions are made.

Please see my previous answer to question (b) on redundancy.

Administration and billing will be promoted as an on-line process accessed through the Waveney District Council website. Alternative methods of subscription will be made available for those with accessibility difficulties.

It is envisaged that payment will be in advance for the year ahead and that if payment is not received then the existing bin will be either returned or collected. If the bin is retained by the householder then it will not be collected from the point of non-subscription. Therefore enforcement action in the event of non-payment will not be required.

(d) Question from Robert Cousin to the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

What is the projected cost for the enforcement action resulting from additional fly-tipping that may occur as a result of removing this service that many believe has already been paid for through their council taxes? I would like to know how this cost compares to the value of saving the green bin service.

Response from Councillor M Barnard

There are currently around 70 fly tip collections per month within the Waveney district. These are collected by Waveney Norse cleansing, refuse or other operational teams across the District as part of their day to day activities. Future enforcement of any additional green fly tips will continue to be made by the existing team, clearly obtaining evidence of offender's identification is highly unlikely from green waste.

Research has varied on increases in fly tips after the introduction of subscription charging elsewhere. It has been modelled that the collections of any additional fly tips would be well within the existing resources. The Council and Waveney Norse have a proven track record in managing such changes to the service and in particular the knock on effect of potential fly tipping. The closure by Suffolk County Council of the Household Waste Recycling Centres in Beccles and Southwold being an example where similar concerns were raised and all managed effectively.

(e) Question from Jenny Webber to the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Will the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee tell me why the issue of green bins being cut - and jobs potentially being put at risk has not been properly, thoroughly, and satisfactorily scrutinised at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee given the potential ramifications and costs that this may incur in the future? Will the

Overview & Scrutiny Committee also commission a full robust consultation about this matter and transparently analyse the results?

Response from Councillor S Barker

The decision to charge £42 to collect garden waste was agreed by the Waveney District Council Cabinet at their meeting held in public at Riverside on Wednesday 15th July, 2015 during an exempt (confidential) session at the end of the meeting. I was in attendance as the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, where I can ask questions but cannot vote as I am not a member of the Waveney District Council (WDC) Administration nor Cabinet. In addition, a number of Labour Councillors were in attendance and asked various questions concerning the issue to charge £42.00.

The meeting was also told by the Waveney District Council Cabinet Member that the decision was rushed, due to the fact that Suffolk County Council had made a decision at their Cabinet meeting the day before (14.7.15) in Ipswich, to reduce Recycling Performance Payments to the various Districts and Boroughs across Suffolk, which was worth £790,000 to Waveney. By the Friday (17.7.15) the information mentioned above was in the Lowestoft Journal and therefore became public knowledge.

Secondly, and quite separately, a 'Call in' on the decision made on the 15.9.15 at the WDC Cabinet meeting, was initiated by four Labour Councillors - Councillor Graham, Councillor Webb, Councillor Cherry, Councillor Gooch and also jointly (cross party) with Councillor Elliott (Beccles Green Councillor) on the basis of the following evidence:-

It was argued in the 'Call in' to the Waveney District Council administration *'that the decision to charge the £42.00 on the 15.7.15 by the WDC Cabinet was flawed due a lack of internal and external consultation on the reasons why the decisions were being taken'*. In addition, *'there had been no opportunity for the reasons within WDC to be debated nor externally to the residents of Waveney - who would be affected'* by the decision.

If the 'Call in' had been accepted, the decision would have gone to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, however the 'Call in' was rejected by the Monitoring Officer and therefore the Overview & Scrutiny Committee did not have the opportunity to scrutinize the decision to charge £42.00 for the removal of garden waste.

Going forward from today it is important that as Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, I request that a full report is brought forward to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the light of recent concerns in the wider Waveney District community as to how this new policy is to be implemented and who will monitor its effectiveness. Called a 'Post Implementation Review' this will be brought to Overview & Scrutiny Committee within the next six months.

A Councillor raised a point of order at this point in the proceedings and queried whether the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was able to add items of business to the Committee's agenda if a call-in on the matter had already been rejected. The Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer clarified that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be able to look at charging for the collection of green bins in order to see if there were any difficulties in the implementation of the decision, at least 6 months after the change. They were not able to prevent the change to charging for green bin collection being implemented.

10. SUFFOLK DEVOLUTION

The Leader of the Council presented the report and informed Members that the Chief Executive would be providing a presentation to Members regarding the issue of Suffolk Devolution. It was noted that the Expression of Interest was developed by Waveney District Council, alongside both Suffolk local government and wider public sector partners, in response to the Government's invitation to submit formal, fiscally-neutral proposals for devolved arrangements to be submitted to the Treasury by 4 September 2015, ahead of the Spending Review.

Suffolk's Leaders were collectively eager to make the most of this opportunity for Suffolk and have worked together to develop a shared ambition for devolution. This has been built on Suffolk's strong track record of collaboration and innovation, and will serve as the basis for negotiation with the government for a robust devolution deal that will deliver better outcomes for local people.

It was noted that for many years, Suffolk Councils and wider public sector partners had worked collaboratively across a number of projects such as the Suffolk Growth Strategy, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft Enterprise Zone, Business Rates Pool and Lowestoft Rising. Nationally, Suffolk has come to be respected as a place for innovation, collaboration and delivery. This was further recognised in 2014 by the granting of £3.3million from the Governments Transformation Challenge Award for the further development of Suffolk's approach to innovation and shared delivery.

There was also the recognition amongst Suffolk's public sector Leaders that as well as collaborating and working in a more integrated way, there was a need for more radical change in order to meet the forthcoming financial challenges and still effectively support local communities.

Members were informed that the Expression of Interest would form the basis for negotiation of more detailed proposals with Government throughout the autumn, with the expectation of some conclusions in the 25 November 2015 Autumn Statement. Once concluded, these will then be subject to further discussion by Full Council and the various appropriate decision making bodies of Suffolk's public sector partners.

It was noted that although the Expression of Interest was solely regarding Suffolk, the Councils had intimated that they would be willing to work in collaboration with Norfolk, particularly on the matter of growth, should the opportunity arise. Further discussions would be undertaken in this respect in due course.

Members were advised that the devolution process may necessitate the creation of a Combined Authority, which would be an additional layer of local government, which would need to make certain collective decisions. Reassurance was provided that this would not alter the powers of the individual Councils.

The timetable for the progress of the devolution agenda was currently fluid, however a meeting had been arranged for 22 October 2015 with Ministers, Civil Servants and the Councils in Suffolk. Members would be kept apprised of any developments.

A Member queried whether the Expression of Interest and Devolution would have any impact upon the third crossing for Lowestoft. Reassurance was provided that there would be no impact on the third crossing, the matter was entirely separate.

A Member raised concerns that the creation of a Combined Authority was another layer of local government, which could potentially create more difficulties and slow progress. It was reported that a Combined Authority would be a standalone body with a specific purpose and would look at issues such as transport, Enterprise Zones and growth at a very strategic level. A Combined Authority would be able to provide assurances regarding the delivery of specific objectives to central government at an early stage and should actually reduce complexity and speed up progress. By having a collective and coherent voice, the Combined Authority would be able to work effectively, efficiently and also save public money.

Reassurance was provided that each Council would have one vote on the Combined Authority, which would be taken by their Leader. The geographic size and population of each separate Council had no bearing on the number of votes that the Council could have.

With regard to voting, a Member queried whether decisions would be taken unanimously or by a majority vote. It was reported that this matter was still under discussion and advice was being sought from the Civil Servants. Further information in this respect

would be provided in due course, however it was noted that unanimous decision making was the preferred option of many Chief Executives and Leaders.

There followed some discussions regarding the fast pace of decision making and the tight deadlines involved with the Devolution process to date. It was reported that the deadlines came from central government and the tight deadlines had been difficult to meet. The importance of keeping Members updated on developments was noted and it was agreed that further briefing sessions would be arranged in order to keep all Members apprised of the situation and forthcoming issues. Members were encouraged to attend these future briefings and to ask questions, as the decisions taken were very important and the resulting reorganisation of powers would affect the District for many years to come.

The Leader of the Council reported that he wished to make an amendment to Recommendation 2 within the report. The recommendation would therefore read:

That the Council endorsed the Cabinet's recommendation that the Expression of Interest (Appendix A) formed the basis for the future detailed negotiation with Government throughout the autumn of 2015 *and the ongoing discussions with Norfolk*.

The amendment to the recommendation was moved, seconded and it was

RESOLVED

1. That Suffolk's ambition for devolution, as contained in its Expression of Interest to Government (Appendix A) be endorsed.
2. That the Council endorsed the Cabinet's recommendation that the Expression of Interest (Appendix A) formed the basis for the future detailed negotiation with Government throughout the autumn of 2015 and the ongoing discussions with Norfolk.
3. That following negotiations with Government, the proposed devolved arrangements will be subject to consideration by Full Council.

11. JOINT FOOD AND HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2015/16

The Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety presented the report which sought approval of the Food and Health & Safety Service Plan for 2015/16. It was noted that the Council was required to produce a Food and Health & Safety Service Plan in the format prescribed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in its Framework Agreement on Local Authority Law Enforcement and as required by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), as set out in the new National Local Authority Enforcement Code – Health & Safety at Work England, Scotland and Wales. The Service Plan must be submitted for Member approval and must be reviewed to identify the Council's performance against the Service Plan, any variance from the plan and areas for improvement in the service.

Members were advised that there were 1,200 Food Premises and 2,200 Businesses in Waveney which required inspection and other responsibilities of the team included ship inspections, infectious diseases and outbreaks of food poisoning.

It was noted that in the three years that the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme had been in operation, there had been a 51% increase in the number of premises achieving the highest rating of 5, which was very good standards of hygiene. The Team had also been involved in Food Hygiene training and ran regular courses for small businesses and bespoke training for a major local employer.

The Team would also be working with colleagues across the county on the introduction of a Healthier Food Award Scheme, which would encourage businesses to provide healthy food choices for their customers as part of a Public Health Suffolk initiative supporting the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing agenda.

A Member queried whether there were sufficient staff to carry out all of the work identified in the Service Plan. The Head of Environmental Services & Port Health confirmed that there were sufficient staff, however if there was a large outbreak of a notifiable illness or food poisoning, there would be an increase in demand on the service, which was hard to predict. However it was felt that there was sufficient resilience within the Service.

A Member commented that the Food and Health & Safety Service Plan had been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Committee had supported the recommendations contained within the report.

RESOLVED

1. That the Food and Health & Safety performance against the Service Plan for 2014/15 be noted.
2. That the Service Plan for 2015/16 be adopted.

12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2014/15 AND MID YEAR REPORT 2015/16

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Welfare Reforms presented the report and advised Members that the Treasury Management Policy Statement required both an annual and a mid-year report to be produced by 30 September 2015, and approved by Council. The report reviewed the performance of the Treasury Management function, including prudential indicators, in 2014/15, and a mid-year view of the first half of 2015/16.

The report outlined the economic background within which the Council had operated, and set out the Council's borrowing and investment activity over the previous year.

The 2014/15 summary showed that investments totalled £23.6m as at 31 March 2015. Interest received during the year totalled £162k compared to £86k in 2013/14, and the Council had maintained its policy of investing short term rather than longer term, due to market conditions. During 2014/15, £4m of short term borrowing for the London Road North Complex had been replaced by a long term Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan, as planned. The loans portfolio totalled £93.22m, as at 31 March 2015, of which £78.4m related to the Housing Revenue Account.

The Council had held an average cash balance of £24.1m during the year and received investment income of £162k, realising an average rate of 0.44% in liquidity accounts (instant access) and 0.97% in fixed term deposits. As at 31 August 2015 the Council held £32.7m of investments, and interest received totalled £74.7k.

The report concluded that the Council had operated its Treasury Management function within the prescribed Treasury Management Policy and Prudential Indicators for 2014/15 and for the first half of 2015/16. The Council had maintained a healthy cash balance during 2015/16 to date, and ensured that an improved interest rate return had been achieved.

With regard to short term investments, reassurance was provided that any investments made by the Council were based upon professional advice, which was received on a daily basis. Any money that was invested was put into banks and building societies with the highest ratings for financial security, based on the professional advice received. It was noted that interest rates were difficult to predict, therefore investments were made on a short term basis, in order to protect the Councils funds.

A Member queried whether any financial modelling had been undertaken, in case there was a significant upturn in the price of oil. It was reported that the financial advice

received covered these sorts of issues and included an assessment of the current and future UK and world economy.

Members took the opportunity to thank the Chief Financial Officer and her team for their ongoing hard work and support for the Council.

RESOLVED

1. That the Annual Report on the Council's Treasury Management activity for 214/15 incorporating the Mid Year review for 2015/16 be approved.
2. That the Prudential Indicators Outturn position for 2014/15 in Appendix A be noted.

13. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Cabinet Member for Resources & Welfare Reforms introduced the report which advised that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) recommended an annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance. Governance was about how the Council ensured that it was doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. The Cabinet Member reported that there had been no revised guidance since the last review of the Code in June 2014, and so little had changed since Members last saw the document.

The Code identified six core principles against which local authorities should review their existing corporate governance arrangements and develop and maintain a local code of governance. Each of the core principles had a number of supporting principles, which in turn translated into a range of specific requirements that applied across the range of Council business.

RESOLVED

That the revised Code of Corporate Governance in Appendix A be adopted.

14. MEMBER QUESTIONS

- (a) Question from Councillor I Graham to the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

National figures have shown an increase in the last two years of flytipping. Can you inform the Council as to the flytipping situation in Waveney, the costs involved to remove it, and the number of prosecutions resulting from flytipping over the years 2013/14 and 2014/15?

Response from Councillor S Ardley

Local authorities are required to provide data on flytipping to the Environment Agency on a monthly basis so that trends can be monitored and the costs associated with its clearance calculated.

In 2013/14 the Council received 577 complaints about flytipping ranging from a single item to the equivalent of a tipper lorry load. The cost of clearance was just under £37,000. There were no prosecutions in this period but 17 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued through the Council's incident ticketing system and a number of warning letters were sent.

In 2014/15 there were 784 complaints about flytipping costing just under £49,000 to clear. During this period there were no prosecutions but 40 enforcement actions were taken including 19 Fixed Penalty Notices.

Waveney Norse is contracted by the Council to clear waste that has been flytipped on public land and to investigate and take enforcement action where there is sufficient

evidence to do so. Details of all complaints received are captured and an assessment of the waste is made and this information is then used in the Council's monthly statistical return to the Environment Agency. Wherever possible, waste that is flytipped on public land is removed by Waveney Norse as part of their routine street cleaning and cleansing service.

Further work is being undertaken by Waveney Norse to review current arrangements and carry out refresher training for staff on the incident ticketing system which provides evidence to support the service of Fixed Penalty Notices. I should add that Waveney Norse cannot deal with fly tipping on private land, it is the responsibility of the land owner to deal with it. If the land owner asked Waveney Norse to collect the rubbish, they would have to pay for the service.

Supplementary Question from Councillor I Graham

As the figures for fly tipping continue to increase, can we educate the public about how much it costs them for the Council to clear up the mess? Maybe have an article in the 'In Touch' magazine?

Response from Councillor S Ardley

Yes, I agree and I will look into writing an article for 'In Touch'. We need to have an ongoing education programme but it is only a small minority of people who fly tip. However I do think that we need to have an emphasis on the need to report fly tipping and we could set up an anonymous system in case the public were fearful of repercussions. In order to have a successful prosecution for fly tipping we need to have evidence and that is hard to obtain.

(b) Question from Councillor S Barker to the Leader of the Council

On 24th/25th July 2015 the residents of Pakefield and Carlton Colville suffered disruption and heartbreak due to flooding with 30 households severely affected – this terrible incident has cost many families not only their treasured possessions but also their peace of mind and security. A report is being undertaken by Suffolk County Council, led by Councillor Matthew Hicks, under the auspices of the Flood & Water Management Act of 2012. Can the Leader of the Council share with us the evidence his administration is submitting to the investigation and what solutions are being promoted by WDC to ensure that this distressing incident does not reoccur?

Response from Councillor C Law

Council officers have had extensive contact with the Suffolk County Council (SCC) team that is carrying out investigations into these events, and also with representatives of Anglian Water and the Environment Agency, all of whom have responsibilities and / or powers regarding management of pipes and / or water courses on the length of Kirkley stream, which is the watercourse that flows through both affected locations. Officers have shared information supplied by members of the public of recent and historic flooding events with SCC and have encouraged local communities to contact SCC direct with information. The Council has no direct role in the management of pipes or watercourses along Kirkley Stream other than potential riparian responsibilities over a short section of watercourse in Carlton Colville. The Council is pressing all organisations with a role in management of Kirkley stream to ensure that all undertakings regarding works and investigations given at recent public and officer meetings are delivered in a timely fashion and that preventative measures are put in place to reduce the risk and impact of a recurrence.

Supplementary Question from Councillor S Barker

What advice can Waveney District Council give to these residents in case there is another flooding event this winter?

Response from Councillor C Law

The Emergency Planning Team will keep residents informed of any developments and will provide advice and support, as appropriate. As a Suffolk County Councillor, representing the Pakefield Division, you are well placed to press the County Council for a report on this issue and to make sure that all of the remedial works that need to take place are indeed completed.

(c) Question from Councillor A Green to the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising

The Cabinet's decision on 15 July 2015 to charge for the organic waste collection has caused some disquiet in the community. How many of the 55,200 households that are currently serviced is it anticipated will opt-in to the chargeable fortnightly service?

Response from Councillor S Ardley

It is reasonable to expect that initial take up of the chargeable service would be lower than the coverage achieved by the free service. This is very difficult to predict but prudently we have estimated post charge participation could initially be in the range of 25% to 30% of households. Based on past experience elsewhere, involvement would then be expected to increase over time to c. 40% or higher particularly if marketing were used to increase awareness of the benefits of the service during the first three years.

There was no Supplementary Question on this occasion, as any concerns about possible future redundancies had been covered during the responses to the earlier Public Questions.

(d) Question from Councillor L Gooch to the Leader of the Council

What is the administration doing to address the impending resettlement of refugees?

Response from Councillor Law

The Administration is fully engaged and working together with our colleagues elsewhere in Suffolk to properly and appropriately support refugees coming to the UK, and specifically to Suffolk. The national response through central government is still developing but we are liaising with them and the Local Government Association in terms of our preparations. We also already have in place agreement in Suffolk to co-ordinate the reception of refugees. I am particularly heartened by the various offers, both in Waveney and Suffolk Coastal, from private individuals offering space in their homes. At this stage we are referring such offers to the various charitable organisations and would encourage all Ward Councillors to do the same if they receive similar requests.

Supplementary Question from Councillor L Gooch

How are we able to assist those constituents who are willing to offer accommodation for the Syrian refugees?

Response from Councillor C Law

At present there was insufficient information from central government about the number of Syrian refugees, their needs or what funding was available to help support them. The Public Sector Leaders had also discussed the matter and until the information was available from central government there was little that could be done at this stage. After further discussions, the Leader stated that he had requested the Chief Executive to circulate a briefing note to all Councillors regarding the Syrian refugees issue, so that Members could give a consistent response to any queries from their constituents.

(e) Question from Councillor J Murray to the Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety

Since the last Waveney District Council meeting in July 2015 Southwold Hospital has closed due to staff shortages and concerns about patient safety. During the recent consultation on the proposed closures of Southwold Hospital and Patrick Stead Hospital, the Chief Executive of Health East, Andy Evans (Gt. Yarmouth & Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group) sought to reassure concerned residents that “the closure of Southwold Hospital will not happen until the new facilities in the local community are ready”. What representations has Councillor Rudd made to Mr Andy Evans on behalf of the local community regarding the closure of Southwold Hospital?

Response from Councillor M Rudd

Southwold Hospital is not permanently closed, the decision on the future of the hospital will be made by the CCG Governing Body at their meeting in public on Thursday, 5 November 2015. East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH) has announced the temporary suspension of new inpatient admissions to Southwold Hospital on the grounds of patient safety due to shortages of trained nursing staff across all four community hospitals.

Admissions to Southwold Hospital were temporarily suspended for three months from Friday 14 August 2015 as a result of nursing staff shortages. ECCH will review the position in early November.

The remaining three community hospitals – Beccles, Northgate and Patrick Stead in Halesworth – will remain open to admissions, but due to the staff shortages, will be running at reduced capacity, adjusting bed numbers depending on safe staffing levels. The staff from Southwold, including nurses, healthcare assistants and estates, will be temporarily relocated to one of the other community hospitals.

Having spoken to NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group, I am confident that the temporary closure of Southwold hospital is an operational decision taken on the grounds of patient safety and that this decision is in no way related to the decision to be made by the CCG Governing Body at their meeting in November. Officers are briefing me regularly on the situation.

I can assure that my colleagues who represent Southwold are keeping a watchful eye on this together with Southwold Town Council. I will also mention that Great Yarmouth and Waveney Health Scrutiny committee will be meeting at Riverside on Friday 13 November 2015 and the main topic will be HealthEast Shape of the System.

Supplementary Question from Councillor J Murray

Local people are extremely concerned at the temporary closure of Southwold Hospital and the recent closure of Carlton Court. The people were promised that Carlton Court would not be closed until additional beds were available at Northgate Hospital. Those extra beds have not been provided and yet Carlton Court was closed. How can we ensure that this doesn't happen again with Southwold Hospital?

Response from Councillor M Rudd

I will continue to raise this matter with Andy Evans from the Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group. I am unable to alter their plans but I will continue to have dialogue with them and raise your concerns.

(f) Question from Councillor S Logan to the Leader of the Council

It has been widely reported that the company Mouchel based in Woking has been given the task of researching and submitting the business case for the 3rd Crossing in Lowestoft to the Government. Mouchel's company slogan is `Building Good Relationships`. How is Mouchel going to build good relationships to enable the company to gather the

information it needs from local businesses, local elected representatives and the local community to enable the company to submit a successful business case?

Response from Councillor Law

Lowestoft has the best opportunity it has ever had to secure the prize of a third crossing following the Government's decision to invest significant funds for the development of a business case that can demonstrate the value for money of a new crossing. The Department for Transport has imposed a challenging time table for the submission of an outline business case, which must be completed by the end of 2015.

Alongside Suffolk County Council, as scheme promoter, and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, Mouchel understand absolutely that it is a prerequisite for the delivery of a new crossing that the project is supported by the people who live and work in Lowestoft. There was public consultation about a third crossing during study work in 2014. From this consultation it was clear that there is a desire for a third crossing and strong opinions were expressed about its location. On that basis, it is unlikely that there will be a re-run of a public consultation exercise during this initial period of business case development. Wider public engagement is more likely however at the next stage of scheme development when more detailed design work will take place. In the immediate term however there is further stakeholder engagement, particularly with the business community because a key element of the business case will be to demonstrate how a third crossing will bring significant benefit to the Lowestoft economy.

In particular the County Council and Mouchel are developing a number of consultation and communication routes to support the development of the economic business case. The planned consultations are specifically focussed towards collection of information linked to development of the economic business case. The Lowestoft & Waveney and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce have also been asked to consult with and draw together information from local businesses. An online business survey is open until 30th September 2015 and a Consultation Event attended by Mouchel has been arranged for 24th September 2015. I also understand a meeting for locally elected members, to be attended by Mouchel, is being planned for October 2015 and an information website is nearing completion.

Supplementary Question from Councillor S Logan

How many people and businesses are anticipated to participate in this consultation and will these views be made public?

Response from Councillor C Law

The consultation is being arranged by the Lowestoft and Waveney and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce. They are going to gather all of the information together and feed it back as appropriate. The information will then be sent to Mouchel via Suffolk County Council.

The meeting was concluded at 8.25 pm

Chairman