

Minutes of the Council meeting held at Riverside, Canning Road, Lowestoft
on **Wednesday, 24 January 2018** at **6.30 pm**.

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Members present:

F Mortimer (Chairman), S Ardley, P Ashdown, E Back, S Barker, M Barnard, M Bee, N Brooks, P Byatt, A Cackett, G Catchpole, J Ceresa, M Cherry, Y Cherry, L Coulam, J Craig, G Elliott, T Gandy, T Goldson, L Gooch, I Graham, K Grant, A Green, J Groom, M Ladd, P Light, T Mortimer, J Murray, L Nicholls, K Patience, B Provan, C Punt, T Reynolds, D Ritchie, C Rivett, M Rudd, J Smith, K Springall, C Topping and S Woods.

Officers present:

S Baker (Chief Executive), H Javadi (Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer), N Khan (Strategic Director), A Mills (Strategic Manager for Anglia Revenues Partnership), H Slater (Monitoring Officer & Head of Legal and Democratic Services), S Taylor (Finance Manager & Deputy S151 Officer), A Wellham (Senior Accountant) and N Wotton (Democratic Services Manager)

Others present:

S Cox – Member of the Independent Remuneration Panel
K Forster – Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel
I Holden – Member of the Independent Remuneration Panel
T Osmanski – Chairman of East Coast Community Healthcare
T Sullivan – Mental Health Ambassador for Lowestoft
J Williams – Chief Executive of East Coast Community Healthcare

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting. In particular, he welcomed Councillor P Byatt, newly elected Councillor for the Kirkley Ward and Councillor L Coulam, newly elected Councillor for the St Margaret's Ward, to their first Full Council meeting. He also welcomed guests T Sullivan, T Osmanski and J Williams who would be providing health related presentations during the meeting.

It was noted that item 12 on the agenda was a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Chairman therefore welcomed Karen Forster IRP Chairman, Sandra Cox and Ivor Holden to the meeting. In respect of the financial reports on the agenda, it was reported that the Chief Finance Officer, Finance Manager and Senior Accountant were in attendance, as well as the Strategic Manager from the Anglia Revenues Partnership.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Allen, J Ford, M Pitchers, K Robinson, L Smith, N Webb and S Webb.

Apologies were also received from Councillors T Reynolds and K Springall, as they would need to leave the meeting early, for personal reasons.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barker declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest in Item 12 – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as she was a former colleague of S Cox, who was a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Councillor Graham declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest during the consideration of Item 16 – Capital Programme, as he was the Mayor of Lowestoft and Lowestoft Town Council were in receipt of some grant funding from the Council.

Councillor Ritchie declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest in Item 12 – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as he was an acquaintance of S Cox, who was a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel, and he had worked alongside her to support the Fisher Theatre in Bungay.

In response to a query from a Member, the Monitoring Officer provided advice that it was unnecessary for Councillors to declare any interests in Item 12 – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel. The Council was allowed to debate the recommendations made by the Panel, in respect of the Members Allowance Scheme.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

Holocaust Memorial Day

The Chairman of the Council announced that Holocaust Memorial Day would be taking place on Friday, 26 January 2018 at 10.30 am in Station Square, Lowestoft. The theme for this year was ‘Words’. All Councillors were encouraged to attend this event.

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

The Leader of the Council advised that he had attended the recent funeral service of Daphne Mellor, who was Chairman of the Council in 1981. He had also taken the Chairman’s chains to the funeral as a mark of respect, on behalf of the current Chairman of the Council, who had been unable to attend.

6. NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) A Notice of Motion had been received from Councillor G Elliott:

‘This Council notes with shock and sadness the report that reveals the River Waveney has the highest levels of neonicotinoid pollution in the country.

The Council also notes that no Environmental Quality Standards have been set for neonicotinoid pollution and that the Environment Agency does not know what the impact of neonicotinoid pollution is on aquatic life.

This Council resolves, therefore, to write to the Secretary of State to urge that:-

- there is regular and systematic testing of neonicotinoids in our rivers, to monitor the levels and the impact of this pollution
- urgent measures are put in place to return our water bodies to a good condition
- he proceed with a total ban of neonicotinoid use both outdoors and in greenhouses as soon as possible
- that even before such a ban comes into force, better information is given to farmers and growers who are responsible for their use, about levels of these pollutants in waterways.’

In accordance with the Council’s Constitution, it was proposed and seconded “That the Motion be discussed immediately.” On it being put to the Vote the Motion was **CARRIED** and the Motion was therefore duly discussed.

Councillor Elliott advised that he had been extremely saddened to note the high levels of nicotinoid pollution in the River Waveney, which came from insecticides. The high levels were worrying, as it was not yet known what the ‘safe’ levels should be. The River Waveney was used for a variety of leisure pursuits and was a major part of the tourist economy and should therefore be protected. The nicotinoids were affecting all insects including bees and it would also affect other wildlife including birds and fish, which fed on insects.

The Leader of the Council reported that he was happy to support the motion. The Council should do as much as possible to protect the local heritage and the environment for future generations. He confirmed that he would involve Councillor Elliott in the composition of the letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Michael Gove.

Councillor Ritchie updated Members on a recent letter released by the Environment Agency, which confirmed that there was no official guidance on the safe level of neonicotinoids. It was also unclear as to whether there would be any adverse affects to wildlife caused by these chemicals, however should positive evidence be provided that they did cause a negative affect, then the appropriate action would be taken. Members noted that significant work was already underway to minimise the run off from farm land into rivers, which would help to reduce overall pollution levels. It was also reported that neonicotinoids had not been used on sugar beet for the last 10 years, however the situation was being closely monitored and scientific data was being gathered to inform future decisions.

Councillor Barker stated that the pollution levels in the River Waveney were a key issue for the District. Although the source of the pollution was thought to be farming, individuals could also help by checking any weed killers or insecticides bought for use in the home did

not contain these specific chemicals. She felt that the Environment Agency should be congratulated for their work in highlighting and monitoring this important issue. The need to ensure the correct regulations and legislation were maintained in the future was noted, to preserve the environment for future generations and to keep people safe.

Councillor Graham proposed an amendment to the motion at this point in the proceedings, to *'Call upon all of the Council's suppliers to stop using neonicotinoids and to encourage all Town and Parish Councils in the District to stop their use too.'* This was duly seconded by Councillor Barker.

There followed some discussion regarding the proposed amendment and it was felt that the inclusion of the amendment may weaken the overall message of the motion. It was noted that the situation was going to be closely monitored and the matter could be brought back to Full Council for further consideration, if required. Councillor Graham duly agreed that his proposed amendment to the motion be **WITHDRAWN**.

It was therefore unanimously resolved

RESOLVED

1. That the Notice of Motion was unanimously approved by Full Council.
2. That the Leader of the Council would write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to raise the concerns of the Council to urge that:-
 - there is regular and systematic testing of neonicotinoids in our rivers, to monitor the levels and the impact of this pollution
 - urgent measures are put in place to return our water bodies to a good condition
 - he proceed with a total ban of neonicotinoid use both outdoors and in greenhouses as soon as possible
 - that even before such a ban comes into force, better information is given to farmers and growers who are responsible for their use, about levels of these pollutants in waterways.

(b) A Notice of Motion had been received from Councillor L Gooch:

`In view of the scientific evidence of the growing problem of waste produced by single-use plastics, this Council calls for the introduction of a campaign by Waveney District Council to encourage local businesses to offer discounts for customers using reusable cups or containers.`

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, it was proposed and seconded "That the Motion be discussed immediately." On it being put to the Vote the Motion was **CARRIED** and the Motion was therefore duly discussed.

Councillor Barker raised concerns about the large number of plastic cups which were being discarded on a daily basis and the need to encourage recycling. She stated that plastic cups should be made easier to recycle or reusable items should be encouraged as an alternative. Concern was raised that there should be a binding target to increase recycling, as action needed to be taken today to reduce the current level of waste.

The Leader of the Council reported that he supported this motion and was proud that the Council had a positive record for undertaking important and ethical campaigns. It was noted that Waveney had had cross party support to be the first Council to support Fair Trade and Lowestoft was also the first Fair Trade Town in Suffolk. It was important to support all initiatives to reduce waste and encourage recycling. It was noted that the Council needed to work carefully with the plastic manufacturers in the district, who were significant employers, to encourage innovative ways of working for the future.

Councillor Elliott reiterated that it was better to reuse items rather than to recycle them, however the amount of waste being produced needed to decrease and supporting these schemes and initiatives could make a real difference.

Councillor Graham reported that Lowestoft Town Council would soon be moving into their new offices, which would be environmentally friendly. There would be no disposable cups, a drinking fountain would be installed and the toilets would use less water, when being flushed.

Councillor Gooch stated that the Council had a duty of care to manage and maintain the local environment, and had a guardianship role in order to protect the environment for future generations. Educating everyone about the need to stop littering was also important, for young and old alike.

RESOLVED

1. That the Notice of Motion was unanimously approved by Full Council.
2. That Waveney District Council would encourage local businesses to offer discounts for customers using reusable cups or containers.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

With the agreement of Full Council, the Chairman changed the order of business to enable the other agenda items to be considered prior to receiving Members' Questions.

8. PETITIONS

No Petitions had been received.

9. QUESTIONS FROM THE ELECTORATE

No Questions from the Electorate had been received.

10. PRESENTATION ON THE POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH MANIFESTO FOR LOWESTOFT FROM TOD SULLIVAN, MENTAL HEALTH AMBASSADOR FOR LOWESTOFT, LOWESTOFT RISING

The Chairman welcomed Tod Sullivan, Mental Health Ambassador for Lowestoft, to the meeting and invited his presentation on the Positive Mental Health Manifesto for Lowestoft.

It was noted that the Manifesto was created in collaborative partnership with a number of organisations and the local community in Lowestoft. Mental Health issues were often invisible and many people were suffering in silence and not asking for help. Mr Sullivan and his colleagues looked at how other areas in the UK and further afield were addressing Mental Health and found that rather than having care homes for Mental Health, there should be 'care communities'. The Manifesto had commenced a number of initiatives such as 'Community Connectors' to help link isolated people and reduce loneliness, which is a major contributor to ill health.

It was reported that people did not need a clinical diagnosis in order to be suffering from mental health issues, many people suffered at a lower level and were able to manage it for themselves. There were also many issues associated with those people who had obtained a mental health diagnosis, which was often a challenge in itself, due to labelling, public perception and associated stigma.

Members were updated that the most common cause of mental health problems was developmental trauma, often experienced during childhood. Children whose parents were divorced, in jail, living with addictions would have significantly different outcomes, when compared to those children whose parents did not have those difficulties. Studies had shown that children who had experienced that kind of adversity were negatively impacted in their later life and were more likely to have health issues, to attempt suicide, end up in prison or do poorly at school. The chemical response released by the brain at times of stress, fear or trauma was unhelpful and made it more difficult for people to cope with difficult situations. Further studies had shown that a community based response was the most effective way to mitigate developmental trauma, which included schools, businesses and faith groups. Talking about issues was a really effective way to support traumatised people and their local community around them were best placed to assist with this process.

Lowestoft was similar to many other seaside towns in the UK, with high levels of deprivation and a large proportion of their population being prescribed anti-depressants. It was noted that poor mental health made children less likely to engage in education and residents of seaside towns often found a lack of opportunity. There needed to be a change whereby the local community was able to be aspirational, to pursue happiness and become more active, whereby people would begin to support each other and community cohesion would increase. Work was underway to recruit Champions to help encourage people to go on Wellbeing Walks. It was possible for Lowestoft to become a leading light in dealing with trauma care, in the future.

Mr Sullivan was involved in arranging a Mental Health Annual Conference for 2018 and it was anticipated that over 300 people would be in attendance. A further conference would be arranged for carers. A wide range of speakers would be attending and the events were helping to put Lowestoft on the map for positive mental health.

The Cabinet Member for Tourism & Economic Development reported that this was an extremely important issue, of which he was very supportive. Mental health was raised at the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee meetings and there had been a recent video involving Children and Mental Health (CAMHS) and Healthwatch Suffolk. He queried whether Mr Sullivan could work closely with the current mental health work underway in West Suffolk? It was confirmed that Mr Sullivan was already working with

West Suffolk as one of the partners. Work was also underway submitting bids for funding further research in Lowestoft.

The Leader of the Council thanked Mr Sullivan for sharing his personal experiences in the presentation and commended the work he had undertaken in raising awareness of mental health issues. It was important to support those people suffering from mental health issues and it was noted that Lowestoft Rising was created following the suicide of a local woman at Battery Green car park and the deaths of her children. The opportunity for local people to access simple, basic activities, such as those provided at the Care Farm, were extremely important and beneficial to people's mental health. The Leader queried whether the Council could help to support this work or whether it could do more as an employer? Mr Sullivan reported that there were several community groups in operation such as pathways and men's sheds and it was important to let individual group evolve over time, to meet the needs of their local communities, rather than being too prescriptive. Exercise was also very beneficial for all and a number of wellbeing walks were arranged to assist. Intergenerational projects were also important, such as Park Run.

Councillor Graham, Mayor of Lowestoft, reported that Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) was committed to making the residents of Lowestoft more active. Therefore LTC had agreed to allow residents free use of the bowls, tennis and cricket facilities in Lowestoft in the next municipal year. Mr Sullivan reported that he welcomed this news and that he would be happy to be involved in working more closely with Lowestoft Town Council on other initiatives.

Councillor Byatt commented that mental health was a serious issue which was often overlooked, particularly in the case of people who were hospitalised for long periods of time. He queried how Waveney District Council could assist in improving mental health, bearing in mind that Waveney had 2 of the most deprived Wards in the UK. Mr Sullivan reported that he would accept all offers of help to support positive mental health. However individuals dealt with trauma and mental health issues in different ways, a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder could have far worse mental health issues than someone who had lost three limbs. Each situation was different. Phil Aves from Lowestoft Rising was also committed to helping improve mental health locally and he would be working with Mr Sullivan to reduce the stigma of mental health and work with partner organisations, wherever possible.

Councillor Cackett commented that many young carers had mental health issues and she queried what help was available for the families and friends of people suffering with poor mental health. Mr Sullivan confirmed that he would be attending a young carer's event shortly to offer his help and support. In respect of helping others with their mental health, it was important to provide a safe and secure environment in order to help them speak about their concerns and to reduce their isolation. The Mental Health Manifesto had an 'able-ism agenda' to help people to help themselves and communities were best placed to facilitate this.

The Chairman of the Council thanked Mr Sullivan for his interesting presentation. It was noted that should any Councillors have any questions about mental health, which they had not been able to ask at the meeting, their questions should be forwarded to the Democratic Services Manager, who would send them on to Mr Sullivan outside of the meeting.

N.B. Councillor Reynolds left the meeting during this item.

11. PRESENTATION ON THE EAST COAST COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE (ECCH) AND THE NORFOLK AND WAVENEY SUSTAINABILITY TRANSFORMATION PLAN FROM JONATHAN WILLIAMS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF ECCH, AND TONY OSMANSKI, CHAIRMAN OF ECCH

The Chairman welcomed Tony Osmanski, Chairman of East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH), and Jonathan Williams, Chief Executive of ECCH to the meeting and invited their joint presentation on ECCH and the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability Transformation Plan.

Mr Osmanski provided an update on how ECCH was structured and worked with partner organisations to deliver community healthcare in Norfolk and Suffolk. ECCH had a £35million turnover, had around 900 staff and commissioned a wide range of health services including Adult Services, Children and Family Services, Health Improvement Services and Primary Care. Members noted ECCH's strategy to deliver high quality, professionally led services that support and sustain the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Members were updated on the strategic challenges and opportunities which they current faced, including:

- Health and Social Care resources and finance
- Workforce Planning and Development
- Transformation and Integration across sectors and organisations
- Lack of legislative structure for STPs
- Partnerships and Alliances
- Health and Wellbeing role of district councils
- Public Engagement

Mr Williams advised that he was currently a State Registered Nurse (SRN) and had brought his wealth of experience of the health service and its operational organisation to his role as Chief Executive. The aim was to bring together the lead people from a variety of organisations in order to find new and improved ways of working. It was noted that the Health Service had no choice but to work together in new and innovative ways, in order to meet the needs of the population. In the future, many staff would need to work across several organisations, rather than working in isolation, and a more integrated approach would be very beneficial. There was a strong commitment from all staff to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community and future generations.

A Member commented that the NHS needed to use more digital technology, so that patients with long term or chronic conditions should be able to monitor their condition using Apps on their smartphones, which would then link directly to their GP, providing regular updates on the management of their condition. It was confirmed that nurses already had mobile technology in order to access patient information securely and safely and it was hoped that patients would be able to share their data with their GP practices, in this way, in the future.

A Member queried how the NHS really worked and how different services linked together such as GPs, the ambulance service, care homes, A&E etc. It was reported that there was a very helpful video available on YouTube which explained how the NHS worked, in a very

easy to understand way. It was noted that parts of the NHS were working more closely together and had had a shared management team, rather like the shared working arrangements for Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils. However, the NHS was lagging behind in terms of new ways of working, when compared to many large public organisations. Recently, the James Paget Hospital had issued a red alert, which meant it was at high risk and was receiving a large number of patients. It was reported that James Paget was part of a wider healthcare system and as such, other parts of the healthcare system were able to offer help at this difficult time, to help reduce the number of patients at the hospital.

A Member highlighted an issue which they had experienced recently, whereby patient information had not been shared between a GP and a physiotherapist, which had resulted in a 6 week delay in receiving the results of an x-ray. It was reported that this delay had been unnecessary and was regrettable, however work was continuing to help reduce these sorts of delays and increase joined up working.

The Chairman of the Council thanked Mr Osmani and Mr Williams for their informative and interesting presentation. It was noted that the Government Agenda was to bring together social care and health, which would be challenging. However, the need for fusion and closer working throughout the health service would lead to improved and more efficient health services in the longer term.

It was noted that should any Councillors have any questions about ECCH, that they had not been able to ask at the meeting, their questions should be forwarded to the Democratic Services Manager, who would send them on to Mr Osmani and Mr Williams outside of the meeting.

N.B. Councillor Springall left the meeting during this item.

12. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Chairman of the Council introduced Mrs Forster, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), to the meeting and invited her to present her report to the Full Council.

Mrs Forster advised that the IRP had also consisted of Mrs Cox and Mr Holden. The Panel had met on a number of occasions to consider the Members Allowances Scheme. The Members Allowances Scheme had last been reviewed by the IRP in 2015 and at that time it had been recommended that the Scheme should be reviewed further at the end of 2017, to ensure that the Scheme was still relevant and fit for purpose. In 2015, the IRP had recommended that the Basic Allowance should be increased, as the Basic Allowance paid to Waveney Councillors was the lowest in East Anglia. However, Full Council had decided not to accept the recommendations of the IRP on that occasion and instead decided to award Councillors a one off £1,000 contribution towards their IT costs.

During 2017, the IRP reviewed the allowances for Waveney Councillors. It was noted that their Basic Allowance was the lowest in all of Norfolk and Suffolk and was one of the lowest amounts in the UK. The recommendations from the IRP were outlined within the report, however it was recommended that the Basic Allowance be increased to £4,787.57 which would bring it in line with the Basic Allowance paid at Suffolk Coastal District Council. It was noted that both Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils were working very closely together and this would increase over time, culminating with the creation of a new Council for East Suffolk. In particular, a Shadow Authority would be created during 2018 and there was a significant disparity between the Basic Allowances of

the two Councils which, in the opinion of the IRP, needed to be addressed, as the Councillors were undertaking the same work.

As part of the review process, all Councillors were invited to respond to a questionnaire and 4 Councillors had been interviewed in detail, on a cross-party basis, to find out more information about their roles and responsibilities and whether their workloads had been increasing over time. It was noted that the interviewed Councillors were:

- Councillor M Bee – Leader of the Council / Cabinet Chair / Conservative Member
- Councillor S Ardley – Deputy Leader of the Council / Cabinet member for Communities & Merger / Conservative Member
- Councillor S Barker – Labour Group Leader (main Opposition Group Leader)
- Councillor T Gandy – Backbench Member / Labour Member

During discussions, it was felt that the workload involved with being a Councillor had increased over time and was not therefore adequately reflected in the current level of Basic Allowance being paid to Waveney Councillors.

The IRP also looked at the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) that were payable to Councillors for undertaking specific roles such as Leader of the Council, Chairman of a Committee and Chairman of the Council. It was noted that the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council roles had increased significantly due to the creation of a new Council for East Suffolk and there also needed to be parity with the SRAs at Suffolk Coastal.

The IRP also felt that the Vice Chairmen of the Committees needed to receive some payment for undertaking their role. Also, they decided that the Chairman of the Licensing Committee should be paid the same amount as the other Committee Chairmen, rather than a reduced amount, as was currently the case.

Members were informed that the IRP had also reviewed the newly created position of Deputy Cabinet Members and advised that they should receive an SRA in recognition of the additional responsibility, training and experience that these Councillors would gain. Their roles were essential to succession planning and building resilience within the Cabinet. It was felt that the role of Deputy Cabinet Member was of a similar level to that of a Vice Chairman of a Committee.

The IRP had wished to differentiate between a carer's allowance for adult and child dependents. They had recommended that for dependents requiring specialist care, a maximum of £20 per hour could be claimed, per carer/nurse, for actual costs incurred. Up to date prices were sought for the provision of babysitting and child minding and it was proposed that a maximum of £10 per hour could be claimed, unless it was provided free of charge under a government scheme, for actual costs incurred.

The IRP reported that as the Members Allowance Scheme had not been increased for many years, they felt that the proposed Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances, if approved, should be back dated to 1 April 2017. A full summary of the proposed increases was included within the report.

Mrs Forster took the opportunity to thank the Councillors who had taken part in the questionnaires and interviews, as well as the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Manager for their support during the review.

The Leader of the Council thanked the IRP Members for their hard work during this review. It was noted that a significant review of the Members Allowance Scheme had taken place in 2004, however no increases in the Members Allowance Scheme had been awarded since that time, therefore the Members Allowances at Waveney were significantly lower than at other Councils. He reported that approving an increase in Members Allowances would never be a popular decision, however it needed to be done now, as the Council was working towards the new Council for East Suffolk. There needed to be parity between the two councils and it would not be appropriate to wait until the new Council was established in 2019. Members noted that the new Council for East Suffolk would have fewer Councillors – approximately 55 in total, compared to 98 from the 2 councils currently.

Councillors working for the new East Suffolk Council would have greater responsibility and more constituents and a new Members Allowance Scheme would need to be created for the new Council, in due course. Members were advised that as well as approving an increase in the Members Allowance Scheme, there were other 2 recommendations contained within the report. These included a proposal to increase the fee paid to the IRP Members for undertaking a review of the Members Allowance Scheme and to grant the IRP permission to undertake reviews of the Members Allowance Scheme for Town and Parish Councils within Waveney. The recommendations within the report were duly proposed and seconded.

A Member queried the proposed increase in the payment to the IRP Members for undertaking a review. It was confirmed that £100 per meeting was proposed which would bring the payments they received in line with those paid by other Councils. It was noted that each meeting was a minimum of 2.5 hours and could last for up to 4 hours. The IRP were expected to undertake research in their own time and had to undertake significant preparation for each meeting they attended.

A Member raised concerns about the proposals and queried why the Members Allowance Scheme had to be aligned with Suffolk Coastal District Council at this time? They felt that the issue of Councillor Allowances would be addressed with the creation of a new Council for East Suffolk and did not need to be actioned at this point. The Leader of the Council reported that the Shadow Authority would be established in April or May 2018 and it would be inappropriate for one half of the Councillors to be paid less than the other, for doing the same work.

With regard to costs, a Member queried how much it would cost to implement all of the changes to the Basic Allowance and the Special Responsibility Allowances. It was reported that costs were anticipated to be in the region of £60,000.

In respect of the recommendations contained within the report, a Member queried whether the recommendations could be considered separately, rather than en bloc. It was confirmed that this was at the discretion of the Chairman of the Council. The Chairman advised that he was content for the recommendations to be considered separately.

A Member commented that costs always seemed to go up and they queried whether the Councillors at Suffolk Coastal District Council would be willing to reduce their Members Allowance Scheme to the levels at Waveney, rather than Waveney having to increase theirs? It was reported that this would not be a popular suggestion and it was noted that Waveney had one of the lowest Basic Allowances, whilst Suffolk Coastal was mid-range. It was important that Waveney Councillors were paid at a level which was commensurate with their duties and responsibilities.

Further clarification was requested regarding the position of Deputy Cabinet Member. It was confirmed that Suffolk Coastal did not have any Deputy Cabinet Members. At Waveney, there were currently 5 Deputy Cabinet Members and it was confirmed that there were no plans to increase that number. The Leader of the Council reported that it was important for all Councillors to get into the mind-set of creating a new Council and working towards that aim. There would be no takeover, it was the creation of a new entity and all Councillors would be equally important. Therefore all Councillors involved in the Shadow Authority should have the same status and being paid the same amount for undertaking the same work would help to achieve this. It was reported that Suffolk County Council had Deputy Cabinet Members and it was possible that the new Council could have them in the future as well.

A Member commented that the public perception of this proposed increase would not be positive. The District Council, County Council, Police and many Town and Parish Councils were going to raise their proportion of the Council Tax and now Councillors would be getting a pay rise. Was there any way that this decision could be deferred for 6 months? The Leader of the Council advised that increasing Members Allowances had been deferred for the past 10 years. It was never going to be a popular decision, however by not accepting the previous recommendations from the IRP, it meant that Waveney Councillors Members Allowance Scheme had fallen further and further behind other Councils. This would be an unpalatable matter for Councillors to consider, however it was important that

Councillors from Waveney were not being significantly underpaid for their roles and responsibilities, particularly in the run up to the creation of a Shadow Council.

With regard to the position of Vice Chairmen of Committees, it was confirmed that Suffolk Coastal did pay their Vice Chairmen of the Committees. Clarification was provided that a new Members Allowance Scheme would need to be created for the new Council for East Suffolk. The IRP would need to undertake that piece of work at a later date. Members noted that should any Councillor not wish to accept the increase in their Basic Allowance or Special Responsibility Allowance, they could notify the Chief Finance Officer to that effect and they would not receive the increase.

Clarification was requested regarding the Opposition Groups in the new Council. Reassurance was provided that the opposition would be needed to hold the Cabinet to account, therefore there would still be a formula to calculate the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Leaders of the Opposition Groups.

There followed some discussion regarding the proposed recommendations contained within the report. Members still had reservations and were unsure whether it was the right time for a significant increase and they were not convinced that the payments should be back dated to 1 April 2017. There were also concerns about the number of Special Responsibility Allowances that were being paid and it was noted that approximately 41% of Councillors in the Administration would be in receipt of an SRA. A Member suggested that some of the Opposition Councillors should receive payments and it would be beneficial to have Vice Chairmen of the Committees from the Opposition Groups.

Another Member commented that percentages were misleading, as a 30% increase of nothing was nothing. It was far better to use the real figures when debating such matters, rather than relying on percentages.

A Member requested that there be a Recorded Vote in relation to the first recommendation in the report. In accordance with the constitution, over 7 Councillors stood to request a Recorded Vote for Recommendation 1.

A Member took the opportunity to thank the IRP for their work and commented that they had been glad to take part in the interview process. They raised a concern that the Opposition Group were not paid for attending Cabinet meetings and providing productive challenge to the Administration. They felt that this was an important role and should be acknowledged in some way. They were also concerned that the average wage in Waveney was around £20,000 pa, therefore they felt it was morally and ethically wrong to increase the Basic Allowance by 29%, when most working people had not had a wage increase for many years. They were also unhappy to introduce additional Special Responsibility Allowances for Vice Chairmen of the Committees and Deputy Cabinet Members. It was also possible for the number of Deputy Cabinet Members to be increased over time to provide a Deputy for every Portfolio, which would increase the overall costs still further. They reported that the Labour Group would not be supporting the proposed increase, as they did not feel that it was right.

The Chief Executive provided some clarification at this point in the proceedings. The IRP had evaluated the Basic Allowance and the Special Responsibility Allowances and had allocated an appropriate value to each role, which was commensurate with the overall responsibility and experience required to undertake that role. The IRP had evaluated each role individually. It was noted that there had been funding allocated within the budget to cover an increase in payments to Councillors and it was anticipated that the increase in Basic Allowances for 48 Councillors would be approximately £51,000 pa. It was reported that the Shadow Authority was statutorily required to meet within 14 days of the Order being made for a new Council for East Suffolk, therefore a Shadow Authority meeting was likely to be needed in April 2018. At that meeting, all Councillors from both Councils would meet, which was 90 Councillors in total. In May 2019, there would be elections for 55 Councillors for the new East Suffolk Council, which was a significant reduction, and they would have responsibility to approving a new Members Allowance Scheme for that Council.

A Member commented that it was never the right time to increase Members Allowances. However it was important to have the right level of Members Allowances in order to

attract a wide range of people, with a variety of skills to the role. Having a very low level of remuneration would deter people from becoming Councillors. The average age of Councillors in Waveney was 60, which was not representative of the general population. The National Labour Party were actively encouraging and promoting an increase in Members Allowances in order to attract a broad spectrum of people to the role, therefore Waveney Labour Group were not working in accordance with their national colleagues advice. The recommendations from the IRP had been declined in previous years, whilst Councillors in other parts of the Country were receiving sizeable increases.

The Leader of the Council reported that an increase in the Members Allowances Scheme was long overdue, however there was never a time when such an increase would be popular with the public. The IRP had conducted an in depth, detailed review and had made their recommendations based upon facts. The work of Councillors had been undervalued for many years and it was now the right time to rectify this matter.

The consideration of this item was then deferred for a few moments to deal with a procedural matter.

13. CONTINUATION OF MEETING

In accordance with Paragraph 9 of Part 3 of the Constitution and as the meeting had been in session for almost three hours, the Chairman asked Full Council if they wished to continue or adjourn the meeting. It was proposed, seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED

That the meeting continue over three hours in duration.

14. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL CONTINUED

The recommendations contained within the report had previously been moved and seconded. Members had requested a recorded vote in relation to Recommendation 1 earlier in the meeting, the results of which are shown below. It was therefore:

RESOLVED

1. That the report from the Independent Remuneration Panel containing recommendations for a revised Scheme of Members' Allowance for Waveney District Council, back dated to 1 April 2017, be adopted.
2. That the fees paid to the Independent Remuneration Panel Members be changed from £200 per review to £100 per meeting which each Member attends, as part of any review, to adequately reflect the time spent in carrying out this role, and the level of knowledge required.
3. That the Independent Remuneration Panel sits as a Parish Remuneration Panel to undertake a review of Members' Allowance Schemes for Town and Parish Councils in the District and that the costs of this be apportioned equally amongst the number of town or parish councils taking part in the review.

In accordance with the regulations, the results of the recorded vote for recommendation 1 are shown below:

Councillors who voted For the Recommendations (23)

S Ardley, P Ashdown, E Back, M Barnard, M Bee, N Brooks, A Cackett, G Catchpole, J Ceresa, L Coulam, T Goldson, K Grant, J Groom, M Ladd, F Mortimer, T Mortimer, B Provan, C Punt, D Ritchie, C Rivett, M Rudd, C Topping and S Woods

Councillors who voted Against the Recommendations (14)

S Barker, P Byatt, M Cherry, Y Cherry, J Craig, G Elliott, T Gandy, L Gooch, I Graham, A Green, J Murray, L Nicholls, K Patience and J Smith

Councillors who Abstained (1)

P Light

The Members Allowance Scheme has therefore been amended to incorporate the following:

1. That the Basic Allowance for 2017/18 and 2018/19 be increased to £4,787.57 per annum, back dated to 1 April 2017.
2. That the following Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) be applied and back dated to 1 April 2017:

Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)	New Value of Allowance Per Annum
Leader of the Council	£14,362.00
Deputy Leader of the Council	£9,575.14
Delegated Cabinet Members	£5,583.36
Other Cabinet Members (none currently exist)	£4,950.59
Deputy Cabinet Member	£2,393.78
Chairman of a Committee	£4,950.59 (incl Licensing Chairman)
Vice Chairmen of the Planning Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee	£2,393.78
Vice Chairmen of the Licensing Committee and Audit & Governance Committee	£957.51
Chairman of the Council	£7,181.35
Leader of the Opposition Parties / Groups (Limited to Groups with 2 Members or more). (Basic Allowance divided by total number of Opposition Members on the Council x No of Members in the party / group).	As per the formula

3 Dependent Carers Allowance for Councillors

- 3.1 The Allowance for specialist care of dependents (in circumstances previously approved by the Council's Monitoring Officer) is set at a maximum of £20.00 per hour, per carer/nurse, for actual costs incurred.
- 3.2 The Allowance for care of child dependents (in circumstances previously approved by the Council's Monitoring Officer) is set at:

Babysitting - up to a maximum of £10.

Child Minding - up to a maximum of £10, unless provided free of charge under a government scheme, for actual costs incurred.

3.3 Payment of the Dependent Carers Allowance is subject to the production of a receipt and should not be provided by a family member.

3.4 The remainder of the Travel and Subsistence Claims would remain unchanged.

N.B. Councillor Gooch left the meeting at this point in the proceedings.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED FROM 9.30PM TO 9.40PM, TO ALLOW FOR
A SHORT COMFORT BREAK.

15. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2018/19

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report which advised Members of the need to consider the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19, which was a locally set scheme, that replaced the national Council Tax Benefits (CTB) scheme from April 2013.

Members were reminded that the aim of the change had been to

- Transfer the system to local control.
- Make savings.
- Protect vulnerable people.
- Support work incentives for claimants created by the Government's wider welfare reform.

As a result of the new powers, Waveney District Council had developed a scheme that mirrored the previous Council Tax Benefit rules, which paid a maximum benefit of 91.5% for working age claimants. Waveney had qualified for additional funding in 2013/14; that funding had not been offered again. The Council had also protected War Pensioners and other payments within the Armed Forces Covenant from the reduction in maximum benefit and also removed Second Adult Rebate for working age claimants from its schemes.

The Cabinet Member for Resources explained the proposed changes to the scheme as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report, which would have an adverse impact of £225, shared between all the major precepting authorities. However, following consultation and having considered the other options which would impact on customers as outlined, the proposals being recommended to Council were considered the best option.

The Cabinet Member for Resources took the opportunity to thank Officers for their ongoing work in this respect and invited questions from Members.

A Member queried whether the same report would be presented for consideration to Full Council at Suffolk Coastal District Council. It was confirmed that the reports were aligned for both Councils.

RESOLVED

1. That the following be approved for implementation from 1st April 2018:
 - the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme remains paying maximum benefit of 91.5% for working age claimants, leaving 8.5% to be paid by the individual(s);
 - benefit rates, known as applicable amounts, are updated to 2015 rates; and
 - the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is harmonised with the DWP Welfare Reforms introduced in the Prescribed Scheme for Pensioners and Housing Benefit.
2. That links to the award of Universal Credit are introduced for entitlement to the Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, removing the requirement for a separate application to be made.

16. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2018/19 TO 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report, which was to consider the approval of the Council's General Fund Capital Programme and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for the financial years 2018/19 to 2021/22 and revisions to the 2017/18 programme.

It was noted that the Capital Programme had been compiled taking account of the following main principles:

- Maintain an affordable four year rolling Capital Programme.
- Ensure capital resources were aligned with the Council's Business Plan.
- Maximise available resources by actively seeking external funding and disposal of surplus assets.
- Not to anticipate receipts from disposals until they were realised.

The General Fund Capital Programme for 2017/18 to 2021/22 had a total budget requirement of £80.3m, which would be financed through both internal and external resources. Full details of the HRA Capital Programme were set out in the report and relied on external grants and contributions, capital receipts, the use of capital reserves and direct revenue financing.

The Cabinet Member for Resources drew attention to the key investments with regard to the Battery Green Car Park, Corton & North Corton Hybrid Scheme, Lowestoft Tidal Barrier, the Housing Redevelopment Programme and the Housing New Build Programme. He explained that approval of the Capital Programme was required as part of the overall setting of the budget and MTFs.

Members noted the need for improved asset management and the potential sale of surplus and underused assets. A Member requested further information in this respect and it was reported that more information would be provided outside of the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Resources reported that an amended Appendix B had been circulated to Councillors and copies were available to view at the meeting. The amendment arose from the Cabinet meeting on 17 January 2018, where additional contingency funding had been requested for key housing projects within the District.

At this point in the proceedings, Councillor Graham declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest in this item, as he was the Mayor of Lowestoft and Lowestoft Town Council was due to receive some grant funding from the Council.

RESOLVED

That the Capital Programme for 2018/19 to 2021/22, including revisions to 2017/18, be approved.

17. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which presented the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Income and Expenditure Account Budget for the period 2018/19 to 2021/22, together with a summary of its reserves and balances and recommended its approval by Full Council. The HRA budgets were fully funded from existing funds to meet the Council's HRA spending plans, including the capital investment programme and reserve balances, as per the HRA Financial Business Plan.

It was noted that, for the first time in many years, the government had implemented legislation regarding social rents, by the inclusion of sections within the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, compelling Councils and Housing Associations to reduce rents by 1% each year from April 2016 to April 2019 (that being 2016/17 to 2019/20). The move was made by the government in an attempt to help reduce the country's Housing benefit bill. Whilst the impact of the compulsory rent reduction was contained within the existing parameters of the HRA, the effect of four years of enforced reductions had resulted in reduced funds being available to invest in the new Housing Development Programme.

The 1% decrease in the weekly housing rent, as directly by Central Government, which equated to an average weekly rent of £83.06 over a 50 week collection year. Service charges were to increase slightly to £13.40 per week and garage rentals had increased by 3.5%.

The repairs and maintenance budget for 2018/19 had been set at £3.77 million, which would be used to ensure that the Council undertook all of the necessary works for the Council's housing stock to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

A Member raised concerns regarding the 52% increase in rent arrears, which had also been discussed at the recent Joint Overview & Scrutiny and Audit & Governance meeting on 4 January 2018. It was noted that the main reason for the rapid increase was the implementation of Universal Credit. The Cabinet Member for Customer Services advised that the Head of Customer Services had arranged for additional support and training for residents on how to manage their money, as well as proactively lobbying in the Government to make changes to Universal Credit. The Leader of the Council reported that there were many concerns about the implementation of Universal Credit and suggested that a Member Briefing on this matter be provided in due course.

A Member requested further clarification regarding the slippages in planned works, which was mentioned in page 86 of the report. It was reported that further information in this respect would be provided outside of the meeting.

A Member commented that on page 81 of the report, it mentioned that from April 2018, claimants wait time would reduce from 6 weeks to 5 weeks, which was a Government directive. The Member queried what the average wait time was currently in Waveney and it was reported that this information would be collated and provided outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2018/19, the revised estimates for 2017/18 and the indicative figures for 2019/20 to 2021/22 be approved;
- (b) That the Movements in Reserves and Balances be approved;
- (c) That the Weekly housing rent decrease of 1% for 2018/19, giving an average weekly rent of £83.06 over a 50 week collection period be approved;
- (d) That the Service Charges and associated fees for 2018/19 be approved;
- (e) That the changes affecting public and private sector housing and welfare be noted.

18. POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY OF THE COUNCIL AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Leader of the Council presented the report which advised the Council of the revised overall political balance of Waveney District Council and sought approval for the revised representation on the Council's Committees. It was noted that following the resignations of the former Labour Councillors Louisa Harris-Logan and Steve Logan, by-elections were held for the Kirkley and St Margaret's Wards on 16 November 2017.

Councillor Peter Byatt was elected to the Kirkley Ward from the Labour Party and Councillor Linda Coulam was elected to the St Margaret's Ward from the Conservative Party. As a result, the Conservatives had gained one seat, whilst the Labour party had lost one seat, which changed the political proportionality of the Council.

At the previous Full Council meeting on 15 November 2017, it had been agreed that the size of the Audit & Governance Committee would be increased by 2 seats, to help reduce the risk of the Committee being inquorate.

A full review of the political proportionality of the Council was undertaken, including on the Council's Committees. In order to reflect the political proportionality of the Council in the Committees, the Conservatives would need to appoint to the 2 vacant seats on the Audit & Governance Committee. It was proposed that Councillors L Coulam and K Robinson be appointed as the Conservative Councillors to the Audit & Governance Committee.

Members were informed that the Leader of the Labour Group had also requested a change to their representation on the Audit & Governance Committee. It was therefore proposed that Councillor P Byatt replace Councillor T Gandy on the Audit & Governance Committee, with immediate effect.

Following a query from a Member, confirmation was provided that there had been no change to the Substitution arrangements for the Independent Members and Green Party Member as an informal 'Minority Opposition Group'. Recommendation 4 in the report was only to reaffirm the current arrangements, following the change to the political proportionality of the Council.

RESOLVED

1. That the results of the review into the political proportionality of the Council and allocation of Committee seats on a politically proportionate basis be noted.
2. That Councillors L Coulam and K Robinson be appointed to the two additional seats on the Audit & Governance Committee from the Conservative Group.
3. That Councillor P Byatt replaces Councillor T Gandy as the Labour Group representative on the Audit & Governance Committee, with immediate effect.
4. That the Substitution arrangements for the Independent Members and Green Party Member as an informal 'Minority Opposition Group' be noted.

19. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

- (a) Question from Councillor J Craig to the Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety and the Cabinet Member for Planning & Coastal Management:

In the light of recent reports stating that the River Waveney has been named as the national watercourse with the highest contamination levels of neonicotinoids, can we be updated as to which authorities and organisations Waveney District Council is working with to address this critical state of affairs?

Response from Councillor M Rudd

Neonicotinoids have been widely used as an insecticide since the early 1990s but following concerns about their impact on bees and other pollinators their use on flowering crops was banned by the EU in 2013.

The test results referred to by Councillor Craig follow the first systematic testing of British rivers for neonicotinoids in 2016 as concern is now focussing on the impact of these insecticides on aquatic insects and the fish and birds that feed on them. The results of the tests carried out on 16 rivers in England identified half as having either chronic or acute levels of contamination. The River Waveney was identified as one of those rivers having acute levels of Neonicotinoid contamination. Sugar beet production is thought to be the source of the contamination in the River Waveney and the River Wensum in Norfolk.

The European Commission has proposed a further restriction on the use of three neonicotinoids which, when implemented, will only allow their use on plants in glasshouses. Currently, their use is banned for oilseed rape, spring cereals and sprays for winter cereals, but they can be used to treat sugar beet and as seed treatments for winter cereals.

The government has indicated that it will support the ban in principle. Michael Gove, Environment Secretary, has said:

"The weight of evidence now shows the risks neonicotinoids pose to our environment, particularly to the bees and other pollinators which play such a key part in our £100bn food industry, is greater than previously understood."

"I recognise the impact further restrictions will have on farmers and I am keen to work with them to explore alternative approaches both now and as we design a new agricultural policy outside the European Union."

Mr Gove has confirmed that he will impose the same standards on neonicotinoids after Brexit.

Given the government’s announcement in November last year the Council should take a watching brief as Defra will be working with the farming community on alternatives to neonicotinoids and the Environment Agency, who have responsibility for river water quality, will continue to monitor our rivers.

Supplementary Question from Councillor J Craig

Has any consultation been undertaken about this pollution, with the owners of land that borders onto the River Waveney?

Response from Councillor M Rudd

I do not have that information at this time. I will check and report back outside of this meeting.

(b) Question from Councillor A Green to the Leader of the Council:

The state of the Burger King site does nothing to enhance the progress of the North Lowestoft Heritage Zone and may I also suggest it is detrimental to the reputation of this Council. In answer to a question at the 19 July 2017 Council meeting, Councillor Bee stated: ‘We are hopeful that work will start in the near future’.

As it is now some 6 months later can the Council be informed as to why no progress appears to have been made in obtaining an operator in what we are informed is a ‘quality location’?

Response from Councillor M Bee

Following the Burger King franchisee (Millcliff) going into administration, the Council has been liaising with the Administrators who have been looking for a buyer for the lease. At one point the possibility of another Burger King franchisee taking the site looked a promising prospect but this unfortunately failed to materialise and the Administrators handed the site back to the Council in September 2017. Once back in control of the site the Council appointed a specialist agent to market the property for a commercial use. There has been interest and we are currently in negotiations with two potential occupiers. We hope to have an updated business proposal to bring to Cabinet within the next couple of months.

Supplementary Question from Councillor A Green:

Thank you for your response. I will be monitoring the situation closely.

Response from Councillor M Bee:

So will I! If we cannot get another franchisee to take over the site within the next 6 months, we will need to look into using the site for housing instead. However we need to allow the specialist agent sufficient time to market the site first.

(c) Question from Councillor T Gandy to the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Resources:

Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on the current situation with regard to the payment of housing benefit to residents of Women’s Refuges in Waveney?

Response from Councillor B Provan

For clarity, I would just like to explain to Members that Waveney District Council does not own any refuges in the district. They are independently owned and managed and supported by Suffolk County Council. I can confirm that Housing Benefit is paid for each of

the rooms in the refuge as well as further accommodation provided to customers who are more independent at another location. Refuges are defined as ‘specified accommodation’ under benefit regulations and therefore anyone receiving Universal Credit, either now or in the future, will continue to have the housing element funded through Housing Benefit.

Supplementary Question from Councillor T Gandy

My understanding is that Central Government provides funding for refuges via County Councils. Can you confirm that I should contact Suffolk County Council about any issues or concerns I have in this respect?

Response from Councillor B Provan

Yes, you should contact Suffolk County Council directly. The Government has ring fenced the support for vulnerable people’s housing, however the funding is very complicated and also involves charities and providers. There are many pressures facing local government and there were concerns that the ring fencing could be removed in due course. Peter Aldous, MP for Waveney, has been actively raising our concerns with Parliament and it is hoped that progress will be made soon.

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

Will the Cabinet Member ensure that the Chair of the STP (Sustainability Transformation Partnership) is contacted to arrange a public meeting as soon as possible in Waveney; to make residents aware of what is planned for the future of the NHS across Waveney?

Response from Councillor M Rudd

Two Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) stakeholder events are planned for Waveney in April 2018. Details of these are still being finalised but it is likely that one will be in Lowestoft (potentially at Riverside) and one in Beccles. Both events will be invitation only because they are designed for stakeholders, the voluntary sector and patient representatives. Engagement events will continue to be held to involve the public in relation to specific service changes and developments across the STP footprint as appropriate – for example an engagement event is already planned for 7 March around primary care and acute services in association with Healthwatch Suffolk.

Supplementary Question from Councillor J Murray

We are aware that the STP prepares the ground for accountable care providers, with the aim of providing competent healthcare for all. Will there be a full public consultation before there is an NCO in Waveney?

Response from Councillor M Rudd

I will attend the relevant meetings and try to take this forward and ensure Waveney is represented.

(e) Question from Councillor P Byatt to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Merger & Communities:

The Labour Group welcomes the news that local MPs are communicating with national banks in the hope of dissuading them from closing branches in our market towns; what is the response of Waveney District Council to these threats of further isolation for our rural residents?

Response from Councillor S Ardley

The closure of branches of national banks in our market towns is a national challenge, particularly impacting on rural communities and their service centres and we give the stance taken by our MPs in brokering meetings with representatives of the banks our full

support. We will continue to monitor the situation as it develops and intercede as required.

Supplementary Question from Councillor P Byatt

Rural areas are losing many of their banking services. Many areas have no cashpoint or Post Office. Due to poor internet connections, many people are unable to do online banking. What is Waveney District Council doing to hold Suffolk County Council to account for the delays in implementing super fast broadband in the district?

Response from Councillor S Ardley

That question has no bearing to the original question. Waveney will continue to lobby the national banks and will do what we can.

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

Will the Leader of WDC ensure that all WDC Cllrs are made aware of the upcoming Consultation concerning the proposed SCC Cuts to School Transport; information accessed at www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel deadline for comments 28th February, 2018?

Response from Councillor M Bee

Thank you Councillor Barker. Naturally, it is Suffolk County Council's responsibility to manage and publicise their own consultation as they see fit; however by bringing the matter to this Council's attention, I would suggest that you have now created the awareness of the consultation that you were seeking and I am grateful.

Supplementary Question from Councillor S Barker

Suffolk County Council currently has £204 million in reserves. Waveney District came 314 out of 324 for social mobility in the UK. How is cutting rural transport in this area going to improve matters regarding social mobility?

Response from Councillor M Bee

Your question should be posed to Councillor Noble, Leader of Suffolk County Council, as Waveney has no responsibility for school transport. This evening we have raised awareness of the consultation and we can encourage everyone to take part. By the end of 2018, 98% of Suffolk should have access to super fast broadband, which is a significant achievement and we will continue to lobby and work for the final 2%,

(g) Question from Councillor Y Cherry to the Cabinet Member for Housing:

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing update the Council on changes to WDC tenants' rental payments, since the installation of Meters to their homes for the payment of their Gas and Electricity use?

Response from Councillor C Punt

The Council does not have any properties where rent has any element of utility included within it. The rent is set either at a Social Rent or at an Affordable Rent which is 80% of market rent or the local housing allowance rate, whichever is lowest. Rent has been decreasing annually by 1% in line with Government policy since April 2016.

There are some schemes such as sheltered where an electricity supply comes into the building for the whole scheme and one bill is received from the supplier. 10% of this bill is then allocated as communal electricity and pays for the communal areas such as hallways, lounges and the scheme manager's office. This is a communal service charge and is eligible for Housing Benefit. The remaining 90% of the bill is equally proportioned up as a Heating charge to each resident but this is not Housing Benefit eligible.

The Housing Team have commenced a programme of works to install an electrical metering system which monitors individual usage for each flat and allows for accurate

proportioning of the electricity bill. This is still in its early stages and only one scheme has had these meters installed. Data is presently being analysed to enable us to provide accurate charges to individual properties from April 2018 in that scheme. The intention is to roll these meters out to all schemes that currently have communal electric to ensure that residents have the ability to pay for the energy they have used, hopefully leading to a reduction in the overall usage of electricity in these schemes. These changes will have no impact on the Rent element of the charge.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Y Cherry

What risk assessments have been done about this and what can we do to protect our vulnerable tenants. Also will we need to alter their leases as their gas and electric won't be covered in their rent?

Response from Councillor C Punt

The gas and electric meters that are being installed will give accurate records of how much gas and electric the tenants have used. They are not payment meters. These meters are being installed in communal housing eg in St Peter's Court. At the moment, all of the gas and electric usage is apportioned out equally to each flat. Once the meters are installed, each flat will have an accurate reading of how much energy they have used and they will then receive an accurate bill. It will be much fairer, as people will only pay for what gas and electricity they have used.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 pm.

Chairman