

COUNCILLORS IGNORE PUBLIC OBJECTIONS

- **Disastrous Riverside Road Project to go Ahead**
- **Serious Questions Remain Unanswered**

On Wednesday 30 January Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts had the chance to put the concerns about the Riverside Road accommodation Project to Waveney District Council. LCAC thanks all those who made this possible by signing our petition either online or in the precinct.



Unfortunately councillors were unable or unwilling to provide any answers. Here is how it went:

LCAC: You have halved WDC staff numbers in the last five years and more redundancies are to come. Why does the business plan contain no assessment of future staff numbers? How do you know what to build? **No answer.**

LCAC: Are the Riverside Road offices being built for the private and outsourced partners who will contribute nothing? **No answer.**

LCAC: The plan, co-written by Norfolk Property Services, involves selling off about ten properties. NPS stands to collect a commission when it sells them. Is this right? **No answer. (LCAC has found out that NPS does stand to profit in this way.)**

LCAC: If you are centralising services why have you got two centres, the Marina and Riverside Road Offices? Doesn't this defeat the object? **No answer.**

LCAC: Whose bright idea was it build on Riverside Road and to shift five hundred jobs away from the

High Street and town centre shopping areas? "Riverside Road is in the centre. It is the centre." (Colin Law, Tory, Council Leader. Laughter in the Chamber followed.)

LCAC: Have you made an impact assessment of the effect on shops and other businesses of moving five hundred jobs out of town? **No answer. (LCAC has found out that no impact assessment has been made.)**

LCAC: Why was the redevelopment of the Town Hall site not considered as an option? **No answer.**

LCAC: Why was the site occupied by the old WDC Housing Offices not considered. It is central, is owned by the Council and could contain all Council departments. **No answer.**

Green Councillor Graham Elliot pointed out that building offices outside the Town Centre broke Waveney's own planning guidelines. Curiously, he got no answer either. On the fate of the Town Hall there was much waffle, **Tory Councillor Martin Parsons** entered fantasy land with the building becoming the centre of a "erm, cafe, artistic quarter". The people are to be "engaged" about its future. And then the project was voted through. Only five voted against, four Labour and one Green.

Waveney District Council is to decide whether the project gets planning permission - LCAC is opposing this stitch up.

SIGN UP TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- Support LCAC by joining our leafleting every Saturday, 11-1pm, in the town centre precinct, outside the Britten Centre.
- Join our email list - keep up to date with activity
- Photocopy this leaflet and pass onto friends and workmates.
- Support the local libraries campaign - contact Pauline on 01502 586412.
- Want to know more? We can supply a speaker for your group or trade union branch.

Contact us

lowestoftagainstthecuts@hotmail.co.uk
01502 568684 / 569174 / 574010



LOWESTOFT NHS SERVICES AT RISK: DO YOUR VIEWS MATTER ON LOWESTOFT HOSPITAL?

LCAC went to the last of HealthEast's public meetings on its plans for Lowestoft Hospital and the new health centre in Kirkley. About thirty members of the public were faced by executives and doctors from HealthEast who are given and spend most of the NHS money for Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. What did we find out?

HealthEast's Chief Exec, Andy Evans (pictured), talked about a once in a lifetime opportunity to remodel health services in Lowestoft yet oddly the Kirkley Health Centre was not its idea; HealthEast inherited the plot and the money from "the previous regime". So they built it. It will house two doctors' surgeries and other services (including some now at Lowestoft Hospital) and there would also be a new health centre in the



north to cater for residents there. Why two are needed was not clear although a great deal was made of the bridge. Would services be duplicated? Why was it being proposed to provide council services when the councils plan to spend £15m on doing the same thing? Again there were no clear answers.

Money to modernise Lowestoft Hospital would come out of the James Paget Hospital's budget, we were told, while selling it (although that word was never used) would "release assets". Andy Evans' own view was that it would be an ideal site for a care home and sheltered housing. The NHS is responsible for neither so presumably selling is the plan. No site for a possible health centre in the north was mentioned.

The main message was that patients could be better cared for at or close to home, that times and health care have moved on. We shouldn't think about buildings. But beds will still be needed. If Lowestoft Hospital is closed beds would be bought in private care homes (there aren't any others) or patients treated in the James Paget. Neither is an improvement on what exists. We were assured that Andy Evans would keep a close eye on standards in the care homes.

The privatisation threat sparked great debate. The two doctors present said that they cherished the NHS and that HealthEast supported and would use NHS provision. They seemed unaware of how far privatisation has already happened, that Community Health Care in both Suffolk and Norfolk (not Waveney) is in the hands of Serco. Serco's latest wheeze is to charge millions for monitoring tagged prisoners who don't exist. The dangerous fiascos of privatised out-of-hours services and the 111 service were also brought up.

The doctors didn't answer when asked if they would send patients to private providers. Chief Exec Andy Evans brought us down to earth. If private companies offered better value for money than he would, of course, have to consider them. Money was tight. Nobody mentioned Trident.

What do we think? The doctors seemed dazzled by "the vision" of remodelled services but less aware of some of the practical issues and certainly naïve about the Government's intention to see the NHS privatised. Our belief is that Lowestoft Hospital, which is in an ideal location, should be brought up to date and that it should be the main centre for health services in Lowestoft. We need a hospital in Lowestoft.

TELL HEALTHEAST WHAT YOU THINK - SEE PAGE 2

NOW DEFEND OUR HOSPITALS

We celebrated the 65th birthday of the NHS with a rally outside Lowestoft Hospital on Friday 5 July. Would we have liked ten times, 100 times the thirty odd people who showed? Yes, of course but it was a lively and enthusiastic rally and we will build on it. Organised by LCAC and Waveney TUC, also there were the Friends of Lowestoft Hospital and representatives of the PCS, GMB and Unite unions.



During the rally Radio Suffolk broadcast an interview with LCAC. The interviewer was apparently baffled by the news that community health care in Suffolk (not Waveney) had already been privatised. Suffolk midwives are now employed by SERCO, the firm that also runs Yarl's Wood Detention Centre and maintains Fylingdales Ballistic Missile Defence System.

Both our hospitals are under threat. Carlton Court, which provides in-patient care for mental health and dementia patients, is facing bed closures and staff cuts at a time when demand is growing. The cuts are so severe and the outpatient service proposed so questionable that the plans have been labelled "chaotic" and "dangerous" by the BMA and local staff. Money must be found to continue the present service.

The reorganisation of health care in Lowestoft has started with the building of a costly new health centre in Kirkley but HealthEast, the new commissioning body, also wants to duplicate this in the north. HealthEast is proposing to close Lowestoft Hospital leaving no NHS beds in Lowestoft. Instead beds would be bought from private care homes or patients would "bed block" in the James Paget.

HEALTHEAST CONSULTATION

HealthEast is trying to push through its favoured plan by marginalising other options. HealthEast wants views and comments by *Monday 12 August*.

Copies of the document are available in the library or you can fill in the questionnaire online at: www.surveymonkey.com/s/LowestoftPublicConsultation

Or write with your views to:
Freepost RSUL-JJRA, HealthEast, Beccles House, 1 Common Lane North, Beccles RN34 9BN
or email: gywccg.your-views-matter@nhs.net

OULTON BROAD LIBRARY

After being handed over to an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) in spite of 80% of respondents to Suffolk County Council's survey stating explicitly that they wanted the libraries to be kept under Council control the future of Suffolk's libraries is still fog-bound.

It is still not clear where responsibility lies for each library, with the IPS or the "Friends Groups". Each library has, very clearly, been set a target sum to raise so that the libraries can function. How they get it is up to them. What will happen if they don't raise the money is not clear. Nor is it clear who gets the money or what, exactly, it is for. That much more than £130,000 demanded from the Groups has already been spent on the chaotic reorganisation is certain.

LCAC campaigned against this policy from the start but SCC's leader Tory Mark Bee was clearly determined to get the libraries off his hands no matter what the waste, the disruption and the consequences.

Oulton Broad Library has to raise £1950 to cover the first 20 months, Lowestoft Library £9750. Maybe Waveney District Council could help out? We will try



to keep you informed.

MAKING WORK PAY ENOUGH

Since the 1970s when workers were defeated at the hands of Thatcher and her successors there has been a continuous shift of wealth towards the rich.

Since that time workers have needed two working parents to support a family. Mortgage debts grew and credit card debt ballooned. Even working families couldn't support themselves; the state paid benefits to more and more working families to subsidise inadequate wages.

At the same time the wealthy needed to find investments which they did in banking and privatisation. These are little more than unproductive rackets but they were much more lucrative than the weak British industrial sector. And it didn't involve any real work.

The banking crisis was simply this. With less of the nation's wealth workers relied on debt and benefits while the nation's wealthy encouraged more debt so that workers could maintain consumption. It was not sustainable and the crash was inevitable.

The austerity programme aims at more privatisation; it is not austerity for private equity companies. The NHS is the biggest prize yet for the parasites in the City with the Post Office next on the list. Suffolk County Council has already sold off its care homes and elderly residents to the City. Wealth is being shifted even further to the rich in a period when we are all supposed to be suffering austerity.

For workers austerity has meant real hardship with further attacks on jobs, on rights, wages, pensions and benefits. Food banks and pay-day lenders are symptoms of the new austerity economy. It is as unsustainable as the economy which led to the crash of 2007/8: where are the customers to come from? Austerity solves nothing and a new crisis will follow. For workers it is just a con.

"Making work pay" is an insulting and deceitful slogan aimed at working people. Rather than cutting benefits and creating more hardship what is the Government doing about raising wages so that workers pay enough and benefits are not needed? Even the dimmest Tory must realise that businesses need customers. Even the most out-of-touch Labour op-

position politician must realise that the root of the problem is that the people they claim to represent are being screwed. Even the most cautious trade union leaders must realise that they have to do something.



Who needs benefits...?

LCAC is campaigning to make that happen.

LABOUR PARTY ATTACKS ITSELF

Is there any hope for the Labour Party? After supporting cuts to workers' living standards and the slashing of public services the two Eds promised to continue Tory policies even if they win the next election.

Now they have decided to outdo the Tories by attacking the trade unions for practices that the Labour leadership has been following for years. That it will also cut off their own major source of funds

We didn't vote for these cuts and this is our alternative*...

End tax dodging believed to cost £150 billion a year

Tax the rich

Stop the disastrous foreign wars, expenditure on weapons of mass destruction and invest in green jobs

Stop the bankers paying themselves obscene bonuses

Levy a Robin Hood tax on bank turnover

*Resolution passed at LCAC launch rally - 2 March, 2011