

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.

The campaign to stop the Riverside Road Project goes on. You can write to the Lowestoft Journal with your views or lodge a complaint with WDC Monitoring Officer, Arthur Charvonia.

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 in your area.
- 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



THE THIRD CROSSING: COLBY'S PIPEDREAM?

The public meeting called by local businessman Peter Colby (pictured) and chaired by Labour Party candidate Bob Blizzard wasn't all about a third crossing but it was difficult to get beyond this issue which has dominated local thinking for years. Colby made a strong case for a barrage-based crossing and focussed his attack on the council's Area Action Plan which earmarks land south of Lake Lothing for housing.

Colby wants a new road and crossing to allow the development of industrial units on the old Sanyo and Brooke Marine sites. Colby sees these as the key to the industrial and marine regeneration of Lowestoft. To flatten the buildings and to fill in the docks would destroy one of Lowestoft's few remaining major assets. Colby wants to develop them himself with his

own money and, of course, for his own profit. He is no philanthropist.

WDC has bought the Sanyo site for housing after Colby had already put in an offer, which council leader, Tory Colin Law, claimed to have no knowledge of even though council officers had met Colby to discuss his plans. In a closed meeting, councillors who approved the WDC purchase were deliberately kept in the dark. House building there has been assessed by Badger Builders as prohibitively expensive yet the Council has paid £2.5m for the site.

It is pretty obvious that if we all tried to drive then no one would get anywhere but the train/bus interchange and the cycle/pedestrian bridge were

dismissed with too much scorn. The interchange is of limited value because of the bascule bridge but improvements for cyclists and pedestrians are a step forward. Rail travel too could be greatly improved at relatively small cost. How about an extra carriage and fixing the Reedham bridge on the Norwich line?

The meeting was a large and genuine expression of frustration and anger at Waveney District Council but there was no strategy to amend the housing fixated Area Action Plan. Nor did the councillors present, nearly all Labour, explain how they would reverse the Council's decision to buy the Sanyo site. Nor was the problem presented by Associated British Ports, which owns the land on the north side of Lake Lothing and



opposes the barrage plan, addressed.

In the meantime yet another strategy document has been produced. "Moving Lowestoft Forward" throws in four possible third crossing sites. The time scale? In "ten years plus" there might be a third crossing, or there might not: "Subject to option appraisals and development of proposals carried out in a short/medium term, deliver the preferred option for the replacement/relocation of the Bascule Bridge and/or the provision of a third crossing."

Don't blame us for the spelling mistakes – they are in the original.

See Page 3 for more comment.

LOWESTOFT WANTS TO KEEP HOSPITAL

LCAC hospital ballot results: YES 4 NO 190

In a snap opinion poll held between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm in London Road North, Lowestoft on Saturday 28 September and 5 October, 2013, organised by Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts, 194 members of the public posted their one word answers in the polling box to a simple question: Do you agree with HealthEast's decision to close Lowestoft Hospital?



The answer was overwhelming. Only four out of 194 agreed with the closure decision.

The poll exposes the consultation for what it was. An apparent offer to spend millions or continual decline? The consultation was an expensive fraud. What is surprising is that so many voted to oppose HealthEast's "preferred option".

LOWESTOFT HOSPITAL CONSULTATION

HealthEast was apparently offering to spend millions on a new health centre in Kirkley and one in north Lowestoft but would close the hospital and buy beds in private care homes. Its alternative was to "do nothing", that is to allow the hospital's decline to continue. HealthEast got the answer it wanted. LCAC has launched an official complaint against the "loaded" questionnaire.

THE JAMES PAGET HOSPITAL

As HealthEast's consultation ended the JPH announced £20m cuts. The hospital is "not clinically viable" says new Chief Executive, Christine Allen, who intends to close departments, cut 600 staff and shorten hospital stays. Emergency readmissions have doubled in the past ten years and workers predict "chaos" in A&E this winter. Yet HealthEast will close Lowestoft Hospital which takes pressure off the Paget. Why?

BECCLES, HALESWORTH AND SOUTHWOLD HOSPITALS

Andy Evans, Chief Executive of HealthEast, told

Lowestoft residents that if his plan to close Lowestoft Hospital goes through then all Waveney's community hospitals, at Beccles, Halesworth and Southwold will be closed. Do the people of Beccles, Halesworth and Southwold know this?

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Local GPs own HealthEast the body which controls most of the NHS budget for Great Yarmouth and Waveney. Do GPs support cuts to NHS services? Do they support hospital closures? Do they support privatisation? Ask your GP.

CARLTON COURT HOSPITAL

Based in Carlton Colville, the hospital provides inpatient and outpatient services for those suffering from mental health and dementia conditions. Need is growing but the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trust is closing Poppies, the day centre, and proposes to replace hospital beds with home visits. Over 400 jobs are to go. Clinicians have labelled the plans "chaotic" and "dangerous". Last year 161 "serous incidents" including 53 "unexpected deaths" were reported to the Trust. It is a disgrace.

ALAN MILBURN DISCOVERS POVERTY...

Alan Milburn, ex Labour Health Minister and now the Tory's Mobility Tsar, has discovered that we are getting poorer. That is us, not him. Working people cannot exist on what they earn. 2.3 million children live in poverty. 5.6m adults of working age live in poverty. Most of the poor are in work.

His main proposal, and the one being touted by commentators, is to means test pensioners' allowances. Or, to put it another way, blame the old. Set up young people to blame old people. Yet the plain and obvious fact is that wealth is being continually redistributed to the already wealthy. We are getting poorer because they are getting richer.



AND WE DISCOVER ALAN MILBURN...

Milburn was the minister who opened up the NHS to private companies and pushed the PFI hospital rip-offs. Resigning from parliament when the expenses scandal was being probed he has prospered by advising the giant healthcare companies on how to exploit the cannibalising of the NHS. His jobs include advisor to Lloyds Pharmacy and advisor to Pepsico. He is on the board of private equity company Bridgepoint Capital owner of CareUK. Suffolk County Council's Tories disgracefully sold the county's care homes, and their vulnerable residents, to this appalling firm. CareUK is responsible for much of the 111 service disaster, not to mention the Broadland home care failures.



Now PriceWaterhouse Coopers, the world's largest accountancy and consultancy firm, "has recruited" social mobility Tsar, Milburn to lead its healthcare arm. His aim: "to drive change across the health sector and PwC's growing presence in the health market." You bet.

We are getting poorer because they are getting richer.

NOT ALL ABOUT A THIRD CROSSING

A third crossing won't solve all of Lowestoft's problems and it shouldn't distract us from key issues that we face now.

The town has suffered a haemorrhaging of skilled jobs as the shipyards and the factories have closed one after another. A huge range of skilled trades and skilled people are dying out. The councils are cutting and outsourcing services: council officers, librarians and youth workers are all jobs lost.

As one speaker at the Colby meeting asked: What future is there for our young people? What

hope is there?

We can see what is happening. What jobs there are are often insecure and poorly paid. Zero hours contracts are increasing in the last remaining large employer in town, Birds Eye, and are the norm in the newest, Wetherspoon's Joseph Conrad Pub in Station Square.

The attacks on wages, conditions, services, benefits and pensions are continuing. The NHS is being privatised day by day and on the day of the Colby meeting, Lowestoft fire fighters came out on strike against pension cuts. Pay more for your pension, work till you are 60 and if you can't work then out the door and a pension cut of up to 50%. Jobs will go.

Over 200 attended the Colby meeting. Four turned up to show their support for the fire fighters – although many passing motorists beeped their horns in solidarity.

LCAC totally supports the fire fighters. Those campaigning for a third crossing, who care about the future of the town and decent jobs for the people of Lowestoft, should support them too.



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