

JOIN OUR CAMPAIGNS: LOWESTOFT IN 2013 - 2014

THE FIREFIGHTERS STRIKE

Firefighters have a very expensive pension – they will contribute £4,000 pa next year, about a fifth of their take home pay, and that will go up again the following year. The government now demands that they work until they are aged 60 and face a pension cut of almost 50% if they are unable to meet fitness standards beyond the age of 55. After refusing to talk for two months a series of solid strikes has forced the government to restart negotiations.



THE TOWN HALL

After months of bluffing Waveney District Council has finally admitted that it did not look at alternative town centre sites for new council offices nor did it conduct an impact assessment on moving 500 jobs out of town. Planning rules say that it must. LCAC is preparing an appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman.

LOWESTOFT HOSPITAL

LCAC lodged a complaint against the loaded nature of HealthEast's consultation which recommended the closure of Lowestoft Hospital. The Chief Executive Andy Evans is claiming that

he can deal with the complaint himself, even though he is officially precluded from doing so. This is also likely to end up with an Ombudsman.

COUNCIL CUTS

Waveney District Council will lose half its government grant, that is another £2.5m, over the next three years. Suffolk County Council will lose £50m. Jobs and services will go and the Tories will shed no tears. Planned mergers with other authorities are already leading to further loss of local democracy and the marginalising of Lowestoft. The piers and the beach are closed. Just as the sea came over the quayside in Belvedere Road in 1953 it did so again in 2013. What is the Council doing besides buying land and building houses and offices?

CARLTON COURT HOSPITAL

Last month hundreds attended the founding of the Campaign to Save Mental Health services in Norfolk and Suffolk. Launched by front-line workers it is opposing plans to cut £40m from the Trust's budget. Patients are currently sent all over the country because local provision is already inadequate. Carlton Court Hospital is closing its day centre Poppies and plans to close most of its beds.

When Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts was formed in March 2011 we vowed to fight against cuts. While the government demonises benefit claimants massive tax dodging continues to be rife. Salaries and bonuses in the City are at staggering levels. And that money doesn't grow on trees, it come from us. The gas and electricity companies coin in profits, for what? It doesn't take much skill to ring up Russia and ask for some more gas please. Massive capital projects of dubious value are being embarked upon. We will have to pay three times the going rate for nuclear power and £50bn or more for a marginally useful high speed rail line. Now the major expansion of Heathrow Airport is planned with little evidence of need. Wars and nuclear weapons are given a blank cheque. LCAC believes that that is what the government should cut. It should not cut jobs, wages, pensions and services.

 **LOWESTOFT COALITION**
AGAINST THE CUTS

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PUBLIC'S VERDICT ON CARLTON COURT CONSULTATION: "IT'S A SHAM"

Over 100 members of the public, patients and ex-patients, relatives, carers and health professionals crammed into the United Reformed Church to ask questions of Clinical Commissioning Group, HealthEast (the ones who have the NHS money), and Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (which runs mental health services including those at Carlton Court Hospital).

We had been there before. The last time we were offered two choices over the future of Lowestoft

Hospital. We could keep the badly maintained hospital which would cost millions to repair or we could have two new health centres with all the services we could dream of and no mention of the cost. All we had to do was give up the hospital and privatise the beds.

This time mental health services were the target and the cuts were obvious and more keenly felt. Beds for those suffering acute mental health issues would be reduced from 28 to 20 and all could be moved to Yarmouth. All dementia and assessment beds would be closed with four beds in Norwich hospitals to replace them.

The mantra continually spouted, as it was over Lowestoft Hospital's closure, was that outreach teams could more effectively treat patients at home. Nobody at the meeting agreed. In fact account after account testified to the damage

and the dangers which occurred when that last resort, the hospital bed, was not available.

Nearer to home? Already patients are sent all over the country because there aren't enough local beds. Already patients are held in police cells because there is nowhere else. Director of Operations of the mental health trust (NSFT), Dr

Kathy Chapman, spoke of a rising tide of dementia but couldn't connect that with the urgent need for more beds. She blamed the patients, they shouldn't be there, she said.

But if that is so then why are they there and if not there, then where? The hint was that they could be shifted to private nursing homes.

Some unspoken facts emerged. £7.5m had been spent on bungled redundancies; two criminal investigations into the Trust were ongoing; compensation had been paid after the suicide of a patient who had asked for help and not received it. There has been a spike in "serious incidents" involving patients.

But the basic situation is this. The Trust has been told to cut £40m from its budget and the Trust and HealthEast between them intend to do so. Nobody believes that the intention is to improve services.



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SCANDAL OF ORME HOUSE CARE HOME

● COUNCILLORS “SHOCKED AND HORRIFIED”

Councillors were said to be “shocked and horrified” by conditions at Orme House Care Home. Yet this report by WDC officers went unreported in the Journal in spite of urging by Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts. This is what the Food and Safety Team found, as reported in the Council minutes:

“potentially life changing risks i.e. legionella control, asbestos management, gas safety, electrical safety, lifting equipment, falls from height and matters of evident concern”

as well as

“faeces on walls, doors and equipment, mattresses heavily stained by human waste, broken bedroom furniture with nails exposed, damp and mould growth in bedrooms, exposed electrical conductors and an inaccessible fire escape”.

The Care Quality Commission (now hopefully reformed) had, a short time earlier, inspected and passed the care home in all categories.

Equally shocking is that no one has been prosecuted and, as far as we know, the company which ran Orme House is still operating two other homes in Essex. It also emerged that local authority powers of inspection have been watered down and will now be dependent on complaints. Residents of care homes are seldom in a position to lodge complaints. The councillors did not propose to take any further action.

We understand that the Journal is chronically understaffed and cannot cover every story with its own resources but there is no excuse for failing to report important issues. Especially when LCAC and others give them the story on a plate.

Here is how we reported the breaking news in March of 2012...

ORME HOUSE CARE HOME SCANDAL

Dirty, soiled mattresses piled outside the private Orme House Care Home on Kirkley Cliff Road told the story of the disgraceful conditions in which our elderly are being forced to live. The conditions at Orme House came to light by accident. It was a

report of faulty electrical work in the home which led to environmental health officers closing the home after initial attempts to clean the place had to be abandoned. The fifteen residents were split up and hastily found places in a number of other homes. The

impact of this sudden move on vulnerable, elderly people will become clear over time. It is the job of the Care Quality Commission to inspect care homes. Twelve months ago, after what appears little more than a tick-box exercise, Orme House was judged “adequate”, and left to its own devices. There are no spot checks on care homes. The CQC's budget has been cut from £240m to £164m. The CQC does not have the money to do the job.



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

THE STORIES THE JOURNAL WOULDN'T PRINT

LOWESTOFT TheJournal

Newspapers have been losing readers for years and one of the reasons is that they are so timid. Here are some of the stories we have given the Lowestoft Journal in 2013:

Lowestoft Town Hall

We told the Journal that Norfolk Property Services, the company that co-wrote the business plan which recommended moving council staff to new offices in Riverside Road and selling some ten town centre offices including the Town Hall, stood to collect a commission on those sales. The Journal did not report this.

We told the Journal that councillors were misinformed, in the same business plan, when they were told that Suffolk County Council and Waveney District Council would save hundreds of thousands of pounds in business rates by building in an Enterprise Zone. The Journal did not report this.

We told the Journal that Waveney District Council's spokesman, Phil Harris, had wrongly accused LCAC of failing to engage in the democratic process during their decision to dump the Town Hall. We had and WDC was forced to print an apology on its website. The Journal did not report this.

Lowestoft Hospital

We told the Journal that the Chief Executive of HealthEast, Andy Evans, had said that if Lowestoft Hospital was closed then Beccles, Southwold and Halesworth Hospitals would be closed too. The Journal did not report this.

Orme House Care Home

We told the Journal that WDC Environmental Officers had presented a detailed and harrowing

report to the Council on the appalling conditions which had been allowed to develop in Orme House Care Home on Kirkley Cliff Road. After six weeks we still await a Journal report.

The Third Crossing

We handed the Journal an extract from the council's transport plan which revealed that no third crossing would be considered for at least ten years. We pointed out the two spelling mistakes in one sentence. The Journal didn't mention the Council's spelling mistakes, it just corrected them.

CONSULTATION “IS A SHAM” CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

To add insult to injury the closures have already happened. Larkspur and Laurel Wards and Poppies day centre are closed and nurses laid off. They were closed before the consultation had started.

Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts', Stephen Mynott, contrasted these cuts to the riches grabbed by the already wealthy and asked: who supports these cuts; who believes that this is a genuine consultation? A vote happened whether the Chair of the meeting liked it or not.

Reluctantly he conceded that the majority had voted the exercise to be “a sham”.

That is exactly what it was.

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

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