

2021 Annual Assembly Questions and Answers

Question from Bob Collis to Lowestoft Town Council:

Can the Town Council please give a public update on the situation regarding the local heritage artefacts and consider making a public statement on when it may be possible to view them?

Answer from Cllr Alan Green, Mayor:

Lowestoft Town Council is working with East Suffolk Council to produce a complete inventory of the items. This has been difficult given the current lockdown restrictions. When the renovation of the Town Hall is complete the Town Council would like at least some of the items to be on public display there.

Question from Sonia Barker to Peter Aldous:

Could you outline how much money has been allocated to Lowestoft to attract business into the town under the Enterprise Scheme since 2015, and how many jobs have been created since then?

Answer from Peter Aldous:

Mr Aldous did not have the information to hand but Town Council officers have emailed the question to him and his response will be published here once received.

Question from Christian Newsome to Peter Aldous:

Are there any plans to reintroduce the bus service operators' grant to support the industry coming out of the pandemic?

Answer from Peter Aldous:

Possibly. Mr Aldous has met with the minister responsible and this topic has been discussed. The Government is looking at its own strategy and this issue may be covered.

Question from Keith Patience to Peter Aldous:

Given Mr Aldous' support for the fishing industry and wind farms, does this present a conflict of interest?

Answer from Peter Aldous:

There should be no reason why the two industries could not work together. It would not be good for the town to be reliant on one industry.

Question from Christopher Brooks to Peter Aldous:

Details of the flood protection scheme have been made available, but is there a report about the proposed barrier for the bridge channel itself?

Answer from Peter Aldous:

Some work has already started, and preparatory work for the barrier will begin shortly. It should be constructed over two to three winters, beginning in a couple of years' time. A Public Works Order is required. Over the next few months, members of the public will be given the opportunity to have their say.

Question from Colin Butler to Peter Aldous:

When East Suffolk Council was formed, the Government decreed that due to its size, Lowestoft's own Town Council be formed. Unfortunately the result is an unsatisfactory arrangement of four relatively inefficient parish councils within the urban area. Why weren't these four councils combined under a recreated Lowestoft Corporation with borough status similar to Great Yarmouth, and thus eliminate the extra and unnecessary layer of bureaucracy that East Suffolk Council represents?

Answer from Peter Aldous:

Mr Aldous did not have the answer to this question, but would presume that various alternatives were considered. Personally, he has experienced pros and cons of working with East Suffolk Council. An advantage is that it is a reasonably well resourced Council with the expertise to carry out various projects. A disadvantage is that it would be easier for Mr Aldous to deal with a Council with ward boundaries similar to his own.

Question from Louise Gooch to Peter Aldous:

If the bid to secure funding from the Government Towns Fund is not successful, what is the next option?

Answer from Peter Aldous:

It is hoped the bid will be successful and it has so far received some positive feedback. If not, the bid will be adjusted and resubmitted based on the feedback received, but it is hoped this will not be the case.

Question from Wendy Brooks to Peter Aldous:

East Suffolk Council's Planning Committee North does not address the real issues of Lowestoft and seems to favour its own agenda. It does not take the views of the Town Council into consideration. The Town Plan is a fantasy. It was drawn up in isolation and favours ideas such as demolishing the building behind the old Post Office. If it fails could the Town Council have more of a say in its future?

Answer from Peter Aldous:

There is a legal process behind formulating the plan. Some areas have never even had a local plan so the fact that it is there at all is important. Public engagement is important in its creation. The problem with planning is that decisions have to be made at a particular point in time, in whatever the current circumstances are. The pandemic has accelerated and produced new trends.

Question from Sonia Barker to Tim Passmore:

It was advised in a public meeting that fifty two police officers would be recruited in Suffolk by April 2020. How many police officers are there in Suffolk now and how many are allocated to Lowestoft?

Answer from Tim Passmore:

A recruitment process was held and there is understood to be approximately one thousand two hundred and forty police officers in Suffolk. Lowestoft should be getting eighteen to twenty extra police officers in the next three years.

Question from Andy Pearce to Tim Passmore:

One of the roles of the Police and Crime Commissioner is to hold the Chief Constable to account. How can the population of Lowestoft be assured that the Police and Crime Commissioner's intentions are police motivated and not politically motivated? Additionally, when will tax payers see visible evidence of what they pay towards the policing budget?

Answer from Tim Passmore:

Mr Passmore gave reassurance that he is trying to represent the best interests of Suffolk as a whole, and puts those interests before politics. His voting record should demonstrate this. The Chief Constable does need to improve the visible police presence, but not all crimes are visible, and more resources have been allocated to tackling hidden harm. If Suffolk had the same level of funding as Norfolk there would be more police officers in Suffolk on a pro-rata basis, and Mr Passmore is lobbying for this to the best of his ability.

Question from Wendy Brooks to Tim Passmore:

It has been reported that the last precept raised was spent on an experimental scheme to deal with perpetrators of domestic violence. The number of Police Community Support Officers is to be halved and Lowestoft has an office-hours police station with no holding cells. Is it true that the precept was spent on this scheme, and is there a chance the police station could at least be open seven days per week? Additionally, there are still unregulated parking issues in the town, and enforcers do not seem to be interested in enforcing illegal parking at The Triangle.

Answer from Tim Passmore:

Civil Parking Enforcement is responsible for picking these issues up. East Suffolk Council has wardens and this should be an improved scheme for dealing with these issues. Police will get involved with incidents of dangerous parking, but otherwise it is better to report known issues to the District Councillors. The report about the precept is untrue. A comprehensive list of areas where policing money was spent is published annually (this can be viewed via the following link: <https://suffolk-pcc.gov.uk/how-your-money-is-improving-policing-in-suffolk-in-2020-21>). The custody suite in Norfolk serves this area as well. Lowestoft police station does have a front desk but it is not open all the time. The police have to consider the best use of the resources it has available. If more money were available it may be possible to keep the desk open for longer, but data suggests it is not currently well used.

Question from Christian Newsome to Tim Passmore:

Why is it that police cannot tackle incidents of non-compliance with face coverings not being worn on public transport?

Answer from Tim Passmore:

This is something police officers can tackle if they are present, but the difficulty is when they are not present that evidence is required and tracing those who have not complied.

Question from Louise Gooch to Tim Passmore:

How are you helping to bring pressure to bear on the Government to address the link between organised crime and fly-tipping; and organised crime and cruelty to wildlife?

Answer from Tim Passmore:

The police are part of a multi-agency approach to tackle fly-tipping. This needs better enforcement and more people involved. Specialist officers deal with crimes against wildlife.

Question from Andrew Groom to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

What are the opening and closing times of the current bascule bridge and how do these compare to Gull Wing?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

They do not have data for the existing bascule bridge, but Town Council officers will endeavour to find out this information.

Question from Andy Pearce to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

Have the delays with the project resulted in any budget cost overruns? If there are further unexpected delays leading to cost overruns is there an appropriate budget provision? Additionally, Associated British Ports had previously raised an objection. With the requirement for a three week closure of the port can it be confirmed that there is no conflict with Associated British Ports?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

A detailed risk assessment was carried out and there was a statistical output to identify the contingency which may be required. There is a level of contingency in the budget for this purpose, which should be sufficient.

Question from Colin Butler to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

Will there be a restriction on opening Gull Wing during high wind speeds?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

There has been extensive modelling on the impact of wind and it is not thought there will be any restrictions required.

Question from David Finnigan to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

With the movement of traffic to the bridge what mitigation is planned in terms of air pollution monitoring in the Durban Road area?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

There is a statutory obligation to monitor air and noise pollution.

Question from Rodney Duerden to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

Was any archaeology discovered during exploratory work, particularly on the North side?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

No, there were no discoveries of this nature.

Question from Christopher Brooks to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

Is the hard bed rock chalk? Additionally, there was going to be some modification to the design of the bridge to allow wider pedestrian access, to allow vehicles to still pass through, particularly emergency vehicles, in the event of the carriageway becoming blocked. Has this happened?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

The geological information can be obtained but it is not thought that the hard bed rock is chalk. It was confirmed that the width of the pedestrian access would be sufficient to allow a vehicle to pass through if required.

Question from Sonia Barker to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

What is the estimated lifespan of the existing bascule bridge, bearing in mind the time it will take to complete Gull Wing?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

Simon and Neil do have the information about the existing bascule bridge, but have no reason to believe that it should not be maintained satisfactorily.

Question from Wendy Brooks to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

To what extent do the engineers think it was right for the people of Lowestoft to push for Gull Wing not to be installed next to the existing bascule bridge?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

The chosen location seems logical from a traffic and engineering perspective.

Question from David Finnigan to Gull Wing Project Representatives:

Will the emergency services be alerted to either bridge being raised in order to ensure appropriate response times are maintained?

Answer from Gull Wing Project Representatives:

There will be an operations plan drawn up before Gull Wing is operational, and this will include several aspects, including notification to the emergency services.

Question from Kevin Pull to East Suffolk Council

Can parking officers agree to attend problem areas, such as outside the Gunton Primary Academy on Gainsborough Drive?

Answer from Cllr Louise Gooch:

Please contact your ward Councillor who can raise this with Cllr Norman Brooks and ensure this is taken forward through the officers responsible for parking enforcement.

Question from Andy Pearce to East Suffolk Council

Should the town funding grant be approved the number of planning applications with East Suffolk Council or a partner as an applicant will likely increase. This presents an obvious risk of conflict. The Chair of the Planning Committee North does not offer reassurances that impartiality and objectivity will not be affected, and members of that Committee do not declare an interest in relevant items. In future can a caveat be added and all members of the Planning Committee North declare their position as East Suffolk Councillors as a relevant interest.

Answer from Cllr Louise Gooch

Please formalise this request in an email and send to Cllr Paul Ashdown.

Question from Andrew Groom to East Suffolk Council

When can we expect to hear further details about the proposed Corton Garden Village, as the public consultation closed in February.

Answer from Cllr Louise Gooch

Further information is not available to hand but please contact Cllr Craig Rivett, who is the Deputy Leader and in charge of economic development and regeneration.

Question from Christian Newsome to Lowestoft Town Council

Is the Council still intending to close the public conveniences on Pakefield Street?

Answer from Shona Bendix, Town Clerk:

There has been no formal decision to close these public conveniences. The Town Council's Toilet Strategy Working Group is considering the options. Views and comments from the public are always welcome.

Question from Christopher Brooks to Lowestoft Town Council:

Is Lowestoft Town Council involved with coastal defences against erosion?

Answer from Cllr Alan Green, Mayor:

The Town Council has been invited to nominate a representative to join the Pakefield Cliff Protection Steering Group.

Question from David Finnigan to Lowestoft Town Council:

Have the town museums discussed reduced rate entry fee for people who visit all of the museums?

Answer from Shona Bendix, Town Clerk:

The Town Council's Assets Committee could consider incentives for the museums it has on its land, particularly post lockdown, to encourage visitors back to the museums.