

Dear Councillors

Comment about Full Council Agenda Item 204.2

I am sending this email to express my shock and dismay at the proposal to close the Lowestoft office of Suffolk Archives and remove all records to the Hold at Ipswich. Prior to the Record Office coming to Lowestoft, the Library had a very good Local Studies Library which was subsequently absorbed into the Record Office/Suffolk Archives. The majority of these records have already been transferred to the Hold, and this latest proposal will mean the removal of all remaining records, including the remaining Lowestoft Town Records. I don't believe Suffolk Archives have a claim to the Local Studies records and books, as they formed part of Lowestoft Library stock and I am at a loss to understand how the second largest town in Suffolk can be left without a local history library.

It is important that our young people be given the opportunity of learning about their locality and the rich past this town and its environs offers. If the Lowestoft office of Suffolk Archives closes and there is no longer a Longer Studies Library how will they learn? Suffolk Archives said digitization of removed records would reduce the effect of the removal of Lowestoft records, but this shows no sign of happening. Also, as part of their application for Heritage Lottery funding, Suffolk Archives promised "county-wide benefits" with the establishment of the Hold - we in Lowestoft are yet to see any. There is also the question of travel to the Hold at Ipswich, with no bus service the only options are rail or road. It currently cost around £22 by rail and there is quite a long walk from the station. Using a car, including car parking is about £20. Most people cannot afford these additional costs, and there is the added issue of increased cars on the road.

I have deposited items with Suffolk Archives and am very disappointed that they are no longer accessible for Lowestoft people. I have also encouraged others to do the same and bitterly regret doing so, now that these items are tucked away in the Hold at Ipswich.

I remember the excitement local historians/family historians felt when we learned a branch of Suffolk Record Office was coming to Lowestoft in 1985 - no more long journeys to Ipswich or Bury St Edmunds. It may be worth noting that in 1983, a report by County Archivist Amanda Arrowsmith explained the reason for a third branch in Lowestoft - "a widespread unwillingness of owners of records in this area to deposit them in an office in Ipswich". She also acknowledged the expense and difficulty of travel from the north east of the county. Many individuals and heritage groups have supported SRO/SA Lowestoft and feel extremely let down by the current proposal on top of the enormous cut backs to the Lowestoft Branch and reduced service, Lots of individuals, societies and groups have deposited records believing that local people will be able to access them and would not have done so, had they known they would have eventually been sent to Ipswich where they are almost impossible to access.

Please could this email be placed before the full Council.