

COUNCIL MEETING – 29 JULY 2020

Question 1 to be put by Councillor Cenci to Councillor Ross

Councillor Cenci: Does Cllr Ross support the 54 extra police officers for Suffolk and Suffolk's bid for Safer Street Funds, although I know there's an update on that recently?

Councillor Ross: As I have campaigned consistently against the cuts to police numbers imposed by successive Conservative Governments since 2010, of course I support this belated increase in police numbers, and I will also lobby Mr Passmore to ensure Ipswich gets the lion's share of those officers.

Your second point. I did support the Safer Street Fund bid, but not only support the bid, much more than that. The bid was from the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Home Office but as often is the case recently, a very short time scale was only given to put together a bid. So the police asked Ipswich Borough Council to help, and as our work in Westgate, started by our pro-active councillors Jones, Gibbs and Kreidewolf had kick-started a great project that was then put together by our own communities team, our parks staff and public protection, the bid was based around that, and I'd like to public thank Caroline Elias Stephenson (one of our Officers) who did most of the work alongside Kerry Cutler from the Constabulary on this project.

However, we have just learnt that this bid by the Police and Crime Commissioner has been turned down by the Government. This is deeply disappointing and shows that this Government does not appreciate the problems we are facing here in Ipswich.

Discussions will take place with partners and I'm sure we'll find the best way forward.

Councillor Cenci: Yes, really pleased to hear that and share the disappointment. So could Councillor Ross confirm that neither he or the Labour Administration does not support BLM's aims to defund the police which would have a devastating effect on our town.

Councillor Ross: We do not support defunding the police.

Question 2 to be put by Councillor Xhaferaj to Councillor Meudec

Councillor Xhaferaj: If you were advertising a job role that involved 100% home working you would have to offer an incentive such as higher salary or paid-for utilities to make the position attractive as this is the industry standard. Businesses do this as their costs are decreased but the employee's costs are increased.

Does this administration have a plan to compensate their hard-working employees who, at extremely short-notice, altered their work-life balance and made their homes into offices?

Councillor Meudec: I don't agree that there's a local government "industry standard" that means we have to offer an incentive for home working, and if there was it would be part of the JNC Green Book on which our Terms and Conditions are based.

In fact we asked employees to work from home at short notice because of government guidance and to keep them safe. Very important. And we are extremely proud of how they have stepped up to that and continued to deliver high quality Council Services.

Councillor Xhaferaj: For clarity, it is a business standard, not necessarily a council standard. But do we as a council not think that our employees are worth the sacrifice that they have made?

Councillor Meudec: I'm not sure about what you are talking about sacrifice really. Employees who have worked from home during the coronavirus pandemic have benefitted from considerable flexibility to meet the demands of both the job and their families, and this is really true for people who have dependents and people to care for. So I don't quite agree with the terminology of "sacrifice" as such. That's all I can say. Thank you.

Question 3 to be put by Councillor Harsant to Councillor Rudkin

Councillor Harsant: I'm sure you're aware that residents in Holywells Ward are disappointed to hear the Council propose to close the Profiles Gym on the Waterfront – what efforts have been made to find ways of keeping this open?

Councillor Harsant: I was going to ask Councillor Rudkin, that I believe the council allow junior I-card holders to attend this particular gym on the Waterfront to work out any time of the day whilst the other gyms have restrictions set. How will the closure impact on the young people, and surely the council and the university could somehow make this gym work?

The Mayor has asked that a written reply is provided to Councillor Harsant for both the question and supplementary question.

Question 4 to be put by Councillor Phillips to Councillor Ellesmere

Councillor Phillips: Recently it was announced that the safety works on the Cornhill would cost a further £370k – this is in direct conflict with an earlier pledge by yourself that this work would not cost more than the contingency already put aside. When questioned about what we were getting extra for the money all that was mentioned was two planters. Could you finally put on record please, why the final costs are so far removed from what you pledged only a few months ago and can we have a promise that this is the final spending on this project?

Councillor Ellesmere: Councillor Phillips will recall that the Council commissioned an independent safety review of the Cornhill works.

We committed - when the report was commissioned - that we would implement any recommendations it contained. The report confirmed that the Cornhill had been constructed in accordance with all relevant standards, but nonetheless identified additional works that could be undertaken.

As per our commitment, we're doing just this, and I am assured that the works will be completed next month.

The works include much more than 2 planters as Cllr Phillips will see if he goes to the Cornhill. There will be additional handrails and balustrading to the steps, new tree grills, new step treads and of course the new planters. All of this has been reported to Executive – most recently within the year end out-turn report and I can confirm that the Council has no plans to undertake further works at the Cornhill after the current works are finished next month.

Councillor Phillips: Thanks for that. Given this is extra expenditure and last September Cllr Ellesmere sort of told us at a similar council meeting that you would tell us about future additional funding, would you agree that buried in a 100 pages declaration in June was not really giving adequate notice so would you agree that in future you might sort of send an email out to councillors to say extra funding is being required on specific capital

projects rather than us having to rely on reading a hundred pages overnight and the Evening Star reporting it the next day?

Councillor Ellesmere: We reported the additional funds that were required in the normal way which is through the outturn reports or the quarterly monitoring reports to the medium term financial plan. This information was not kept secret and has made its way into the public domain, so I don't think we've been any less than transparent on this.

Question 5 to be put by Councillor Fisher to Councillor Ellesmere

Councillor Fisher: Given the scale of the adverse financial impact to the council by the current pandemic why were IBC employing the services of a temporary agency worker to undertake basic duties within the customer service department at the same time as furloughing staff who were perfectly suited to complete the work?

Councillor Ellesmere: This was an ongoing arrangement put in place prior to the pandemic. It was felt appropriate that we continued with that experienced member of staff whilst our Customer Services team were busy adjusting to operating our customer contact centre remotely, allowing us to effectively respond to enquiries that at the peak saw a 30% increase in calls.

This team were also engaged in ensuring the 24/7 Home, But Not Alone helpline was operational and there to support the most vulnerable people when they needed us. This arrangement allowed us to focus on responding to the needs of our residents without needing to retrain one of our own members of staff as well as keeping to the commitment made to the individual we'd employed on a temporary basis.

Councillor Fisher: Would the Leader agree that retaining the services of an agency worker who's contract could have been annulled at any point (that's the whole point of an agency worker) is actually resulted in extra financial burden to the council at a time when we're looking to cut our costs accordingly because of the size of the financial black hole that's he's going to be reporting later on?

Councillor Ellesmere: I think it's important to remember that the time we were talking about was at the peak of the virus where the government was requesting that councils put in place completely new services supporting vulnerable people. It was also the time when the Secretary of State Robert Jenrick told councils to do whatever is necessary and we will compensate you for the expenses that you incurred. So at the time we were doing what was right to enable us to put this new service in place. We'd got a commitment from the government that they were going to compensate us for any additional expenses that we incurred. Sadly, they haven't stuck to their word, which is why we're going to

have to make savings now. But at the time that we did this, it was the right thing to do and we were following government advice.

Question 6 to be put by Councillor Pope to Councillor Barber

Councillor Pope: According to 'Visit Britain' tourism accounts for 10% of Britain's GDP and supports nearly 4 million jobs. Why is Ipswich telling the world it does not welcome tourists at a time when attracting & welcoming more visitors to our town is key to future economic success?

Councillor Barber: Although you haven't said it, I am assuming that your question relates to the proposal about the TIC (the Tourist Information Centre). Ipswich isn't telling the world that it doesn't welcome tourists. Put simply the provision of a TIC does not attract tourists to a town in the first place and, increasingly, they're not being used by tourists for information when they get there either.

Ipswich Borough Council does a significant amount to attract tourists.

We put on a fantastic annual events programme, that attracted 180,000 visitors last year. Last summer we hosted a series of concerts for 140,000 people in Chantry Park and put on the landmark *Ed Sheeran: Made in Suffolk* exhibition in the Wolsey Arts Centre.

We support our Museums in keeping them free to enter and are investing in their improvement.

We've been able to secure internationally acclaimed exhibitions such as Wolsey's Angels, Rodin's The Kiss and the forthcoming exhibition that includes a display of costumes from the Marvel Studios' Black Panther film. We helped St Elizabeth Hospice deliver the Elmer's Big Parade during summer and which attracted over 200,000 people into Ipswich Borough Council venues during the trail.

This administration continues to support the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector through the grants we give to the world renowned NPOs that we have based here and the support we give those organisations in finding suitable accommodation in the town.

We know the work that we and Ipswich Destination Marketing Organisation do has an effect, as Ipswich was named the UK's top 'emerging destination' in TripAdvisor 2020 Travellers' Choice

Destination awards. Ipswich is the only British destination in the global ranking for this category.

In my view, the examples that we have given attract far more people in to Ipswich than the provision of the TIC and it's to be able to keep those organisations and events and providing them in the future that we are having to take tough decisions now.

Councillor Pope: I should say for those who weren't there, I did ask a similar question at Overview and Scrutiny and I have received the same answer, which is that it's all online now. If tourists don't go to the Tourist Information Centre, as Cllr Barber just stated, how can she account for the fact that over 100,000 visitors went in last year and 750,000 over the last five years, which by my mathematics is an average of 150,000 a year. More than attended the Ed Sheeran concerts.

Councillor Barber: The numbers that Cllr Pope actually refers to are people that have visited the Tourist Information Centre, and also I'm going to give some information which relates to the second question that Cllr Pope will be asking is that these are not necessarily people that are accessing the Tourist Information Centre for tourism information, so that is why we're having to take the really tough decision and consider closing the Tourist Information Centre because it's, as I've said before, it's not the way that people access information about tourism any more.

Mayor: Yes, there's a connection here. Cllr Pope are you happy to go straight into your next question for Cllr Barber, please?

Question 7 to be put by Councillor Pope to Councillor Barber

Councillor Pope: How was the wider impact of the Tourist Information Centre assessed and can the PH share the rationale behind this research?

Councillor Barber: Councillor I just need to beg your indulgence for a second, please. Thank you everybody.

What we know is that a very small number of people that I referred to in my previous answer, visiting the Tourist Information Centre, are doing so for Visitor Information. During what is considered as the peak tourist period spanning July, August and September, an analysis of the visitors to the Tourist Information Centre found that there were only 5 enquiries per day related to visitor Information about things to do in Ipswich. If a decision is made to close the TIC then it is our intention to continue to work with our partners to ensure that the provision of information is made online and we will ensure that printed material is accessible at other locations around the town and across Suffolk for those visitors who are already visiting.

We will work with operators of the River Cruises and the Tour Guides to provide a cost-effective service that meets their needs. Obviously we don't want to have to consider closing the TIC if we didn't have to, but it's an expensive service and this proposal provides a much needed financial saving towards the £10m deficit that we are facing.

Councillor Pope: I do have a supplementary question but I wonder as Cllr Barber didn't actually answer my first question whether I should just ask it again? What was the rationale behind the closure and what research has been done into it? How have you measured the impact of it, in its wider sense?

My supplementary has been what other options have been explored instead of purely closing the Tourist Information Centre?

Councillor Barber: As I've said to Cllr Pope, we're exploring those options at the moment and that we will continue to work closely with the other partners in Ipswich and across Suffolk that actually work to provide Tourist Information and that we are working with our partners in Ipswich to develop a service. If the

decision is to close the TIC and that's what we'll do going forward. And again I will say that the number of people that come into the Tourist Information Centre in Ipswich is actually a very small number of people that coming into the building to access tourist information.

Question 8 to be put by Cllr Cenci to Councillor Ellesmere

Cllr Cenci: Ipswich Borough Council itself lost £158,000 on the Ed Sheeran concerts last year. Whilst this did bring in positive economic benefit to the private sector, this council cannot afford to lose sums of this nature again if future high-profile events are organised. What lessons have you learned to avoid such problems in the future please?

Councillor Ellesmere: I think I'd just like to correct you there. The Council didn't lose £158,000 on the Ed Sheeran concerts last year. This council invested £158,000 to help organise and ensure the safety of 140,000 people from all over the country and beyond who were attending these concerts. This money assisted in delivering an estimated £9m benefit to the local Ipswich economy.

We remain extremely proud of the role we played in bringing Suffolk's own superstar to Chantry Park and to co-host a unique exhibition on his life at Christchurch Mansion. We have of course gained significant experience from doing this and look forward to being able to use this experience to good advantage in the future.

Cllr Cenci: I totally agree it was wonderful event and I am sure that there are still lessons that were learnt and that would have been quite nice to have heard them but perhaps we'll hear them at another time. Thank you.

Question 9 to be put by Councillor Phillips to Councillor Ellesmere

Councillor Phillips: The administration seems determined to build a new car park in the Princes Street area at a cost of £10m. At a time when we really can't predict the future demands for a car park with this heavy level of expense, would you agree that now is the time to put the project on pause for just 12 months to re-evaluate its likely viability and sustainability. Please also clarify the expected source of this £10m of funding.

Councillor Ellesmere: No - I don't agree.

There seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding about the purpose of the proposed new Portman Road multi-storey car park.

It's aim is not to provide additional car parking spaces but to provide the same amount of car parking using less land. The land freed up will be re-developed bringing new jobs and investment to Ipswich.

An additional aim of the project is to significantly increase the number of publicly available EV charging points, thereby encouraging the increased take up of electric vehicles to help improve air quality in the area.

The final decision on funding the scheme will be made once the plans are further developed, but this proposal has been in the MTFP since February 2019, and has also been highlighted in the MTFP as being externally funded. The expectation is that this development would be funded by borrowing which would be repaid, not by the Council, but by ring-fenced Enterprise Zone income. It's also possible that Town Deal funding may also be sought to support the wider area and fund some of the elements included within the current planning application.

The further developments that would be kickstarted as a result of this project will also realise additional income and capital receipts which would accrue to the Council.

As Cllr Phillips is aware through his involvement on the Business and Recovery Steering Group, there is cross-party agreement that

the Council needs to undertake preparatory work to generate “shovel ready” projects for when external funding becomes available.

The Portman Road multi-storey is one such project. If the current preparatory work is paused for 12 months as he suggests then we could potentially lose out on external funding which would pay for the majority, if not all, of the construction.

However I can confirm that the decision whether to proceed with the building of the multi-storey car park still has to be determined by Executive, When Executive makes that decision it will clearly have regard to matters of current car park usage, funding and potential redevelopment projects.

Councillor Phillips: Thanks for that Cllr Ellesmere. You’re saying that the funding will come from Enterprise Zone money, well would you not agree that that’s our money effectively to begin with? And also can you clarify what other sorts of uses might you have for other parts of the ladder, which I’m quite interested to hear about? Now would that be leisure opportunities, would that be like temporary markets like the Ice Rink that we had about 15 years ago? If you elaborate on that, that will be great please?

Councillor Ellesmere: The Enterprise Zone funding is not our money. It is retained Business Rates paid for by businesses that have located in the Enterprise Zone, and this is funding that is ring-fenced for additional projects within the Enterprise Zone. We can’t spend them outside this area. There are a number of different projects that are being considered for Portman Road and they will be made public when they’ve progressed further.

I think it’s highly unlikely that there will be an Ice Skating Rink there. They generally don’t make a huge amount of money and I think, given the current financial state of the council, we need to be focussing on projects that are going to bring us additional income, not require further subsidy.

Question 10 to be put by Councillor Harsant to Councillor P Smart

Councillor Harsant: Why has Holywells Park Office been chosen to have its reception times drastically cut and yet there are no similar cuts in the Christchurch Park Reception?

Councillor Smart: Can I begin by assuring Cllr Harsant this is not an exercise in Park Office envy, but this decision has been arrived at after applying objective criteria.

Christchurch and Holywells Parks are two very different parks: The visitors to them, the times they visit and their reasons for visiting are all different.

The Reg Driver Centre at Christchurch Park is a multi-purpose facility containing a meeting room regularly used by a number of community groups as well as providing a public toilet facility.

At Holywells Park the toilets are accessed without the need to visit the reception and the Orangery is used less frequently. The proposal to change the opening hours at Holywells Park reception reflects when the majority of visitors make use of it, ensures that we have the right resource at the right times and as a result this proposal provides a much needed financial saving towards the £10m deficit we are facing. Can I also remind people it is worth noticing that the proposal relating to these opening hours of the Reception Desk will not, I repeat, not affect the opening times of the adjacent café.

Councillor Harsant: Cllr Smart, you will remember that there is a disabled toilet in Holywells Park, which the Receptionist does have the key to so that's something to think about, but that actually isn't my supplementary.

What I want to say, is it not true the Reception at Holywells Park was a specific part of the HLF National Lottery funded project. Do you not agree that this proposed draconian reduction sends a poor message in respect of existing and future Lottery Funded projects?

Councillor Smart: Cllr Harsant, none of us are happy that we are having to make this decision, but I'm satisfied that objective criteria has been applied in reaching this decision and I'm sure that the Heritage Lottery Fund will understand that.

Question 11 to be put by Councillor Fisher to Councillor Meudec

Councillor Fisher: Please could you provide me with up to date information on the number of employees currently furloughed and the full time equivalents?

Councillor Meudec: Currently there are 317 employees on Furlough today. This equates to 77.36 Full Time Equivalents.

So this sounds quite low because it includes a large number of “casual employees” who are contracted to do a minimum of 5 hours per year, hence the FTE number being so low.

So work is well underway to make Grafton House and all our operational buildings COVID-Secure following Government guidance. However, we will not be able to accommodate as many staff as before Coronavirus in Grafton House due to some of the Government rules.

So in the coming weeks managers and HR will discuss what next with each employee who has been working from home and we will have to take into account the COVID-Secure guidance, the job role and the employee’s personal circumstances of course, including any health issues. So this way we will be able to balance the needs of the Council with the needs of the employee and comply with Government guidance. It’s not really a quick and easy process but it is important that it’s not being rushed.

Councillor Fisher: Cllr Meudec’s thrown me off a little bit because she’s managed to answer my supplementary question without actually hearing it – part of it anyway.

I’m just asking Cllr Meudec would she agree that the council being a large employer and somebody a public body has a kind of like - should really be setting an example on bringing workers (not necessarily just furloughed workers, but workers working from home as well) back into the office to set a good example for other companies. I’m very pleased that work is going on, but I think we do need to speed this up slightly to show that we’re obviously open for business and to give that message to the rest of the town in the hope that others follow. Will she agree with that?

Councillor Meudec: I'm not a clairvoyant but here we go. To your supplementary question, we have to follow the government guidance albeit we want to set an example. It's very important to be very careful. And as you know, the Chief Executive on a weekly basis on a Friday morning, does issue an update on Covid-19 and last week's update was that we are working on bringing people back to the Office and - let me see if I can see the highlight on it – and that there's been significant amounts of new signage and sanitisers, where to go up, where to go down, in the building but still we will only manage about 25 – 30% occupancy, and so we are on it.

I sort of agree with you that we need to bring back people, staff, because some people want to go back as well so it's very important and obviously it's subject to not having a second wave of pandemic.

Question 12 to be put by Councillor I Lockington to Councillor Ellesmere

Councillor I Lockington: Could the Leader of the Council outline what the capital cost of the Corn Hill redevelopment project was in the first place for NALEP, Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council, secondly, what the capital cost of the ongoing corrective work will have been when finished plus the revenue cost to date and the future budget for IBC for the revenue cost and finally, what the total capital cost will have been if we had been installing what is now planned in the first place?

Councillor Ellesmere: The original breakdown of the budget contribution from to each of the funders of the Cornhill Project was New Anglia LEP £1.6m, Ipswich Borough Council £0.8 and Suffolk County Council £0.8m.

This was then increased by £50k, £200k and £100k respectively prior to the main contract being let. At that time Ipswich Central also contributed an additional £50k.

Since then the Council has contributed a further £373k related to the current works. All of this has been reported to Executive as per my reply to Cllr Phillips' earlier question.

Ipswich Borough Council remains only the 2nd largest financial contributor to the project.

In terms of revenue, £36k was set aside for ongoing annual maintenance. Ipswich Borough Council has also contributed £25,000 towards the comprehensive programme of events on the Cornhill which occurred last year. This was funded from a reallocation of existing budgets and was matched by £25,000 from Ipswich Central and £50,000 from New Anglia LEP.

As to the last part of Cllr Lockington's question, there's really so many different variables in play here, that it's not possible to give an answer with any certainty.

Councillor I Lockington: I would like to ask what happened to the pillars called "Stonehenge"? Have they now gone forever? And of course the plaques on them? Are they going to be incorporated (the plaques) into the finish, or is that what we now see, is that how it's going to look like?

Councillor Ellesmere: I think it's safe to say that we won't see the pillars again. We did salvage the plaques and are considering what use we might put them to in future.

Question 13 to be put by Councillor Holmes to Councillor M Cook

Councillor Holmes: In February 2018, the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government published Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments setting out new disclosure and reporting requirements for investments, defined to include loans for wholly-owned companies, for financial years commencing on or after 1st April 2018. Ipswich Borough Council does not seem to have complied with this Statutory Guidance. Why is this?

Councillor M Cook: The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Governance Statement, Constitution and budget monitoring reports combine together to comply with the Statutory Guidance that you refer to.

I do recognise however, that having these different elements being included in different documents isn't the simplest way to present and understand the information, doesn't necessarily aid transparency and make assessing compliance particularly easy and so with that in mind, we're going to be considering how we can best pull all of this information into a more coherent framework going forward.

Councillor Holmes: Thank you to Cllr Cook. Has he considered the comments made by the external auditor in this regard?

If I just make a couple of them.

It says "The council should review its capital strategy in the light of the revised Code of Practice" - that's the guidance.

It also says "This update to the strategy should have been undertaken in advance of the current borrowings and loans to Ipswich Assets made during 2018-2019". So presumably this also applies to the current financial year?

Councillor M Cook: So appreciate the supplementary. On 17th September 2019 Ernst & Young, the auditors, were asked at the Audit and Governance Committee if they were satisfied with the council's response to the recommendations that you just set out there, and I'm just going to read briefly from the Minutes of that

Audit and Governance Committee meeting so that you can get the picture of how they looked at this.

First of all:

23.7 A value for money risk assessment had been undertaken which focussed on the governance and decision-making arrangements between the council and their subsidiaries of which they had been satisfied that appropriate provisions had been implemented.

23.8 Updated guidance stated that Authorities must not borrow more than or in advance of their needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. However, should a local authority choose to disregard this guidance, the council had to ensure that their investment strategy included the reasons why and how the risks associated with this would be minimised. It had therefore, been recommended that due to the scale of the borrowing, and the increased risk to the council, Ipswich's strategy be updated. A satisfactory conclusion had been given as the council had showed a robust decision-making process, however, due to possible significant changes to the guidance in future the council would need to remain mindful of this.

So as you can see I think from that extract from the Minutes, Ernst & Young were satisfied with the steps that had been taken to address their audit recommendation. A detailed review of the guidance has been undertaken by officers and it would be helpful to bring difference aspects of this together in to one single chapter in the next Medium Term Financial Plan or as a stand-alone document as I kind of outlined earlier to make sure that this was in one place, which would make it easier to follow and understand. This should be timed to be after any formal changes to the Public Works Loans Board, which are under consultation at the moment, have been made so that the new document and chapter can take all of that into account.

Question 14 to be put by Councillor Holmes to Councillor Ross

Councillor Holmes: Has any final decision been made on the additional parts of the Public Space Protection Order regarding anti-social behaviour originally proposed in 2018?

Councillor Ross: A *Public Space Protection Order* is in place in Ipswich for Alcohol, Dog fouling, urination and defaecation.

No final decision has been made following public consultation on the more wide ranging PSPO. The consultation raised some further human rights issues and then alongside the pandemic impact, further consideration on this matter is required.

Councillor Holmes: It does sound to me as though the proposals for such things as the loitering and collecting of people in groups have been abandoned and if this is the case is it not a waste of considerable time and resource?

Councillor Ross: We are looking at all the measures that were in the original consultation and it was quite obvious of the six measures, all of them were very, very popular with residents with the lowest one being 65% and the average is over 80% of the public, were happy with all the measures.

Two of the measures did raise concerns with us as well as human rights. One of them you mentioned the dispersal / loitering – that can already be dealt with with current police powers so the element was put in so that council employees could deal with issues on IBC land when the police are unable to attend.

As I said, once the virus pandemic is over we will be looking again at all the measures.

Question 15 to be put by Councillor T Lockington to Councillor Barber

Councillor T Lockington: If the promotion of Ipswich Tourism by Ipswich Borough Council is to continue as an essential activity of the Council, what specialist staff, outlets and budget are required to deliver and support our offer to Tourists and enable the promotion of Ipswich's attractions through Tourism services provided by other administrations in the Region, recognising that they should expect reciprocal support?

Councillor Barber: If the decision is made to close the TIC, then in the main the Council's role will be to support the private sector-led Destination Marketing Organisation.

As such we don't envisage there being a need for this Council to regularly provide additional specialist staff, additional outlets or additional budgets to support this. It may be that we, and other partners, support the DMO on a project by project basis (e.g. from economic development budgets).

As is stated in the MTFP updated report, the DMO have confirmed that if the decision is made to close the TIC, then going forward they will look to work with the Council to continue to promote Ipswich as a Visitor Attraction.

Councillor T Lockington: I am concerned that we don't appear to have a wider vision of tourism promotion across Suffolk, but tourism is a degree-level specialism and the town I believe trains in this area. When will we be in a position to reassure skilled staff of the borough's continuing commitment?

Councillor Barber: So Cllr Lockington . . . continued commitment to . . . do you mind just clarifying that point for me, please?

Mayor: Can you unmute Cllr Lockington and just repeat that part of your supplementary?

Councillor T Lockington: To reassure skilled staff that we will continue to employ them to deliver an important service.

Councillor Barber: Cllr Lockington, from what I can understand is that we don't really see that there would be a need to continue to employ specialist staff if the decision is made to close the TIC, and

as such we will support the Destination Marketing Board on a project by project basis and actually to help to promote Ipswich and all the attractions that it has through that in that method.