

## **Additional feedback collated through meetings and events and including correspondence received**

The information is presented using three headings:

1. Concerns and issues
2. Ideas and opportunities
3. Other comments/feedback

### **Concerns and Issues**

#### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

Q SCC committed to 0% Council Tax increase – (that is what we are planning on) but Parish Councils don't get the bribe (ie 2.5% bonus from central gov for 0% increase) but we have to deal with the fall-out of SCC going for 0% and have to meet own inflationary pressures. Doesn't seem fair.

Q Parish Councils often pump primed – how they can be assured that the money will remain if take on divested service?

A; Explained that looking to decrease over time

Q. What services do you intend not to commission out?

Q. If there is a service that you don't think SCC should do, but no-one wants to do it, what would you do?

A If no stat duty may let die

Q. Where do footpaths sit on your list?

Q. Building community capacity – results will only be seen over the medium term, but to develop this capacity needs short term investment. This will be key to helping town and parish councils to build capacity. What is transition fund? How does it fit in?

A – Transition Fund national scheme Councils can apply to, SCC have our own management of change budget (c 2million) that we can use; also RIEP funding

Q. Will organisations running services be subject to audit?

A Issue will be how we set up governance. If arms length company the caught by us; if totally separate should have own. Governance needs looking at

Q But for parishes there is a problem re governance if we are being asked to work alongside SCC due to different governance requirements. This could make things tricky.

Q We were contacted by SCC to see who has Quality Status as SCC will only divest libraries to parishes with a Quality Status. Is this the same for all services? Concerned as there are other things to judge on.

Concern re suggestion that SCC will provide HR advice as that could be a point of conflict in negotiations.

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### **Comments from meeting with VCS organisation**

- Pay of senior Council officers
  - Runaway costs of CSD a very bad example of how to run a contract
  - We will never find enough volunteers/impossible to get volunteers to do anything/always the same old people
  - Not enough detail known/when will "we" be consulted/what about all the SCC people who will be out of a job?
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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

- Why is Suffolk County Council the only LA pursuing this divestment route? It is a high risk strategy – are there no alternatives?
- Danger of different service levels in different areas and people paying twice for services
- Will there be any funding to support parishes wishing to take on additional services/responsibilities?
- If funding support is tapered (eg 100% in year 1, 85% in year 2 etc), how are we expected to make up the difference? By raising precept? People are already stretched and paying a lot of money and towns and parishes have already explored opportunities of maximising use of community space etc to raise revenue.
- Are we going to be lumbered with buildings & services which we cant afford to maintain and have to raise our local precept to sustain?
- Funding situation SCC is facing is accepted but SCC approach seems very radical and feels like decisions are being made 'on the hoof'. It is rushed and we are not being given enough time to consider implications.
- At the divestment event on 23 Nov it was stated that SCC want to develop their offer by December 2010 – this is next week and we still don't know what is going to be on offer.
- Many councillors (town & parish) are volunteers – concerns over being asked to take on activities they don't have capacity or expertise to deliver

- Core raison d'être of library is to raise knowledge. If it becomes a local facility where are the broad range of books going to come from (countywide service at the moment)
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### **Comments from letter received from Town/Parish Council**

- Lack of clarity about which services were being considered for divestment and what divestment actually meant (e.g. does it mean transfer of ownership of property to a community organisation)?
  - What relationship will any new organisations have with the county council?
  - Will they operate under contract from the council or will they be expected to be self-funding within a certain period of time? If the latter is the case, how will these organisations raise the money they need to provide some very complex services on a day-to-day basis?
  - Will customers be expected to become paying members of a particular organisation that provides them with a certain service? If so, what will be done to help those with a complex range of needs that cannot afford to pay?
  - Who will customers be able to hold to account if they feel they are not getting the services they need to the appropriate standard? How?
  - What will be done to help organisations build their capacities and skills bases to enable them to provide a larger volume of complex services as self-sustaining organisations?
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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

Qu: Divestment – how will you decide who is best to divest to?

[Ans – looking to develop criteria , but it's a discussion with anyone interested to try to work out the best option, rather than us having any fixed ideas already.]

Qu: Why has it taken so long to find out we're spending too much money and we now need to pass things onto volunteers?

[Ans - Each year we have been reducing costs and finding efficiency savings, but this year is a watershed and we can't continue as we are – we can't save enough this way. This government is giving us more freedom on how we spend the money which will help.]

Qu: Divest policy – is it a done deal? Is there much point consulting on whether to divest, or is it a consultation of what to divest?

[Ans – 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec Cabinet report is to continue to explore what will and wont work, and where we can save money. This is not a done deal as we don't have the answers yet.]

Qu: Is it consultation on what's in the model rather than divestment principle?

[Ans – no guarantees that what we are suggesting will work. Eg libraries, what if people don't come forward to want to run them – we'll need to think again.]

Qu: This relies on parish councils/communities, the grassroots, what have you done to build capacity?

[Ans: not everyone has the capacity or wants to get involved in their communities. Capacity building is part of the Transformation plan.]

Questioner – said he'd look forward to reading it!

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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

Qu: What might divestment look like –

A : library example. Traded services – can they be taken as a management buy-out. Social care services join up with Health

Qu: Underlying assumption that others can do it for less money.

A. reduction in large org' overheads. Care homes – council can buy that service for less than cost to run it

Qu: Libraries – if divested to be community run and eventually makes a profit, would there be reduction in local taxes for making a success of it.

A. Council costs would be reduced so savings may be passed by way of no increase in taxes

Qu: Cost to individual parish too great.

A. Anything that council can do to make efficiencies will be of value to parishes / communities.

Qu: If community not willing service will be lost?

A. Not necessarily, a different model of divestment. If it's a question of unwillingness due to lack of capacity – council will support.

Qu: Grass verges, play areas, who will do?

A. dog walkers could trim footpaths. Farmers to cut larger verges. Council could continue but less often. Lots of people would consider if just asked! Or might do for a nominal fee.

Qu: (NSD) raises liability issues, etc. When will parishes get more detail?

A. This is the start of the conversation.

Qu: Is Capital Revenue Grant in danger of being lost? Is District going to hand back things like cemeteries to parishes

A. (SCDC) that's currently being discussed, looking at equity of provision. What facilities do parishes have (all different).

Qu: Concern re lack of communication with parishes about NSD (so far).

What happens if all parishes willing to take on a service - bidding war? No apparent process in place.

A. NSD concept taken to Council 2009 but only agreed specific development of NSD in Sept 2010. Now working up process.

Qu: Would parishes be supported with understanding legislative requirements, eg HR issues, play equipment.

A. Yes

Qu: What assurances can be given that changes to Care homes will not jeopardise quality of care.

A. New Strategic Council will ensure standards meet requirements

Town councils – willing to work with new way. Have some capacity but concerned about timing, practicalities of implementation and prioritisation – needs lots of communication.

Governance issues need to be carefully thought though

Concerns about vulnerable people – councils should continue with responsibility

Qu: Libraries – who owns building, who repairs roof? Librarians are professionals

A.. building based matters, depends on transfer of asset. Is it sold, leased, what would terms be? Libraries need not be based in a council building

Qu: Assumptions being made that parishes will bear brunt. More work – restricted precepts. Have to get precept up substantially this year as future years will hit parishes.

A. Will have to go to referendum to do that? Who will pay?

Qu: Planning applications. Will parishes have more say?

A. Would you want it- Improvements needed to planning process

Qu: Landfill tax. If new incinerator – will still pay tax?

A. No

Qu: Parish councils unpaid – will NOT take on this work unless provision is made.

A. Will be sources of funding eg. Locality budgets, place based funding

Recruiting volunteers ever more difficult. People are busier and more tired

People need to relearn self-sufficiency and be able to revive a community culture.

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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

- Difficult to recruit volunteers.

- If youth clubs close young people will have nothing to do and may end up hanging around on the streets and getting into trouble with the police.
  - The cost in redundancy and early retirement payments.
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### **Comments noted from local forum**

- It won't work - too many agencies involved and no one is co-ordinating
  - Heard about the changes - I'm not worried
  - Not interested until they start chopping out the higher levels of staff in the organisation to save money
  - None of it effects me - I don't have children and I drive to work in a car.
  - Need more face to face services such as a mobile van so you can speak to someone if necessary - don't do everything on the internet.
  - Concerns about the cost of activities rising above the rate of inflation (especially in the new South West Centre)
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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

- Professional services v generalist services. i.e. children's care services. How do we ensure that professional work is carried out to a proper standard?
  - What happens if a provider fails in some way after the service /contract has been divested to them ?
  - Explore cards being stopped/public transport savings – concerns about supporting rural communities.
  - Closure of park and ride at Bury Road. How does this support the green economy?
  - What is the cost of monitoring the divestment?
  - Cutting staff budget by 6.5 million. When things go wrong who will be left to fix the problem.
  - What are the resource issues for Parish Councils as a result of the NSD? Admin costs of setting up new services must be included in increased funds to Parish's taking on new roles.
  - Are redundancy payments going to be cost effective and are they being monitored properly.
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- Concerns that the service will lose its professional standard, no continuity of service that is mostly run by volunteer sector

- Loss of jobs
  - Lack of funding to support the service in the future once it has been divested
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## **Ideas & Opportunities**

### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

- Get parishes together to commission a service, rather than SCC commissioning.
  - Can we still pursue some of the ideas from LGR One Suffolk bid as there were some good ideas there. SCC does not seem to be drawing Councils together in Suffolk and building on some of the ideas from the unitary bid.
  - Where you are doing work elsewhere important to explain that too.
  - A lot of parishes and town councils are saying they have not been consulted. Too reliant on media – hear things through media eg All youth clubs closing; Bury park & ride closing without discussion with relevant parishes. Please keep us more informed and discuss more.
  - More locality budgets to get projects off the ground
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### **Comments from meeting with VCS organisation**

None whatsoever.

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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

Why doesn't SCC abandon SOR – would save lots of money

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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

- Could council employ officers similar vein to police community officers. Highly valued by police officers
- Could the 'same people who have always done things' encourage their communities to take their turn. (build capacity from inside)
- Local knowledge is key and parishes knowledge will be advantageous. Verge cutting (timing is important) Car parking.

## Other comments/feedback received

### **Comments received from a Town and Parish Councillor via SCC Elected Member**

If we work on the assumption, that if a private enterprise takes on a public service, it will be looking to make a profit, then the question we have to ask is why the authority cannot do the same exercise of looking at possible profitability?

Warning signs from the 1980s demonstrate that failing utility companies were sold off to the private sector and went on to make huge profits for share holders. These companies better managed and slimmed down but remaining in the public sector would now be making huge profits for the tax payer and providing a more stable energy supply. Most public services can be better run, provided the public and the authority accept that they need to be run on business terms and not at a continuing loss just because they are in the public sector. What is needed is a sea change of thinking not sourcing out to the private sector.

The public sector acts as a better safeguard to public services that have taken 70 years to establish. Border line services will not survive in the private sector. It is arguable that before divestment is undertaken four points should be followed;

1. Re-think the relationship. Could that service make a profit under the public authority? Should some services be charged for? Has the relationship been updated? Can the service change for the better?
2. Education Teach service users to use the service with less management and resources, being more efficient. Train people to think differently, more automation. Workers being more adaptable to cover others jobs.
3. Valuation Are certain parts unprofitable, if so can these be charge for special services? Can services that only apply to certain communities be charged differently? Should all services be free at the point of use? Authorities should look at business plans for services rather than just sourcing out.
4. Move services Can services or clients be moved to other tiers rather than standing on their own. Would they be more viable if they were part of another service? Local examples of this have been new vitality given to post offices when they join with pubs or village halls.
5. Final assessment Only at the end of these points should divestment be considered. It probably means also that that service is not viable in any quarter anyway. It means that service only has a limited life and probably should be in the private sector. There is a real argument for these individual services to

be run by a community, a local village hall is already an example of this where it would rarely be viable to anyone outside the Parish, which is why they are run the way they are. However locality and the minority of the users is probably not enough to discriminate against that service on its own.

### Conclusion

We should be very wary of divestment for divestments sake. We should realise that economics rarely provide a good safeguard for the poor in society. We should also conclude from the analysis that nearly all services can be made profitable with the right management and new work structures. We should not assume that public services that lose the authority money at present should always be that way. What is needed is a new approach to public services that will continue tradition of our respected services, delivering in a new and modern way, making profit for the tax payer.

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### Comments from a Town and Parish Council liaison forum

Clarification sought regarding whether Government grants will be less ring-fenced in the future and whether SCC will have more discretion on how money is spent.

Papers for 2 Dec Council meeting are already on the website and people were encouraged to have a look. SALC are writing to SCC Chief Exec to request more detailed conversations – want more clarity about implications of Phase 1 of divestment programme (libraries, open space) and how dialogue with local councils could be more coherent.

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### Questions raised at Town and Parish Council liaison forum

1. Will County Councillors be equally involved?
2. Will County Councillors be looking for a pay increase – demands on time are likely to increase and allowance is currently based on 22 hours per week?
3. How will CAB grant be decided? No changes under the Compact have been notified to CAB. Demand is increasing on CAB service is increasing?
4. Concessionary Fares are being cut – will dial a ride be a good enough replacement service?
5. Elderly and young people need a bus service; good neighbour schemes can't replace lost bus services. Dial a ride doesn't serve young people U18.
6. What 'services' are going to be passed to Town Councils?
7. If libraries are closing will the mobile library pick up the slack /be extended?
8. Are there any examples of where it has worked?

9. Will County Council be in charge of overall strategy? – what happens if services fail?
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### **Questions raised at Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

1. Why is the grant [central govt] for adults being reduced when demography shows an increase in demand?
  2. How will SCC meet statutory obligations in relation to for example mental Health services?
  3. Withdrawal of transport subsidy and school – home service has disproportionate effect on rural communities – where is the mandate for this?
  4. Street lighting in our village is on 24/7 but senior officer salaries are reduced; why are we talking about selling off the family silver when no consultation has taken place?
  5. Closure of care homes will result in asset stripping. In relation to Davis Court – why can't SCC care homes be brought up to standard instead of the site being sold off? Once it is earmarked for closure staff will leave and people who are able will move out so standards will fall? Who will be responsible for the standards in private homes?
  6. Did SCC look at all the options, why is there no consultation?
  7. Pension liabilities for transferred staff are too much for smaller organisations?
  8. What will the parish precept be from April 12?
  9. Why is it so hard to contact County Councillors?
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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison meeting**

Officers being very resilient and have accepted austerity – parishes need to do same. Need to be less H&S conscious

Qu: What about deregulation.

A. Need to look at assets that may be better managed at community level. Community would be supported to manage. May be through a grant aided fund.

Qu: Towns have more capacity than parishes?

A. Accepted that parishes not capable yet. Support will be provided. All orgs have to change ways of working – agencies, voluntary sector, etc

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### **Feedback received from meeting of key Suffolk VCS organisations with local councillor and MP**

We are where we are.

The Suffolk third sector has been engaged with doing 'Big Society' for many decades, it is highly professional in its approach to delivering services for vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities; it adds value, is cost effective, innovative and grounded in localities across the County.

The third sector as such does not have the absolute right to exist, its leaders recognise that it has to compete, put its best face forward, and demonstrate VFM, effectiveness, impact and the achievement of positive outcomes for its beneficiaries.

- The NSD proposals have been presented as 'cutting edge', and leading the way nationally. The Suffolk third sector is prepared and equipped to respond to the challenge. However, more capacity is required to ensure it is able to respond effectively. Suffolk County Council should consider how it strategically engages with what is a diverse range of third sector providers; currently, the County lacks a co-ordinated, transparent and accountable approach.

The sector is compelled to deal with different officers from different departments, and there is no joined up, co-ordinated or well-thought through approach to working with the sector being adopted by the authority; causing confusion and muddle. This must be resolved in partnership with the third sector. A combined, collaborative leadership style could drive forward NSD to achieve positive outcomes. Central government recognised the need for this with the creation of the Office of the Third Sector, now re-named Office for Civil Society and headed up by Minister, Nick Hurd MP.

- The third sector requires help with the forthcoming period of transition and change management on a co-ordinated and expanded basis from the County Council (the one county based authority which significantly funds third sector activity, and to which many quite rightly look to for financial support for service provision to Suffolk residents and communities). If this is not done now organisational chaos, bitterness and service fragmentation will result; and the 'perfect storm' of public sector cuts locally, accompanied by significant reductions in national funding streams, will mean the sector, and the services it provides, will implode. Years of experience, effective service delivery and inter-locking relationships and local knowledge could be thrown to the wind.

- The Big Society should not be about replacing paid third sector workers with volunteers; locally its implementation should not centre on merely being 'cost cutting by the back door'. Is salami-slicing of grants to the sector the most intelligent and strategic way to proceed? This would reduce the capacity and potential to respond positively to NSD. Flourishing and successful third sector organisations will be forced to fall back to 'fire-fighting' tactics rather than responding to the challenges and opportunities of NSD.

- The public sector has much to learn from the operational success of the third sector in Suffolk, and NSD offers up the third sector tangible opportunities and the key issue is to effectively manage the 'transition' period as envisaged by NSD. The time is now for collaboration – based on mutual respect and a

sense of equality - between sectors, and partnership between third sector organisations to maximise the opportunities presented by NSD and 'Big Society'.

- Suffolk County Council must capitalise on the wealth of local knowledge and expertise offered up by the third sector, and ensure that its future commissioning of services respects the value, commitment and passion of what is currently provided by the third sector; intelligent commissioning of services through NSD is vital to the success or otherwise of NSD. There remains huge concern that unintelligent commissioning will result in services being 'outsourced' to national (corporate-style) third sector organisations, with large balance sheets, which will focus on the easy pickings or 'low hanging fruit'. These incoming organisations will not have the best interests of Suffolk residents and communities in their hearts. This must be avoided at all costs.

Suffolk, and East Anglian, third sector organisations are the best placed to deliver locally appropriate and efficient services. This would then give genuine and real expression to the Government's agenda on 'Localism'. This is what Big Society in Suffolk should truly be all about: local organisations understanding local community needs and delivering local services.

- Suffolk County Council should consider seconding third sector leaders, senior personnel and Trustees into the commissioning process so that localism is built into the process. This expertise and sophistication is vital. Many local authority officers simply do not have sufficient experience and local knowledge to make informed decisions, and this will undermine the implementation of NSD. Many local authority officers because of their background within the public sector lack empathy and a working knowledge of what it is like to be a third sector worker, to secure funds, manage volunteers and develop up flexible strategies for delivering services to marginalized and vulnerable individuals and communities. This is not their fault, but it is a serious impediment to NSD's success in Suffolk.

- Similarly, elected representatives should be appointed to the Trustee boards of more third sector organizations to ensure democratic accountability; and establish better two-way conversations. As NSD recognises power and decision-making is too concentrated in Endeavour House. Elected representatives across all tiers and MPs need to have a real say and get involved themselves in overseeing and scrutinising the delivery of local services by third sector organisations (funded by public money). Transparency and accountability need to be nurtured.

- The Suffolk third sector comprises a wide range of long-established organisations, led by people (managerially and as Trustees) with vast experience, local knowledge and true Brit grit, who will work together and act in the best interests of the 'communities of interest or place' they represent. They will continue to work with their elected representatives and more closely with Suffolk MPs. They have confidence in their MPs to ensure that the services and communities they jointly serve will be top priority and that NSD will be made to work in everyone's interests; and informed by the principles

embedded in the localism agenda.

The Suffolk third sector call upon their MPs to champion their cause and ensure that they continue to flourish and deliver on Big Society policy objectives to the best of their collective abilities.

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### **Content of a letter from a Parish Council**

Being aware of the implications of the government's recent Comprehensive Spending Review and proposals for radical decentralisation and 'localism', members of the parish council have endeavoured to learn as much as possible about the County Council's New Strategic Direction (NSD). As well as reading the NSD documents issued by the county council on 29th October, during November councillors have attended the joint Budget Review Forum, the budget presentation to the SALC Area Committee and the 'Understanding Divestment' Conference on 23rd November, and will attend the 'Big Society Conference' on 26th November. Despite this, we are concerned that there is very little clear information available about just what the NSD means in terms of delivery of local services nor about how the divestment process will work in practice.

It is reported that, at the 'Understanding Divestment' Conference, County Cllr. Jane Storey stated "If people don't value a service, it won't be delivered. If no one comes forward with an offer to deliver it, that's proof, it's not needed." The parish council is gravely concerned about the implications of this, given that there appears to be:

- no timetable for reviewing the provision / divestment / cessation of service provision;
- no procedure for identifying / advising communities affected by proposed provision / divestment / cessation;
- no timescale within which a 'community based offer' to take on divested services is expected to be made.

It appears most unlikely that divestment will be in place to any significant extent in time to deliver the necessary savings in the 2011/12 budget. The parish council is concerned that, other than tables forming slides 11 & 12 of the Budget Briefing & NSD presentation, there is no indication of which services might be reduced or withdrawn; there has been no meaningful dialogue with the community about this.

As an active and forward looking local council, xxxxx PC welcomes the principle of local services

As an active and forwardlooking local council, xxxxx PC welcomes the principle of local services being locally determined and locally delivered at the level closest to the local community. However, for the last century or so, local public services have been determined and delivered by district / county councils and by central government agencies. As a result, the level of local council financial & human resources is based on their historically low level of

service provision and the absence of any mechanism for the receipt of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) from central government. Nevertheless, local councils are subject to the same financial rules as district / county councils, cannot increase their precept in midyear and have recently been encouraged by the Secretary of State (despite the absence of any RSG to be increased) not to seek significant increases in precept for 2011/12. In the case of Melton, the parish council has an annual budget of £53,000, 94% of which comes from its council tax precept and 6% from charges for use of our playing field. Its paid staff totals 0.7 fulltime equivalents (FTE), whilst none of its councillors receives any form of allowance. Any devolution of services or divestment of facilities to the parish council must therefore be accompanied by the devolution of an appropriate share of the current county council funding for the provision/maintenance of that service/facility.

Councillors are aware, from the report considered by the County Council on 23rd September, that "it is proposed to start the (divestment) process with a set of early adopter services that will allow the Council to begin the process and develop expertise for the more substantial Phase 1 service".

Implementation of Phase 1 (up to 15 discrete services) is shown as commencing in April 2011, followed in September 2011 by Phase 2, with Phase 3 completed by September 2012. In these circumstances, the parish council would expect the County Council to have identified not just the broad outline of the New Strategic Direction, but also some detail about the services involved, the mechanism and timescale for divestment and a process for devolving funding to those local councils which take on devolved functions. We have heard nothing of any of this.

Councillors are also sceptical about the current consultation process. The 23rd September resolution states "That there should be proactive and wide ranging engagement across Suffolk to establish whether the key NSD proposals find favour with the communities we all represent before moving forward to implementation; and the findings from this engagement be reported back to Full Council at its meeting on 2 December 2010". In completed disregard for the terms of the Compact in Suffolk, to which it is a signatory, we are faced with a consultation on a very significant topic, which started on 29th October, contains very little detail, has no stated enddate but the results of which will be considered at a council meeting less than five weeks later. With the best will in the world, this cannot be described as 'proactive and wideranging engagement'.

#### Conclusion:

Please advise the County Council meeting on 2nd December that xxxxx PC:

- welcomes the principle of local services being locally determined and locally delivered at the level closest to the local community.
- expresses major concern about the inadequacy of the current consultation process.
- expects any devolution of services or divestment of facilities to the parish council to be accompanied by the devolution of an appropriate share of the current county council funding.
- expects any divestment services or divestment of facilities, whether of the commercial or the community & voluntary sectors, to be undertaken in as part

of an orderly, measured and transparent process.

- expects an appropriate time to be allowed for consultation with service users and local councils not just in the area in which a facility to be divested is based but also the wider area which it serves.

- expects a dialogue with the local community to be started immediately on the budget savings for 2011/12, so that this can inform the final budget decision.

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### **Comments from Town and Parish Council liaison forum**

Where are schools in NSD/cuts agenda?

A: Included in CYP – inc in those cuts – no. Have dedicated schools grant.

Q: Has dedicated schools grant been reduced?

A: Don't know yet – talking about element of protection in schools. Pupil rolls falling so at best stand still and some may fall.

Q: Corporate and Capital has no drop – why?

A: Amount we pay to fund capital programme debt so need ££ in there to fund historic debt. SCC doesn't have a debt – What is debt you just mentioned then? Roads and schools previously funded through capital programme.

Q: How did you prioritise cuts?

A: Protected most vulnerable.

Q: Are statutory services more protected?

A: Yes – stat obligation for older people and schools, fostering and adoption, and social care. Equally have obligations as a highway authority.

Q: Explain front loading issue regarding cuts?

A: Most cuts up front – what % of 28% is 1st year etc – 8% this year, 9% next year.

Q: Have you chosen to do this or has govt forced this?

A: Govt has stated cuts will be front loaded.

Q: Are savings going to hurt? Will people lose their jobs?

A: Yes – RM property has already lost 40% of staff.

Q: How would we have managed under Unitary?

A: Had already identified savings.

Q: Divestment does not seem to save a great deal? Why all the publicity?

A: Some libraries and country parks – a small part of savings plan.

Divestment a longer term aim.

Q: Why target Bury Rd P&R – withdrawal of subsidy:

A: Furious – has increasing customer base. Appears to be done on demographic not on anything else. Increase is all on concessionary basis – older people – so dies not show up as income. Big mistake. Give it back to

Ipswich Buses who ran it v successfully. Money spent will have been wasted. People from big area have nowhere else to go. Car park is always full. Site not owned by SCC. Possible that First or Ipswich Buses will take it over. SCC don't want to run it but if it can be made to pay then can continue.

Q: How will you get communities to help themselves?

A: Move onto NSD!

Q: Rural transport cuts (under public transport cuts) a huge issue – we need to move around. Social care transport issue – how will private sector pick this up? Will they?

A: Looking at areas to cut where little use of public transport – hope demand responsive will replace this underused transport. Used Hollesely as an area where this has worked.

Q: Would be better to reopen railway. Or have feeder services via buses into major centres.

A: Communities need to help themselves – costs for reopening rail are prohibitive.

Q: If private sector or divested service, eg library, starts to fail – will you pick it up?

A: Private care homes that fail are picked up by SCC. Will have to look at this anyway – will also be case for community to look at what they can do for themselves – eg path cutting hedge cutting etc on voluntary basis

Q: What happens if communities don't volunteer or divestments don't happen? Will you still provide service?

A: Probably not – depends on service – will only cut verges once per year for instance.

Q: Who covers for insurance of volunteers – eg with strimmer? People who are available are often where they cannot lug equipment up and down paths. Farmers will not do it for free – they will need payment and only when it is convenient for them – not in line with nature needs – eg when birds nesting shouldn't cut hedges – but if that is only time farmer can do it then that's when it will happen.

A: Are looking at where SCC can relax regulations around H&S – commonsense approach. Eg if register to clear snow with PC then are covered by SCC insurance.

Q: need some specialist meetings with Town and PC in Districts for divestment. Need proper engagement regarding country parks open spaces etc.

Q: Process is going too fast.

A: NSD is medium to long term process. Want to engage more people in community life and services.

Q: but phase 1 is quite fast – a lot of emphasis on staff running libraries as co-

ops. Councils feel that other options need to be allowed space. Also concern that ££ won't follow the service. So PC's need to get to grips with implications re precepting etc. Need specialist run of meetings to look at this. Info on how SCC will decide between competing expressions of interest – need to know how this process will work.

A: Are looking to SALC to help get PC's together. Age UK have a lot of paid staff as well as volunteers to provide services.

Q: Issue around ££ not following service – PC's are setting budgets now – need budget to follow as cannot precept after the event.

A: All part of info gathering that is occurring at the moment.

Q: Need to reimburse people for time and effort put in – cannot keep expecting people to give time for free with costs of getting there – need to reimburse travelling etc at very least. Cannot expect it all for free. People will not come forward otherwise.

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### **MS Society Eastern Region**

The committee wanted to know more about how the change of direction would effect PwMS and more particularly how and when SCC would engage with the MS community. There is direct experience within Suffolk of branches and groups developing services alongside other charities, health services and social care. The Region has engaged in and led the development of the Suffolk Neurological Alliance and that in Norfolk and Cambridge. We have a paid officer undertaking this work as part of our annual plan. Both we and the national centre fund these services (and others). The alliance engages with health and social care and is inclusive of MS, Parkinsons. Motor neuron, Epilepsy and Stroke. This is an organisation that wants to be engaged in SCC NSD but has had no contact as yet as is the case with the regional MS structures. The lack of contact is of concern given the community needs and aspirations.

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