

Please communicate the contents of this e-mail with all LTC Councillors or ensure that it is included in the formal business agenda for the next Full Council Meeting.

Thank you.

Regards,

Bob Collis

Dear Lowestoft Town Council:

I am writing this letter in my capacity as Chair of the Save Our Record Office (SORO) campaign group, and also as an amateur historian who has had a longstanding interest in local history and heritage.

As I am sure I do not need to remind the Council, on 10 Jan 2018 SCC announced the intended closure of Lowestoft Record Office. While the "Closure" has now morphed into a "transformation", the end result for LRO will ultimately be the same; the planned removal of the entire strongroom archive contents will be a serious blow to both the heritage community and the general public in NE Suffolk.

However skillfully SCC package up the "County-wide benefits" from "The Hold", the new £20m facility currently under construction in Ipswich, with pretty coloured maps showing lots of promised benefits for Lowestoft belie the fact that Lowestoft and Waveney are facing a major withdrawal of Record Office services, jobs, and little if anything by way of recompense.

Since the National Lottery Heritage Fund signed over £10.3m of public funds to SCC for this project in March 2018, Lowestoft has "hosted" three events. Two events with a musical act attracted fewer than 20 members of the public, and a "Time Capsule" event earlier this year failed to bring about the attendance of either our Mayor, MP, Town, District or Council Councillors, civic officials or members of the public.

Based on the above I would hope that the Council agrees with the opinion of the SORO group Committee that the "County-wide benefits" of this project have thus far been fairly abysmal so far as Lowestoft and NE Suffolk are concerned?

I have supported LTC from its inception, and I have publicly acknowledged and applauded the Council's work in promoting (and funding) local history and heritage projects in various groups and

Committees, several of which I have or have had the privilege to serve on. Only last month the Heritage Open Days festival clearly established Lowestoft as a county leader in the area of proactive history/heritage work. It therefore seems extraordinary to me that against this incredible backdrop of positive history/heritage industry work, that our County Council are proceeding with their plans to remove these unique, localised archives.

I feel that the time has come to make a stand on the subject of the removal of the of LRO archives. I am fully aware that the Lowestoft Library and Record Office site are outside the sphere of influence or control of LTC, but this is a public service withdrawal which our town in the current gloomy climate can ill afford on top of everything else.

I am therefore formally asking LTC to convey the feelings of the communities in NE Suffolk to SCC as neither myself nor any of the members of our group Committee are now in a position to do so. **All the members of the SORO Committee are now blacklisted by SCC.** This means that SCC will neither respond to, or even acknowledge our letters/e-mails. In addition to this, the SCC Monitoring Officer has now informed us that **anyone contacting them on our behalf will not receive a reply or an acknowledgement either.**

Our County Council have also taken the extraordinary step of automatically branding **any** FOI requests relating to either "Hold" or LRO as "vexatious, obsessive and repeated" and now use this response to avoid answering any requests for information. For a Council which supposedly prides themselves on their "openness and transparency" they appear to leave much to be desired!

LTC have already made their objections to the removal of the archives from LRO quite clear, and have also lamented the chronic lack of communication regarding consultation or consideration over what is actually going to be left at the LRO site. Yet despite widespread and very self-evident opposition including one of the biggest public petitions yet submitted to SCC, it does appear that we will shortly be facing the loss of a very large chunk of our cultural heritage. In short, we have again been ignored.

Irrespective of the status and location of the LRO strongroom contents, the SORO group fully intends to continue its campaign. We currently have no plans to reform as a support group for the "transformed" LRO in the event of the archives being decanted to Ipswich.

I would therefore be very grateful if the Council were to consider sending a formal communique to SCC and request in a polite but forthright manner an explanation as to exactly what their plans are for the "revitalised" site, the costing and timetable for the so-called

"transformation" and what events/exhibitions etc we can anticipate there in the future.

I look forward to receiving the Council's response to the above in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Collis

Chair Save Our Record Office

Vice Chair Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society

Vice Chair Lowestoft Independent Archive

Lowestoft Heritage Open Days Steering Committee

Historical Research Officer Lowestoft Aviation society