

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

Via Video Meeting  
16:30 on 12 November 2020

### MINUTES

**Video meeting participants:** Cllrs Sue Barnard, Neil Coleby, Alan Green, Paul Page, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce (Chair), Alice Taylor and David Youngman

**Also participating:** Shona Bendix (Clerk), Sian Maguire (Events and Communications Officer) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

#### 87. Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were reminded of the right to report and application of the video meeting protocol, and the meeting was welcomed.

#### 88. Apologies for absence

Cllr Taylor had advised she would be late. It was noted that Cllr Patience had stepped down from this Committee, but during the course of the meeting he made contact to retract his resignation from the Committee. Cllr Pitts had not provided apologies and was absent. It is understood the start times of meetings of this Committee may be making it difficult for some Councillors to attend the meetings. The scheduling of future meetings will be discussed later on the agenda.

#### 89. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

#### 90. Noting that the minutes of the meeting of 8 October 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

There were no comments and the draft minutes were noted.

#### 91. Any advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda

There were none.

#### 92. Budget:

92.1. Monitoring the budget for 2020 – 2021 – The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee are monitoring the budget and there were no particular matters to discuss here.

92.2. Bank reconciliations – Cllr Youngman has checked September's bank reconciliation, and October's has been sent to him. The bank reconciliations should be up to date by the next Full Council meeting.

92.3. An annual budget for the use of mulch in the Town Council's parks

*Cllr Taylor joined the meeting 16:37*

Cllr Coleby is putting together a paper for the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee to consider. It was suggested that the use of mulch would be in line with the Council's climate emergency declaration, as less watering would be required.

*Cllr Page joined the meeting 16:37*

Cllr Coleby proposed approval of a maximum annual budget of £2,000, from the parks development budget, for mulch; seconded by Cllr Barnard; six Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote; one Councillor did not participate in the vote. Cllrs Page and Taylor had not been present for most of the discussion.

92.4. A maximum budget of £1,842.50 for the purchase of bulbs for Normanston Park, Stoven Close and Daffodil Walk – East Suffolk Norse has provided the quotation and will be planting the bulbs. It is understood the planting will not incur an extra charge. Cllr Coleby proposed approval of a maximum budget of £1,842.50 for the purchase of bulbs for Normanston Park, Stoven Close and Daffodil Walk; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

92.5. Making a recommendation to Full Council on the budget provision for Christmas lights (or an

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alternative) in 2021 – 2022 – Two quotations have been received and circulated. The idea of projectors is also being explored, although locations would need to be considered carefully. The projectors could be used at other times of the year with different images. The current budget provision is £20,000 and the cost of projectors would be well within this. Full Council will be asked to consider the 2021 – 2022 budget provision for Christmas lights. A Zoom meeting will be arranged with the Council's current Christmas lights provider, ahead of the next Full Council meeting if possible, to discuss projectors and alternative options. A site visit can also be arranged early in the new year.

- 92.6. A maximum budget for wildflower areas at Clarkes Lane and Daffodil Walk – Cllr Coleby had a site visit with a representative from East Suffolk Norse, and is expecting further information shortly. It was agreed to move this item forward to December's Finance and Governance Committee meeting.
- 92.7. Whether to include provision for adult outdoor gym equipment in the 2021 – 2022 budget – The Committee felt this would be a good way of promoting health and wellbeing in the community, but would need to carry out public engagement first. There is £100,000 in the play areas reserve, and £50,000 has provisionally been budgeted for play areas in 2021 – 2022. Cllr Green proposed a recommendation to Full Council to ring fence £30,000 in the play areas reserve for outdoor fitness equipment; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.
- 92.8. A budget for signage at Sparrows Nest and The Ness – The signage required for Sparrows Nest is linked to lockable bollards and parking prohibition. Signage is required at The Ness to display contact information for reporting any issues. Cllr Coleby proposed approval for a maximum budget of £300 to purchase signage for Sparrows Nest and The Ness, with delegated authority to the Clerk to decide the appropriate wording; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 92.9. The cost increase for improvement work to Whitton Green, consideration of making a recommendation to Full Council on if and how to proceed with the project, and where within the budget the additional expenditure may come from – The original estimate for costs has been severely affected, largely due to ongoing effects of the pandemic. It is now understood the project will cost between £10,000 - £20,000 to complete. Funding has already been allocated to the project in the current budget, and there will still be £70,000 in the play areas reserve if Full Council agrees to ring fencing funds for the outdoor fitness equipment. Some external funding has been secured for the project and East Suffolk Norse is contributing labour. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to ring fence £30,000 in the play areas budget for the Whitton Green project; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour. It was requested that officers present an updated provisional budget to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee, including the ring fenced sums in reserves for outdoor fitness equipment and Whitton Green.
- 92.10. Building works at the Marina Theatre – The Town Council has responsibilities for the building as owner. Works to try and progress the building being fit for purpose are ongoing. There are cracks to the east and west towers and repointing work is required to prevent further deterioration. At present this work is likely to cost £3,022. The Council has also previously considered the issue the Theatre is having with nesting birds, and the noise and damage they are causing. The Clerk is awaiting confirmation that Suffolk Wildlife Trust is satisfied with the proposals being considered. The Theatre is looking a gel substance, rather than netting or Perspex, which does not have a negative environmental impact. The cost is likely to be approximately £8,700 and it should last for approximately three years. It was requested that a vote on the two lots of works be taken separately. Cllr Coleby proposed approval for a maximum budget of £8,700 for bird nesting control measures at the Marina Theatre, with delegated authority to the Clerk, subject to a satisfactory outcome being agreed between Lowestoft Town Council, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Marina Theatre, which will also need to ensure that the proposed measures are within the law and wildlife/environmental regulations; seconded by Cllr Pearce; seven Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against. Cllr Coleby proposed approval for a maximum budget of £5,000, with delegated authority to Clerk, to investigate and address the cracking to the east and west towers and required repointing

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work; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

92.11. The Norse contract review and budget implications (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

**93. Payments:**

93.1. The income and expenditure reports for October 2020 and November 2020 to date – The income and expenditure reports were received and noted as follows:

**October income**

Date	Received From	Description	Amount
1 October 2020	Market Income	Weekly Market Income 1 <sup>st</sup> October	£42.50
5 October 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£6,300
5 October 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
9 October 2020	Market Income	Weekly Market Income 5 October	£24
12 October 2020	Market Income	Weekly Market Income 12 October	£42.50
16 October 2020	East Suffolk Council	CIL 2 <sup>nd</sup> Instalment 2020-21	£11,044.44
19 October 2020	Market Income	Weekly Market Income 19 October	£18.50
22 October 2020	Lamarti	Hire of Links Road Car Park for sale of ice cream	£420 + £84 VAT = £504
26 October 2020	Market Income	Weekly Market Income 26 October	£42.50

**October expenditure**

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
1 October 2020	East Suffolk Council	Pakefield Street PC Business Rates	£122
1 October 2020	East Suffolk Council	Kensington Gardens PC Business Rates	£210
1 October 2020	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls Pavilion Business Rates	£110
1 October 2020	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park Business Rates	£187
1 October 2020	East Suffolk Council	Triangle Market PC Business Rates	£117
1 October 2020	Autopa Ltd	2x Lockable Posts Sparrows Nest	£144.18 + £28.83 VAT = £173.01
5 October 2020	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions September 2020	£4,664.31
6 October 2020	Land Registry	Land Registry searches	£12
7 October 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£106.75 + £5.34 VAT = £112.09
7 October 2020	SLCC	Virtual National Conference Admin	£25 + £5 VAT = £30

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		and Finance Assistant	
7 October 2020	Blachere Illuminations	Festive Light Installation 2020	£2,587.50 + £517.50 VAT = £3,105
7 October 2020	GYH Plumbing	Denes Oval Pavilion Service	£83.33 + £16.67 VAT = £100
13 October 2020	NPower	Kensington Gardens Electric 1 June 2020 – 31 August 2020	£179.92 + £9 VAT = 188.92
16 October 2020	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Charges	£31.29
19 October 2020	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall Gas September 2020	£42.11 + £2.11 VAT = £44.22
19 October 2020	NPower	Triangle Market Electric September 2020	£102.11 + £5.11 VAT = £107.22
19 October 2020	SERV Suffolk & Cambridgeshire	Covid-19 Grant	£750
19 October 2020	Nicholsons Solicitors	Legal Advice	£384 + £76.80 VAT = £460.80
20 October 2020	Land Registry	Land Registry Search	£3
21 October 2020	HMRC	HMRC September 2020	£4,951.38
22 October 2020	Lowestoft and East Suffolk Maritime Society	Covid-19 Grant	£1,000
22 October 2020	East Suffolk Norse	Partnership Charges November 2020	£36,525 + £7,305 VAT = £43,830
23 October 2020	Salaries	Salaries October 2020	£8,940.68
27 October 2020	Trevor Brown	Internal Audit October 2020	£250
27 October 2020	SLCC	Accessibility Training	£35 + £7 VAT = £42
27 October 2020	RICOH UK Ltd	Printer Hire and Costs	£251.02 + £50.21 VAT = £301.23
27 October 2020	Essex and Suffolk Water	Normanston Park Water 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2020 – 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2020	£268.48
27 October 2020	Binder Ltd	Sewage Maintenance and Disposal at Uplands	£302.50 + £60.50 VAT = £363
27 October 2020	EPBS Ltd	Hamilton House Rent Q3 2020-21	£3,675 + £735 VAT = £4,410
27 October 2020	EPBS Ltd	Hamilton House Capital Repayment	£3,357.40 + £671.48 VAT = £4,028.88
30 October 2020	East Suffolk Council	Planning application	£231
30 October 2020	SLCC	Excel accessibility training	£35 + £7 VAT = £42

**November income**

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
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2 November 2020	Market Income	Weekly market income 2 November 2020	£42.50
2 November 2020	Tenant	Rental income from tenant	£213.16
3 November 2020	Market Income	Weekly market income March 2020	£85
5 November 2020	Market Income	Weekly market income 9 November 2020	£42.50
12 November 2020	HMRC	VAT return Q2 2020-21	£30,040.92

**November expenditure**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Payment to</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
2 November 2020	East Suffolk Council	Pakefield Street PC business rates	£122
2 November 2020	East Suffolk Council	Kensington Gardens PC business rates	£210
2 November 2020	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest bowls pavilion business rates	£110
2 November 2020	East Suffolk Council	Links Road car park business rates	£187
2 November 2020	East Suffolk Council	Triangle Market PC business rates	£117
4 November 2020	East Point Business Services		£8,877
4 November 2020	Need2Store Ltd	Civic artefact storage	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
5 November 2020	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions October 2020	£3,977.69
9 November 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£225.94
9 November 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£369.60
9 November 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£757.83
9 November 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£210.80
9 November 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£158.80
9 November 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£202.09
9 November 2020	NPower	Electricity charges	£121.14
Scheduled under delegated authority	East Suffolk Norse	Turf cutter for bulb planting	£70
Scheduled under delegated authority		Pond surveys	£2,323 + VAT

93.2. Payments made under delegated authority (see schedule) – All payments in the schedules were made under delegated authority.

93.3. Any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were three payments to consider for approval: £2,323 (plus VAT) for environmental pond assessments, £70 to hire a turf cutter for

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bulb planting, and £50 for a poppy wreath donation. This would usually be £37 but the Committee was asked to consider a higher amount due to the exceptional circumstances of this year. Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the poppy wreath donation of £50; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the £70 expenditure for the turf cutter; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. Regarding the pond assessments, officers have chased the company originally instructed to complete the work for the report, but it has not been forthcoming, thus invalidating the contract. Cllr Pearce proposed approval for the expenditure of £2,323 (plus VAT) for new environmental pond assessments, and sending a formal letter to the company originally instructed to advise that is the action the Council had to take when it received no response to requests for the report; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

- 93.4. Receipt of any applications made under the COVID-19 Grant Awarding Policy and any payments made under delegated authority – There have been no new applications since the last meeting of this Committee. Unless an alternative decision is made by Full Council, the Covid-19 grant awarding policy will automatically be replaced by the standard grant awarding policy at the start of the next civic year. The Committee would like to see a report of expenditure from the Covid-19 grant fund, including ring fenced funds and funds transferred out for other purposes. This Committee and Full Council will review the grant awarding policy at their December meetings.

### 94. Budget and Loan Sub-Committee

- 94.1. Receipt of the draft minutes from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meetings on 26 October 2020 and 9 November 2020 – This Sub-Committee is now meeting weekly. Cllr Coleby gave his belated apologies for not attending the meeting on 9 November.
- 94.2. The following recommendations from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee:
- 94.2a. Diverting £7,000 from the electric vehicles and bicycles budget (noting support for this recommendation from the Climate Emergency Committee), £4,500 from the IT budget and £4,500 for the furniture and equipment budget to form the £16,000 budget for amplification improvements and recording/broadcasting provision for meetings at Hamilton House – The Council has already resolved that once 'in person' meetings resume, they will be recorded and the recordings retained for a civic year, as is the case currently. Officers are reviewing the quotations in advance of the Council reaching a decision about the quotations in the new year. The electric vehicles will mostly be associated with the Community Warden roles, and charging and storage arrangements still need to be made, so it is unlikely these will be progressed as quickly. The Climate Emergency Committee is supportive of this proposal. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the proposal to divert £7,000 from the electric vehicles and bicycles budget (, £4,500 from the IT budget and £4,500 for the furniture and equipment budget to form the £16,000 budget for amplification improvements and recording/broadcasting provision for meetings at Hamilton House; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

*Cllr Youngman left the meeting 17:45 Cllr Taylor advised she would need to leave the meeting at 18:00*

### 95. Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee

- 95.1. Receipt of the draft minutes from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee meeting on 21 October 2020 – The draft minutes were received and noted, and have not yet reviewed by the Sub-Committee.
- 95.2. The following recommendations from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee:
- 95.2a. Adoption of the Data Retention Policy, as amended – As there were no objections, it was agreed to vote on items 95.2a – 95.2f together, as the policies had already be reviewed by the Sub-Committee. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt those policies as specified in items 95.2a – 95.2f; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

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- 95.2b. Adoption of the Data Protection Policy, as amended
- 95.2c. Adoption of the Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy, as amended
- 95.2d. Adoption of the Appraisals Guidance
- 95.2e. Adoption of the Code of Conduct
- 95.2f. Adoption of the Complaints Procedure

95.3. Noting that the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee is considering Committee and Sub-Committee structures and Terms of Reference, and considering whether to submit any comments – The review will be taking place in January and will consider how the Committees and Sub-Committees interact. It was requested that this item be carried forward to the next agenda, and any comments can also be sent to officers.

### **96. Events and Communications Sub-Committee**

96.1. A recommendation from the Events and Communications Sub-Committee that the Sub-Committee is not dissolved and continues to operate as per the Terms of Reference adopted in May 2020 – The Council's new Events and Communications Officer was introduced. The Sub-Committee has existed for some time, and it was clarified that there is no intention for the work of the Sub-Committee to duplicate or control the Events and Communications Officer's work. It was queried whether the work of this Sub-Committee could be absorbed by the Finance and Governance Committee, as the number of Committees and Sub-Committees could be causing unnecessary duplication of work. The Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee will be reviewing the structure at their meeting in January, and now that the Events and Communications Officer is in post, the need for the Events and Communications Sub-Committee will be reviewed again. It was clarified that there was no vote required, as the recommendation from the Sub-Committee is to continue with the current situation.

### **97. Audit**

97.1. The Internal Auditor's Interim Audit Report and related Action Plan from the Responsible Financial Officer – The Council has reached its initial target of maintaining general reserves equivalent to four months' precept, and should now aspire to maintain general reserves equivalent to six months' precept. This is aspirational and no date has been agreed to achieve this by, although the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee should start to consider how this may be achieved. The Committee was pleased with the outcome of the Internal Auditor's Interim Audit Report and offered its thanks to staff.

*Cllr Parker left the meeting 18:00*

Cllr Pearce proposed noting the Internal Auditor's Interim Audit Report and accepting the Responsible Financial Officer's Action Plan and recommendations; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

*Cllr Taylor left the meeting 18:01*

### **98. Other financial matters, including:**

98.1. A lease renewal for a tenant (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

### **99. Date of the next meeting**

10 December 2020 16:30 – It was agreed that the start time of December's meeting would be 15:30, rather than 16:30, as some Committee members had been struggling to attend meetings previously due to the start time.

### **100. Items for the next agenda and close**

There were no requests for items in addition to those already being carried forward from this meeting.

Cllr Green proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barnard; all in favour. The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream and

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the live stream was closed as the meeting went into confidential session. It was confirmed the meeting would end following the confidential session.

**101. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:**

101.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required:

92.11 The Norse contract review and budget implications (confidential) – The latest position regarding the contract was discussed.

98.1 A lease renewal for a tenant (confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding the lease renewal of one of the Council's tenants.

The Chair closed the meeting 18:20.

Signed: .....

10 December 2020