

**Lowestoft Town Council**  
**Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee**  
**Via Video Meeting**  
**14:30 on 20 October 2020**

**MINUTES**

**Video meeting participants:** Cllrs Sue Barnard (Chair), Bob Breakspear, Neil Coleby, Peter Lang, Andy Pearce and Alice Taylor

**Also participating:** Sarah Foote (Deputy Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

**61. Welcome**

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

**62. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Amanda Frost, Jacqueline Hardie, Graham Parker and John Pitts. Cllr Tara Carlton had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

**63. Declarations of Interests and dispensations**

Cllrs Barnard and Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 69 and 71. Cllrs Breakspear and Taylor declared a local non-pecuniary interest in any matters relating to Kensington Gardens.

**64. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 22 September 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting**

Regarding item 52.1 of the previous minutes, it was queried whether there had been any progressing with establishing a Working Group to plan an event to promote the beneficial impact of trees. All Councillors had been emailed but no responses were received. Cllrs Barnard, Coleby and Pearce advised they would like to be involved with the arrangements. Although a public event cannot be progressed at this stage, staff will be putting together information for the website.

**65. Advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda**

Cllr Butler had submitted a comment about a bollard in the middle of one of the pathways leading into Normanston Park, questioning its purpose and who authorised its installation. It is understood that this was not under the instruction of the Town Council, but it appears not to be a new bollard. It is assumed that its intention is to segregate pedestrians and cyclists and prevent unauthorised vehicular access to the park, but staff will enquire with Norse about the bollard's history and whether it is sufficiently visible. An item will be added to the next agenda to report back Norse's advice.

**66. Noting that the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee are considering Committee and Sub-Committee structures and Terms of Reference, and consideration of whether to submit any comments**

The Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee will be conducting their review in January. There were no comments that the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee wished to put forward at this stage, but it was requested that this item be carried forward to the next agenda for further consideration.

**67. Progress with the development of wildflower areas at Clarkes Lane and Daffodil Walk**

Two other smaller areas of land on Daffodil Walk had been suggested as alternative locations for the wildflower area, but it is understood these do not belong to the Town Council. Some of the residents had expressed concerns that this was being progressed as a cost-saving exercise, and were concerned about bee allergies. The letter which was delivered

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to residents did explain that this was not a cost-saving exercise. Councillors will remain mindful of the potential increase in the number of bees, but felt the wildflower area was at a sufficient distance from residential properties so as not to cause an issue. Cllrs Barnard and Coleby will put together plans for the wildflower areas for Norse to provide costs. It was agreed that further updates should be provided to the Daffodil Walk residents as the plans progress.

**68. How to manage water usage in the Town Council's parks**

It was suggested that flower beds should be mulched in the Spring to retain water. A budget has been approved by the Finance and Governance Committee to purchase mulch for Belle Vue Park, Sparrows Nest and Kensington Gardens this year, and it was suggested that a policy for the ongoing use of mulch should be developed. It was requested that the Finance and Governance consider a budget to use mulch on an ongoing basis, rather than just for one season. It was requested that consideration be given to other measures, such as water reservoirs, as well. Water butts had been considered, but the professional advice sought deemed the public health and safety risks too great. The Friends of Kensington Gardens would like to be able to store water on site, and have had a water bowser donated. It was suggested that the Council could seek the advice of a consultant on waste water or grey water recovery, and how to use the natural streams at Sparrows Nest. Grants may be available under environmental schemes to support this work. It was reported that external taps at Kensington Gardens have now been locked. This was carried out by Norse under the instruction of the Town Council for health and safety reasons. Cllr Coleby proposed that the Council seeks the advice of a water consultant on how to manage water usage at its parks; seconded by Cllr Barnard; five Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

**69. A planting scheme for plant and bulb orders**

The bulb order has been placed with Norse, but may not be delivered for another two weeks. Norse requires clear instruction as to what is being planted where within each park. Cllrs Barnard and Coleby offered to draw up plans for this. Cllr Lang proposed delegating authority to the Deputy Clerk, working with Cllrs Barnard and Coleby, to progress planting schemes for the autumn plant and bulb orders; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

**70. Reviewing the Town Council's Tree Policy**

A resident has requested tree works in the Great Eastern Linear Park, which is at the rear of his property, and has offered to make arrangements to do the work at his own expense. East Suffolk Norse's Arborist advised that the works would contravene the Town Council's Tree Policy and recommended that no works take place now, although some pruning may be required in a couple of years. The request has been considered by the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee and Full Council and it was agreed that this Sub-Committee should review the Tree Policy. The Tree Policy does specify that pruning will not take place in response to issues such as obstruction of light or a view. Under the policy, members of the public are not permitted to undertake works to Town Council owned trees, other than what they are legally permitted to do.

*Cllr Pearce temporarily left the meeting 15:26*

The Town Council has a duty to promote biodiversity, but tree works would be permitted where a health and safety risk or structural risk to a property was evident.

*Cllr Pearce returned 15:27*

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Cllr Coleby proposed that officers conduct a review of the Tree Policy, particularly to clarify the legal rights of members of the public regarding tree works; seconded by Cllr Lang; all in favour. This item will be carried forward to the next agenda for further consideration.

**71. Whether or not to proceed with the planting of the Tree Council funded trees this year, including consideration of advice from relevant authorities**

Advice from the Tree Council has been received. The Council will need to decide whether to proceed with the tree planting this year - subject to Full Council's approval of the watering budget - if the criteria of involving young people can still be safely met. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to AID to proceed with the tree planting this year, subject to Full Council's approval of the watering budget and the availability of grounds maintenance staff to plant the trees; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Sought advice from CAS about volunteers on projects such as this. Officers have sought advice from Community Action Suffolk about the involvement of volunteers. It was advised that this type of support is always best arranged through a Friends Group, with its own insurance in place. To have the Town Council insuring volunteer groups could create a complex arrangement and increase the risks the Council has to manage.

**72. The results of the audit of the Town Council's parks, including to consider the provision of benches, bins and bicycle racks**

It was agreed that this item should be carried forward to the next meeting to allow the Sub-Committee members to review each site. It is likely there will be significant financial constraints next year, but it was suggested this could be incorporated with the five-year plans being considered.

**73. Park projects, including:**

- 73.1 Improvements to Whitton Green – The project is still going ahead, but has been delayed due to the pandemic. This item will be added to the next AID agenda for an update.
- 73.2 An additional piece of play equipment and a wheelchair accessible picnic bench for Stoven Close – The additional piece of play equipment is being part-funded by s106 and an application has been submitted. It is understood a budget has previously been approved for the picnic bench.
- 73.3 Repairs and maintenance work at St Margaret's Plain – East Suffolk Norse have agreed to do some repainting and maintenance work at the site under the Repairs and Maintenance budget.
- 73.4 The Sparrows Nest Winter Garden and Sensory Garden – Cllrs Barnard, Coleby, Lang and Pearce have formed a Working Group to discuss the plans. It is understood there are some local connections to Alice in Wonderland, and this is being considered as a theme for the park. It was requested that the Peter Pan link to Kensington Gardens is considered as well. It was agreed that five year plans for Sparrows Nest, Normanston Park and Kensington Gardens will be discussed at the next meeting.
- 73.5 The development of parks partnerships – The idea of parks partnerships was discussed during an online event last week. Sub-Committee members were asked to consider which organisations the Council could potentially partner with this and this will be revisited at the next meeting.

**74. Feedback from the Rethinking Future Parks online event**

Cllrs Barnard, Butler and the Committee Clerk attended the event and found it beneficial. Other areas are using technology to monitor the usage of their parks. There was lots of advice on increasing biodiversity and improving community engagement, and sources of

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funding available. Follow-up information should be released shortly which can be shared with the Council.

**75. Information boards and/or required signage for the Town Council's parks**

A specification is required for quotations to be obtained. Cllrs Barnard, Breakspear, Coleby, Lang, Pearce and Taylor advised they would be happy to work on this. It was agreed that entrance signage at all of the Town Council's major parks would be desirable, and this could be incorporated with the five-year plans. The use of QR codes to provide information, walking routes and the history of the parks had previously been discussed as well. It was suggested that options for external funding should be explored. This item will be carried forward to the next agenda for further consideration.

**76. Lowestoft Investment Plan project funding**

East Suffolk Council has indicated that there may be funding schemes available for 'shovel ready' projects, which can demonstrate an aim to bring investment into the town and assist with the town's Covid-19 recovery. A business case based on that criteria would need to be produced.

*Cllr Lang left the meeting 16:41*

Projects were discussed, such as the Triangle Market, The Ness and the Marina Theatre, but it was agreed to carry this item forward to the next agenda for further consideration.

**77. How to progress the following actions towards implementation of the Town Council's Health Emergency Declaration:**

77.1 Planting an orchard tree for every other tree planted – Items 77.1 – 77.4 are specific items arising from the Health Emergency Declaration. Other Committees and Sub-Committees are also receiving relevant items to consider how to implement. It was agreed that all these items need some thought, research and practical suggestions. Cllr Taylor proposed carrying forward items 77.1 – 77.4 to the next agenda; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

77.2 Rapidly progressing the improvement of the Town Council's parks, open spaces and linked facilities for the enjoyment of all

77.3 Progress outdoor shopping and entertainment opportunities, including a cultural/event space in parks

77.4 Progress water fountains in Town Council parks to provide a free quality drink for those enjoying the outdoors

**78. Date of the next meeting**

17 November 2020 14:30

**79. Items for the next Agenda and Close**

In addition to the items carried forward, it was requested that an update on adult gym equipment, following a recent site visit, be added to the next agenda of this Sub-Committee or the AID Committee.

The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the livestream of the meeting. There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting 16:45.

**80. Resolution to close the meeting to the public**