

Lowestoft Town Council
Budget and Loan Council Meeting
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:30 on 19 October 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Bernie Rappensberger and Elise Youngman (Deputy Chair)

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Deputy Town Clerk), James Cox (Finance and Information Officer), Paul Connew (Facilities Maintenance Officer), Jonny Hawes (Parks and Community Officer) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

51. Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report was explained and the meeting was welcomed.

52. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence from any Councillors not in attendance.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Barker and Green with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

Cllr Begum was absent with no apologies received.

53. Declarations and dispensations

53.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr E Youngman declared she worked for the company who cleaned Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) owned toilets.

53.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

54. Public forum

An opportunity for the public to make comments on any matters on this agenda, and to consider any advance comments from the public – No members of the public were in attendance and no advanced comments had been received.

55. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 2 October 2023 and 9 October 2023.

The minutes were in progress and would be signed of at the next meeting.

56. To review the 2023 – 2024 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Pearce had been communicating with officers on committed expenditure to date and requested that the Sub-Committee be notified if any budgets appear to be challenged.

57. To review the 2024 – 2025 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves (some aspects may be confidential)

To be discussed in confidential session.

58. Date of next meeting

30 October 2023 at 12:30

59. Items for the next agenda and close

Any items should be emailed to the office.

60. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be

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excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely any legal and employment issues relating to the matters on this agenda.

Cllr Pearce proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session, noting that no decisions would be made on the budget; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; four votes in favour and one abstention.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 10:36

The total cost for the Norse grounds maintenance contract in 2022-2023 was £459,000. Since bringing the grounds maintenance inhouse, initial savings had been made by hiring expensive equipment, bringing the bowling green treatments inhouse and park-based officers cleaning the toilets sited at the parks. Building maintenance, works on play equipment and pond repairs were being progressed at a higher standard.

Unexpected issues had been found with tree works, the increased fuel costs for equipment, the large volume of orders for consumables, such as line paint and toilet rolls and the ongoing vandalism.

The capital phase of purchasing or hiring equipment had been expected and LTC needed to demonstrate what the anticipated annual cost of running this service would be once the capital phase has passed.

It was requested for the cost of the maintenance of the bowling greens to be identified and entered in the budget document separate from the grounds maintenance budget.

Cllr Brooks declared an association with Uncle Sid's Zero Waste Store and recommended officers review their supplier's prices for consumables such as cleaning products and toilet rolls.

The tree budget lines under the Horticulture budget would require an increase in the future due to the high cost of identified reactive tree works. Once the audit survey has been received a schedule of urgent works would be provided for LTC to consider required funds for the current financial year.

The toilet cleaning budget line for 2023-2024 had been set to £81,900 of which £44,000 had been spent to date. The Finance and Information Officer confirmed the estimated annual figure for the contracted toilet cleaners was £31,282.50.

The Parks and Community Officer (PCO) acknowledged the challenge of undertaking the grounds maintenance transfer halfway through the summer season and confirmed the intention was to bring more services inhouse. Any requirements for workshop-based officers and seasonal workers should be provided to the Personnel Committee for consideration.

The purchase of an electric vehicle for officers had been discussed by the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee and officers were asked to provide a specification of the model and indicative costs to inform the budget. At the time of the meeting the Facilities Maintenance Officer (FMO) had received a £60,000 quote for a long-wheel base transit vehicle. This information would be provided to Full Council in November.

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Indicative costs for a replacement ride-on mower, as the current one was nearing end-of-life, were £10,000-£14,000. The £12,480 budgeted for office equipment in 2023-2024 currently had no expenditure and could be redirected to help purchase a replacement mower. The Finance and Information Officer noted that Equipment budget line also covered Personal Protective Equipment and would need to be split out with the current cost to date being £5,873. If the ride-on mower replacement was not required this financial year then it could be either allocated from the general budget or budgeted for as a single purchase next year of £20,000 to include contingency elements.

Asbestos removal for buildings was ongoing and would require a budget, the costs for which would be informed by the completed reports of the condition surveys, which would also highlight the critical areas requiring urgent removal.

Cllr E Youngman temporarily left the chamber for consideration of the cleaning budgets at 11:22

£31,000 was budgeted for cleaning toilets.
£4,764 was the spend to date for 2023-2024 for the cleaning of Community Halls, which included Norse fees, and the cost for next year was budgeted at £4,189.

Cllr E Youngman returned to the chamber at 11:25

Whilst not used this financial year, the tarmacking budget would be required for 2024-2025 for works on Sparrows Nest, Normanston Park, Kensington Gardens and Belle Vue Park. £60,000 had been budgeted for tarmacking and in addition to expenditure £30,000 had been redirected for the condition surveys, therefore £35,685 had been spent to date. It was suggested that the £30,000 be replaced over the next two years at £15,000 per year.

It was suggested to budget £20,000 for the Bin Emptying budget line in 2024-2025. Two more industrial bins were required at Unit 2 at an annual cost of £1,664. This would be addressed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee.

Ponds maintenance was covered under the Waterways and Ponds budget. Future funds would be required to rebuild the Sparrows Nest ponds as the repair works had been a temporary measure. Officers would obtain indicative costs for these works and provide them to the relevant Committee for early consideration of accumulating a reserve over three years. Cllr Pearce proposed Finance and Governance consider and recommend to Full Council building up a reserve target of £100,000 over the next three years for the eventual replacement of the Sparrows Nest Pond, with the design and location to be agreed over that period, with the initial £33,000 to be funded from the 2024-2025 Waterways and Ponds £41,000 budget; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

The grounds maintenance team had considered how to use the spring water, which would be addressed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:56

Signed:

6 November 2023