

Annual Assembly of the Town

Lowestoft Town Council Offices, First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE
Tuesday 5 March 2019 19:00

Minutes

Presiding:

Cllr Ian Graham (Mayor)

Present:

65 members of the public, including representatives from:

Access Community Trust, the Community Enablers, the Lowestoft Museum, Lowestoft Boxing Academy, Lowestoft in Bloom, Lowestoft and Plaisir Twinning Association, Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society, Lowestoft Police, the Marina Theatre, the Lake Lothing Third Crossing Project (Suffolk County Council), Waveney District Council, Save Our Records Office, Lowestoft Vision, Heritage Action Zone, First Light Festival and The Ness Project

Lowestoft Town Councillors Nasima Alam, Sue Barnard, Neil Coleby, Amanda Frost, Ian Graham, Alan Green, Graham Parker, Keith Patience and Alice Taylor
Shona Bendix (Town Clerk – Lowestoft Town Council) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk – Lowestoft Town Council)

13. Mayor's welcome

The Town Council Mayor, Cllr Ian Graham, presided. The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained and the meeting was welcomed. Those in attendance were reminded that this is not a meeting of Lowestoft Town Council but a meeting of electors registered on the electoral roll. Only those registered to vote in Lowestoft Parish would be able to participate in any votes called at the meeting.

14. Lowestoft Town Council report to the electors

The Mayor provided the report. A spreadsheet of the grant funding Lowestoft Town Council has awarded in 2018-19 was displayed. Organisations and groups based in Lowestoft who were represented at the meeting were encouraged to consider approaching Lowestoft Town Council if they were seeking funding.

Local elections are being held in May, giving people the opportunity to represent their community by standing for election as a Councillor, including for Lowestoft Town Council.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Marina Theatre was invited to speak, as had been requested and agreed prior to the meeting. The Marina Theatre is the second largest theatre in Suffolk. Some of the successful events which have been held at the Theatre this year were detailed. A growth and redevelopment project is being created, with one of the aims being to increase the stage size and thus attract larger shows.

15. Police report to the electors

Sergeant Matt Brown of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team provided a presentation about the '2025 Project' – focussing on policing for the future. The recent restructuring of the force was explained, resulting in the creation of the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams. The team has been looking at how to manage demand and resources with less staff. Modernisation of the force has helped. The team have been engaging with youths to prevent anti-social behaviour and are looking to increase the visible police presence. There are more officers patrolling the High Street area. The Police are working with other organisations to protect vulnerable people and ensure they are receiving assistance from the most appropriate sources. Questions were taken from members of the public. It was queried how many police officers there currently are in Lowestoft. This would depend on the department. Sergeant Brown

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oversees a team of eight Police Constables in the Safer Neighbourhoods Team. Large events such as Latitude and the First Light Festival were discussed but the planning for these is arranged at a higher level. A more visible police presence was requested. This is something which is being worked towards following the restructure. An issue with an abandoned camper van was raised. Sergeant Brown offered to take the details of the individual who raised the concern, to take the matter forward.

16. Lake Lothing Third Crossing Presentation

The Project Manager, Jon Barnard, gave a presentation about delivering the Lake Lothing third crossing. An explanation as to how the bridge will work was given, and it will be one of the first of its kind in the UK. Visuals of the bridge and the surrounding area were displayed, and it was clarified that the landing site of the bridge will be the old coal yard site. It is anticipated that construction will begin before Christmas, for the bridge to be in use by 2022. A timeline for the project was displayed and the project is currently in the examination period. Contractors are using as many local resources as possible and apprenticeships are being offered. A newsletter about the project is issued every three months and contact details were provided at the end of the presentation. Questions were invited from members of the public. It was queried whether archaeological explorations were taking place and it was confirmed that they were. The reliability of the design was queried. The bridge has been designed to an eighty five year lifespan, to a specification of being opened fifteen times a day on average. The gust speed that the bridge can withstand when opened has also been considered. It is not thought that both bridges will need to open at the same time unless to allow passage to a significantly large vessel. There is a bridge of similar design in use in New Zealand. A link to further information can be made available on Lowestoft Town Council's website. It was confirmed there are currently no plans to remove the existing bascule bridge.

A representative from the Lowestoft Boxing Academy requested to speak. It was explained that the academy was established for the benefit of all residents of the town. Any person is welcome to join and they aim to offer a positive activity for young people in Lowestoft. One of their eight year old students has just signed a professional contract and they are also assisting another of their students with joining the Royal Marines. The Academy thanked Lowestoft Town Council for the grant funding it was recently awarded, which it has used to improve its facilities.

17. Community Enablers Presentation

The Community Enablers Roy Emmerson, Dave Eagle and Maggie Rayson provided a presentation about the project. This is a three year project, run by Community Action Suffolk, which is reaching the end of its first year. The project has five partners and is linked to the Town Council through Councillor representation. The Community Enablers aim to build sustainable, stronger resilient communities, working with residents to empower them to make the differences they would like to see and create an environment where communities have access to advice and support. Some of the successes of the project so far were outlined, including the opening of the first community fridge in Suffolk. The Community Enablers are working with local organisations to encourage more volunteering, and the sharing of ideas and expertise. They are seeking to combat negativity in the town and ran a consultation during the Lowestoft Summer Festival about what residents enjoyed about the town and what they would like to see improved. The beaches and the community spirit of Lowestoft were the things people liked the most, but wished to see improvements to litter and fly tipping issues, filling in of potholes in the paths and roads and more activities for young people. Questions were invited from members of the public. It was clarified that the role of Community Enabler is a paid role. It was commented that authorities seem to have withdrawn funding for certain areas and are seeking volunteering instead, which has led to criticism being levelled at such organisations in the town. It was queried how the

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results of the consultation will be acted upon. The Community Enablers will act as directed by the public. A report of the results has been forwarded to Suffolk County Council, but members of the public can still raise issues individually. An issue with Kirkley Cliff Road will be raised with Suffolk Highways by Lowestoft Town Council.

18. Access Community Trust Presentation

An introduction to how Access Community Trust was formed was given. Several projects have been delivered in Lowestoft, including the Thin Ice Project, which offers assistance to the homeless. Homelessness has increased sharply over the last few years. The Thin Ice Project has been delivered over the last four months, which offered a place to sleep for those with nowhere else to go. An extra eighty people have been assisted through the project. Twenty one people have received permanent overnight accommodation with Access Community Trust and several more were assisted over a shorter period. Access Community Trust have also introduced their MEAM service – Making Every Adult Matter. The service has visited and spoken to homeless people in the town and offered assistance to those who were receptive to it. Questions were invited from members of the public and there was an invitation to those who believe they can make a difference to become involved with the project and see the issues first hand, rather than relying on some of the negativity on social media. Access Community Trust has 153 paid members of staff and it was clarified that they have not brought homeless individuals into Lowestoft from other areas. There was a query regarding food banks and it was explained this is a separate organisation now overseen by Churches in the town.

19. District and County Council Reports to the Electors

No reports had been received in advance of the meeting. The District and County Councillors in attendance at the meeting did not wish to speak.

20. Community Organisation and Public Forum

It was queried whether any progress had been made with the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Scheme. Funding has been secured and the project is progressing but will take time.

There was an update from the Heritage Action Zone project. It was explained that funding was secured for North Lowestoft following a national competition. The project will look to restoring the Scores and improving the High Street shop frontages. The Heritage Action Zone will also encompass The Ness. Historic England have identified the Town Hall as a Heritage Asset. Lowestoft Town Council secured funding for emergency repairs and is looking to complete a feasibility study.

There was an introduction to The Ness, which is a new park celebrating Lowestoft's position as the most Easterly point in Britain. It was queried whether Ness Point will be made into more of a visitor attraction. The project would like to see a piece of artwork there and there are sources of funding available to support this. This could be determined by way of a public competition and options will be explored.

There was a discussion regarding Cllr Ladd's role as Heritage Champion. Members of the public expressed disappointment and it was felt that he had not been proactive enough in this role. It was requested that the Town Council formally write to Cllr Ladd to this effect.

A representative from the Lowestoft and Plaisir Twinning Association spoke of their celebration of forty years of the twinning of the towns. Guests from Plaisir visited Lowestoft last year and this year it is the

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turn of members of the association to visit Plaisir. Various fundraising events have been held in support of this and corporate members have provided additional support. Members of the public were encouraged to get involved to maintain the association of the two towns.

There was an introduction to the First Light Festival. This aims to shine a light on Lowestoft and celebrate it as Britain's most Easterly point. It is a cultural event which is free of charge and open to everyone. There will be charges applied for use of headphones during the silent disco and for watching the film. It will be taking place on the beach, Kensington Gardens and the promenade. The schools, colleges and many local organisations and individuals are involved. The organisers are working with the Safety Advisory Group regarding transport and parking for the event. For a free event it is difficult to estimate how many people will be attending, but it is anticipated this could reach 10,000 people. If successful, it is hoped this will be a recurring event. There will be an official launch on 20 March when the event will be widely advertised, but in the interim there is a website offering further information.

The secretary of Lowestoft in Bloom spoke of their aim to inspire communities to make improvements to the appearance of the town and enter the Lowestoft in Bloom competition. Several local businesses have offered their support and it is hoped this will enable an entry to Anglia in Bloom this year.

The secretary of the Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society explained about its formation and the events it has been involved with this year. Plaques have been unveiled to commemorate historic events, as well as the history plaque at the top of the High Street. Thanks were expressed to Waveney District and Lowestoft Town Councils for their support.

A representative of Save Our Records Office spoke in support of heritage events to celebrate the town. Their constitution has been amended to support local heritage groups and they support the collaborative working of the Sunrise Coast Heritage Guild. There was a request for Lowestoft Town Council to organise a time capsule event for and by the people of Lowestoft. Save Our Records Office offered to contribute £500 of funding towards this. This will be added to the next Lowestoft Town Council Full Council agenda for consideration.

A member of the public spoke on behalf of Lowestoft's history and heritage groups and queried whether details of the heritage assets previously held in trust by Waveney District Council can now be disclosed. Lowestoft Town Council was thanked for its assistance with resurgence of heritage programmes in the town, and an evening invitation to the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum was extended. A gift of a mahogany display case was presented to Lowestoft Town Council, on behalf of the history and heritage groups. This was for the display of the Dorothy Dallimer medals recently purchased by the Town Council. The Town Council gratefully accepted the gift, and in response to the query regarding the heritage assets, it was confirmed that the Town Council has not yet taken over ownership of the items but once it does some will be displayed at the office and some may be dispersed or loaned to local museums or other organisations.

A representative from Lowestoft Vision spoke of their work to make the town more secure and look more attractive, for its residents and to attract more visitors. Lowestoft Vision provide funding for a Police Community Support Officer to patrol the town centre and for a security radio service. Additionally they sponsor floral displays and Christmas lights in the town centre, the annual 'Freddie the Fish' trail and are providing support for the First Light Festival and the Heritage Action Zone. Questions were invited from members of the public. It was requested that expertise from local organisations such as Lowestoft in Bloom be considered in the creation of floral displays for the town centre. This will be considered for future years.

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The minutes of the 2018 Annual Assembly of the Town were considered for approval. A member of the public proposed acceptance of the minutes; seconded by another member of the public; all in favour.

Any further comments or questions were invited from members of the public. A gentleman raised a personal grievance regarding the organisation of the First Light Festival and also concerns regarding Waveney District Council, which he was encouraged to raise with them directly.

Two members of the public spoke to say they were impressed to hear about the positive activities taking place in Lowestoft, as detailed by those who spoke at the meeting. Those in attendance were encouraged to take pride in the town and support the Town Council and others in their work to improve Lowestoft.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Signed:

Date:

DRAFT