

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
14:30 on 28 January 2020

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sue Barnard, Bob Breakspear, Neil Coleby (Chair) and Peter Lang

In attendance: Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Also in attendance: Mark Ross (Assistant Manager Grounds – East Suffolk Norse) and Peter Wilson-Sutter (Assistant Manager Parks – East Suffolk Norse)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

51. Welcome

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

52. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Graham Parker and John Pitts. Cllr Barnard proposed acceptance of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

53. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Coleby declared a local non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to Lowestoft in Bloom. Cllr Barnard declared a local non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to the Gainsborough Drive Pond. Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to Kensington Gardens.

54. Public Forum

There were no members of the public in attendance.

55. Accuracy of the minutes

7 January 2020 – Accepted as accurate. Proposed by Cllr Breakspear; seconded by Cllr Lang; all in favour.

56. Feedback from this Sub-Committee's site visits, including long term plans for the following sites:

- 56.1 Belle Vue Park – It was reported that the existing plants in the small triangular garden are not thriving. That area is not yet fully planted and may benefit from some mulch. The sunken garden has previously benefitted from fresh soil and it was suggested that mulch could be used there as well. Bark chippings were used on the Poppy Garden and the Council will need to decide whether to top this up or use something else. It was reported that East Suffolk Norse has a new shredder, which will make it easier to compost some of the green waste at Kensington Gardens. The Friends of Kensington Gardens would like to develop a compost area within Kensington Gardens and the representatives in attendance at the meeting offered some advice to Cllr Breakspear about the green waste management and where the compost area should be. It was queried whether the bollards at the entrance to Kensington Gardens to prevent unauthorised vehicular access are being progressed. The minutes of the Council's decision will be checked. There is no compost area in Sparrows Nest as there are few appropriate locations within that park, but there is one near the Denes Oval, which East Suffolk Norse use for that area. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee for a maximum budget of £500 for mulching in Belle Vue Park, Sparrows Nest and Kensington Gardens; seconded by Cllr Barnard; all in favour.

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A five year plan for Belle Vue Park was discussed. Cllr Coleby had previously drawn up a plan based on the Sub-Committee's discussions and this was displayed at the meeting. Woodland planting for the sloped areas will be considered in the long term and capital or grant funding may need to be considered should the Council wish to reintroduce gates at one of the entrances to the park. It was agreed that the gates would be a long term aspiration and the Council would need to review whether there is a serious issue with unauthorised vehicular access to Belle Vue Park. There have been gates previously removed from Kensington Gardens, which East Suffolk Norse has in storage. It was suggested these could be refurbished and reinstated, although it is understood they may have been removed due to concerns that the pillars could not sufficiently support the weight of them. The plans for Belle Vue Park include an azalea walk, and East Suffolk Norse can give advice on recommended heights for the plants should this be progressed. Protection would need to be considered for the bulbs in the snowdrop areas included in the plans. The plans include provision for a structure to replace one previously removed, and it was suggested this could be a metal pergola, although this may be subject to planning permission if progressed. The plans also include provision for a small play area, and it was suggested that a natural play area with logs, rather than metal structures, would be more in keeping with the surroundings. It was queried whether fencing would surround the play area. Fencing is not currently included within the plans, but there have been issues with dog fouling in this area. Rather than fencing, it was discussed that signage could be considered instead, with positive messages asking users to respect the park so that it can be maintained as dog-friendly area. There was a request for this to be added to the next agenda for further discussion. Cycling in the parks will also need to be considered with the signage, and it was suggested that some of the bigger parks could have information boards as well. The priorities for the first year in Belle Vue Park were identified as the planting of the pink and white beds, the play area and the planting of poppies in the area around the war memorial. If approved, the azalea walk will be progressed the following year and built up over the next few years. The Sub-Committee would also like to see more seating in the park, including a picnic bench and more seating arranged in a similar style to those within the poppy garden, to encourage social interaction. There is funding available to coastal communities to install water bottle refill stations. This has been added to the AID agenda for consideration.

56.2 Clarkes Lane – Renaming of this park and other parks and open spaces has been discussed previously and could be considered with the new signage. Cllr Coleby had previously drawn up a plan for this park, based on the Sub-Committee's discussions, and this was displayed at the meeting. The plan includes a wildflower area incorporating a maze, a bicycle track around the play area and a bowl for skating, for which grant funding could be considered. The plan also includes a second play area, picnic benches and a community orchard. It was suggested that a section of the park could be left uncut to see what grows. If the Council wanted to progress a wildflower area here, East Suffolk Norse recommend ploughing the area, though this is not something they would have the equipment for. The Sub-Committee agreed that the first year priorities should be the picnic benches and community orchard, with the development of the wildflower area to begin in the autumn of the first year. Grants will be explored in year two or three for the development of the skate bowl area, should the Council agree to progress this. It was suggested that there should be some public consultation as well if these ideas are progressed.

56.3 Kensington Gardens, including to consider the following:

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56.3a Options for the Boating Lake (some aspects may be confidential) – It was suggested that a bandstand could be constructed near to the boating lake to make this large area more well used. The issue of algae in the boating lake was discussed. East Suffolk Norse currently use special dye and salt as a preventative measure. Ducks use the lake and members of the public have previously complained that ducklings can become stranded in the lake. Floating islands have previously been trialled but were unsuccessful. The AID Committee voted against installing a fixed island. Options for steps or some type of platform were discussed and will continue to be considered.

56.3b Friends of Kensington Gardens Composting Trial – This was covered by discussions earlier in the meeting. It was reported that the tennis courts need to be cleaned. This is done periodically but it is difficult to keep them clean when they are not in regular use during the winter months. East Suffolk Norse are looking at a new product which should be more effective. It was reported that the bowls pavilion is not fit for purpose. Cllr Barnard proposed checking to see if a condition survey has previously been conducted of this building and if not a recommendation to the AID Committee to progress one; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

- 56.4 Normanston Park – There have previously been discussions to designate Normanston Park as the Town Council’s sports park. Refurbishment of the changing rooms was discussed but it was queried whether to progress this if they are not well used. It was suggested that start times of matches could be staggered, as long as there was a sufficient number of lockers to support the number of people using them. Cllr Barnard proposed a recommendation to the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee to seek advice from an architect as to the optimum internal layout of the changing rooms to support the playing of sports; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour. It was suggested that a future plan for the park could be to consider a compostable toilet nearer to the play area. The AID Committee will be considering the provision of adult outdoor gym equipment and it was suggested that consideration should be given to other sports for which there are currently no facilities in the town.

Cllr Barnard left the meeting 16:19

This could include the development of a bicycle track in the wooded area. A running track was suggested but this could be expensive to do and the area is not flat. The park is also poorly lit after dark.

57. How to encourage native flora and fauna in the Town Council’s parks and open spaces

At the last Climate Emergency Committee meeting, Cllr Lang put forward the area of open space on Daffodil Walk as a pilot area for encouraging biodiversity. It was suggested that local residents could be directed to an online survey requesting their comments and ideas and whether they would like to be involved. East Suffolk Norse could offer advice about the development of a wildflower area, but this could be expensive to progress.

58. To refine and define the use of mulch on land owned by the Town Council

Due to time constraints on the meeting it was agreed to carry this item forward to the next agenda.

59. Date of the next meeting

The current scheduling of meetings of this Sub-Committee does not allow for recommendations made to be considered by the AID Committee within the same month. It was agreed to schedule meetings of this Sub-Committee for the third Tuesday of every month going forward, and the next meeting date was agreed as 18 February.

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60. Items for the next Agenda and Close

Councillors were asked to email the Committee Clerk with any suggestions for items to be included on the next agenda.

61. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

61.1 Any legal matters including those at 56.3a above as required – There were no confidential matters to be discussed.

The Chair closed the meeting 16:41.

Signed:
18 February 2020