

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee
Via Video Meeting
18:00 on 1 February 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Bob Breakspear, Neil Coleby (Chair), Andy Pearce and John Pitts

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

138. 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.

139. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sue Barnard, Colin Butler, Alan Green (who attends in his role as Mayor), Jacqueline Hardie and Paul Page. Cllr Graham Parker has resigned from this Committee. Cllr Peter Knight had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

140. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 147 and with regard to item 145.1 noted that he does attend meetings of the Most Easterly Community Group, who were represented at the Friends Groups Forum. Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 145 and 147.

141. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 4 January 2021 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

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

A comment had been submitted regarding item 143.5 – the request to install ‘Happy to Chat’ signs in Kensington Gardens and Fen Park, and whether this has been fully considered. The comment will be taken into consideration during the discussion of that item.

143. Parks and open spaces:

143.1. Receipt of any comments and noting the draft minutes of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee meeting on 19 January 2021 – The draft minutes were noted.

143.2. Recommendations from the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee:

143.2a. Supporting composting or mulching areas on Council premises where appropriate, including to explore possible locations in Fen Park and Kensington Gardens – Currently there is a budget of £1,000 for mulch and there will be a further £1,000 in the 2021 – 2022 budget. This is for the purchase of mulch itself but could be used towards creating spaces to produce mulch. The Mulch Policy has been adopted by Full Council. Cllr Coleby will liaise with officers to progress the purchase and use of mulch as agreed. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, in conjunction with officers and any Ward Councillors who would like to be involved, to identify appropriate areas for mulching and composting and progress, with any costs to be considered by the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

143.2b. Adopting the Tree Policy – Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Tree Policy as amended during its review by other Committees and Sub-Committees; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

143.2c. Adopting the report on information boards and/or signage for the Town Council’s parks as a working document – Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full

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Council to adopt the report as a working document; seconded by Cllr Breakspear all in favour. Officers have started seeking quotations for the different types of signs as set out in the document, and this will be discussed further at the next meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee meeting. The cost of the wrought iron over-entrance arch signs will depend on their design. A quotation has also been received for the welcome signage, but additional expenditure may be required if there is nothing suitable at the site to affix the sign to. Ownership signage is required at The Ness and there is a need to replace some of the existing signs at other sites. It was suggested that authority could be delegated to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee in conjunction with officers and any other Councillors who wish to be involved, to agree the design of the signs and appropriate locations. The Ness needs to be progressed more urgently and it was suggested the Clerk may be able to do this under delegated authority as part of the existing agreement for signs. Officers have completed site visits and identified potential locations for signage at The Ness. The design of the current play area sign was displayed. The sign is colourful but could fade. The design could be considered further by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee. Cllr Pitts proposed delegating authority to the Clerk to progress ownership signage for The Ness, and replacement of any existing signage at other sites where required; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

143.2d. Prioritising the Sparrows Nest play area for refurbishment in 2021 – 2022, and making improvements to the St Margaret’s Plain and Britten Road play areas – Cllr Coleby and officers have started looking at ideas, particularly around the Alice in Wonderland theme which has previously been discussed for Sparrows Nest. Cllr Pearce proposed support of the recommendation to prioritise Sparrows Nest play area for refurbishment in 2021 – 2022, with any remaining funds to be used to make improvements to the St Margaret’s Plain and Britten Road play areas; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour. It was suggested that the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee should set the specification before quotes are sought, and will consider the equipment proposals that Cllr Coleby and officers have been looking at.

143.2e. Exploring the possibility of a path at the Stoven Close play area, from Weston Road to the picnic benches – One Councillor has raised a concern that a path may be required for accessibility. Advice received suggests this could be expensive to do and may not be required if the current terrain is reasonable. There will also be other practicalities to consider. Cllr Pearce proposed that a formal quotation be sought to install a path from Weston Road to the picnic benches; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

143.2f. An approval in principle for the installation of dog litter bag dispensers at The Ness, subject to further information regarding the specification and arrangements for replacement bags, and the approval of the Climate Emergency Committee – The company who approached the Council about installing the dispenser is happy to purchase and replace the bags, and there may be locality funding available which they can apply for. Cllr Pearce proposed approval in principle for the installation of dog litter bag dispensers at The Ness, with delegated authority to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, in conjunction with officers, to confirm the specification and arrangements; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

143.3. Progress with memorial lecterns for the Belle Vue Park Peace Garden and Kensington Gardens Holocaust Memorial Garden – It was suggested that an application for locality funding could be submitted in the new financial year. Cllr Coleby proposed referring this item to the Finance and Governance Committee to work out the cost and progress, and Cllr Coleby will liaise with officers to put further information together; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

143.4. Site access to Sparrows Nest – Norse has suggested a drop off area, rather than

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marked parking bays. This Committee had agreed the bollard should be installed further into the park and there should be appropriate warning signage at the entrance. It was agreed that stakeholders should be contacted again to discuss key holder arrangements and an explanation that the Council has an overriding safety concern for its park users. Cllr Pearce proposed proceeding with installing the bollard further into the park, beyond the mini 'roundabout', with a drop of point at the Movie Makers Theatre and appropriate signage there and at the entrance to the park; seconded by Cllr Pitts; all in favour. Consideration will need to be given to how the park will be patrolled to prevent parking in the drop off area.

143.5.A request to install 'Happy to Chat' signs in Kensington Gardens and Fen Park – The Kirkley People's Forum is supportive of this initiative and has a number of signs available, and is seeking landowner permission. The Council will be reviewing its Open Spaces Strategy and Memorial Benches Policy, taking account of East Suffolk Council's Memorial Benches Policy. It was suggested that in due course at least one bench in all of the Town Council's parks should have this designation. It was suggested that the signs should be affixed temporarily to begin with, to see how the concept is received. Cllr Pearce proposed granting landowner consent in principle; subject to the signs not being attached to any existing memorial benches in Kensington Gardens or Fen Park; seconded by Cllr Coleby; three Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against.

144. Progress with the refurbishment of the Sparrows Nest and Fen Park public conveniences

With Sparrows Nest, a condition survey is required to the wider building and there has been an issue with tiles falling away which has resulted in a closure until it is resolved. The refurbishment of the Fen Park public conveniences is ready to proceed. A tender specification is now required to project manage through, looking at the suitability of the site and structure and obtaining quotations. Some work has already take place to put together a specification and seek quotations for the fixtures and fittings across all of the Town Council's public conveniences. A meeting of the Toilet Strategy Working Group is required to progress this. Contingency funding has been set aside in the budget for any works which may be required to the wider building in Sparrows Nest. It was suggested that, if lockdown restrictions are eased for the summer, the refurbishment should not take place during the peak summer season. Cllr Pearce proposed progressing the condition survey for the Sparrows Nest public conveniences building and any resulting work required as a prerequisite for the toilet refurbishment, and for the Toilet Strategy Working Group to meet to discuss the tender specification, before deciding when to proceed; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour. The condition survey can be progressed under the existing health and safety delegation.

145. Friends Groups:

145.1.Feedback from the Friends Groups forum on 27 January 2021 – Cllr Breakspear, the Clerk and Committee Clerk were in attendance. It was a positive meeting which initiated ongoing contact between the Friends Groups. The Finance and Governance Committee will be considering seasonal workers. The Council has various projects it would like to progress, which would benefit from the input of additional workers. Cllr Coleby proposed progressing seasonal workers; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour. Work on the overall contract is ongoing but there were no updates to report at this stage.

145.2.Reviewing the Friends Groups Policy and appendices – Minor updates were required, such as removing references to job titles which no longer exist. It was suggested that a page could be added to the website to complement the Start-Up Pack and provide a resource base and more ease of reference for new groups. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Friends Groups policy and appendices, and that officers look at creating a Friends Groups resource page on the website;

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seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

146. Plans for the usage of the Gunton Drive former telephone kiosk, in addition to the defibrillator

The boxing in of the electrics has been completed. A narrow bookshelf could be accommodated underneath the defibrillator but there is little space to accommodate much else, and it was suggested that anything on the walls adjacent to the defibrillator would restrict access too much. It was agreed that the residents should provide a formal proposal, with an indication that this Committee would prefer to see any shelving installed on the back wall. Consideration would need to be given to the materials used and any enhanced insurance risks.

147. The results of the environmental assessments of the Town Council's ponds

A detailed report has been received and circulated, but does not provide the guidance the Council had hoped for in how to move forward. It was suggested that officers should go back to the person who provided the report for their advice, and that the report should also be shared with Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency to seek their views. The Finance and Governance Committee will be asked to consider the financial implications, as the oxygenation of the Fen Park pond alone is likely to be a significant cost, along with any de-silting which is required. East Suffolk Norse's Countryside Officer has previously visited some of the sites and his views will also be sought. It was also agreed to share the report with the relevant Friends Groups for their consideration. It was suggested that a more regular maintenance structure for the ponds would be beneficial going forward.

148. The Denes Oval:

148.1. Proposals from the Lowestoft Town Tennis Club and the Lowestoft Cricket Club regarding improvements to the Denes Oval, including to consider alcohol licensing, sponsorship banners and club signs – The Working Group which is looking at the proposals met recently. This is still ongoing and a further internal meeting will be arranged. An update on the alcohol licensing, sponsorship banners and club signs will be provided to the clubs. The Working Group will further explore the options before a meeting with stakeholders is arranged and formal proposals drawn up to be considered by the Council.

148.2. The cost of improvement work to the Tennis Courts – This is linked to the discussion of item 148.1. This Committee would like to ensure that public right of use is maintained for at least some of the courts.

149. Amplification and recording equipment options for Hamilton House

Quotations have been received, including from East Point Business Services. Officers are now looking into how the proposals meet the Town Council's requirement. The expenditure could be quite significant. The offices are not currently being used but the Council would like to see the right solution in place when face-to-face meetings resume, and there may be more of a hybrid arrangement. It appears the current arrangements for local Councils will not be extended but some organisations are pressing for change. The Council knows what arrangements it would like to see and discussion with East Point Business Service's IT staff will help the Council to assess how to get what it would like at the best value for money, and it may be possible to incorporate this into the existing contract and provision.

150. Management of the Community Meeting Halls (confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

151. Lease arrangements for a tenant (confidential)

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To be discussed during the confidential session.

152. Date of the next meeting

1 March 2021 18:00

153. Items for the next agenda and close

There were no requests for items to be added to the next agenda.

Cllr Pearce proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour. The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream and the live stream was closed as the meeting went into confidential session. It was confirmed the meeting would end following the confidential session.

154. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

154.1. Any legal issues, including those above as required:

150. Management of the Community Meeting Halls (confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding the management arrangements for the Community Meeting Halls.

151. Lease arrangements for a tenant (confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding the lease arrangements for a tenant. Cllr Coleby made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Pitts; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting 20:15.

Signed:

1 March 2021