

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee
Via Video Meeting
15:30 on 12 January 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sue Barnard, Alan Green, Peter Lang and Paul Page (Chair)

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

113. Welcome

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

114. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Andy Pearce and David Youngman. Cllr Jacqueline Hardie had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Barnard proposed acceptance of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

115. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

116. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 1 December 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

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

Cllr Butler had provided a report regarding item 118.1, which will be discussed at that agenda item.

118. Cycling:

118.1. The draft Cycling Strategy and any feedback from Councillors, including specific concerns regarding road safety – The Committee does not advocate bicycle lanes on roads as they can be dangerous when there is insufficient space for vehicles to overtake. It was commented that the provision of cycle paths in the town is generally good, particularly compared to other areas. Cllr Butler has raised some specific issues regarding road safety. Suffolk Highways and Highways England have the responsibility for cycle paths. The Town Council can identify and report issues, but it would be beneficial if it could suggest solutions as well. It was suggested that the footpath along the side of Denmark Road which has no houses could be converted to a dedicated cycle lane. Both the road and the footpath along The Ravine are uneven, often with brambles and natural spring water along the route. This Committee would like to see a cycle route from the Oulton Broad train stations to Carlton Marshes, and a safe route between Lowestoft and Hopton. Comments from East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council will be sought on the draft Strategy. It is likely that people would be more encouraged to cycle if they felt safer doing so and suitable places to lock their bicycles. It was suggested that the Council should advocate the provision of electric bicycle lockups and this should be built into the Strategy. Cllr Green has been researching the options and costs start from £600. Charging points for electric bicycles may need to be considered alongside this, but this Committee would need to consider the overall environmental impact of the stations and the likelihood that it would be a large footprint cost, versus the benefit of them and how well used they will be.

118.2. The Town Council's submission to the East Suffolk Council cycling consultation – The Planning and Environment Committee has submitted a formal response to the consultation on behalf of the Town Council and this was displayed at the meeting.

118.3. A relevant Town Council submission to Suffolk Highways on behalf of Lowestoft residents, citing health and safety concerns – The Ravine was mentioned specifically and has already

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been discussed at item 118.1. The footpath alongside The Ravine is at an irregular angle and the surface is uneven. Officers will check whether these specific issues have been raised with Suffolk Highways previously. There was gate at the top of The Ravine footpath which has been removed some time ago. The gate at the bottom was in a poor state, and had to be removed as well. If the Council would like the gate repaired and replaced the cost is estimated between £700 – £800. This Committee would need to consider whether this is a worthwhile resource and, since the purpose of the gate is unclear and it would be difficult to justify the expenditure, particularly if only one gate was being reinstated. Cllr Green proposed a recommendation to Full Council not to repair/reinstate the gate; seconded by Cllr Lang; three Councillors voted in favour. Cllr Barnard did not participate in the vote as she had temporarily left the meeting during the discussion and the voting on this item.

119. How to progress the following actions towards implementation of the Town Council’s Health and Wellbeing Emergency and Climate Emergency Declarations:

- 119.1. Review and implementation of the Sustainability Strategy, Net Zero Policy and other related environmental policies, including the Tree Policy and Open Spaces Strategy – The Tree Policy is being considered by several Committees and Sub-Committees, and is an important part of ongoing considerations about how to support the climate emergency declaration and the environment. The Council is doing what it can, and has committed to planting more orchard trees, but an assessment of the Council’s existing carbon footprint and how to move to net zero is required. The Clerk has been researching options and external expertise could be sourced at a cost not exceeding £5,700 plus VAT. The areas covered by the assessment would be as follows: data gathering, an inventory of annual greenhouse gas emissions and a plan to reduce them, benchmarking for the Council’s buildings, operations and sites, detailing energy consumption and emissions, and a report of actions the Council can take. Should the Council prefer to have someone present the findings this would cost a maximum of £500 extra. If the written report is not sufficient this additional cost could be considered at a later date. This would include buildings leased to tenants and the Community Halls. Whilst the assessment would measure the Council’s existing carbon footprint, consideration also needs to be given to how to assess new projects, such as proposals recently submitted by the Lowestoft Town Tennis Club and the Lowestoft Cricket Club for the Denes Oval. The Town Hall would need a thorough independent assessment separately. Cllr Lang proposed a recommendation to Full Council to proceed with an assessment of the Town Council’s existing carbon footprint; seconded by Cllr Barnard; all in favour.
- 119.2. Supporting the reduction in pollution, including to consider the cost of assessing the Town Council’s carbon footprint – Some data about the monitoring of air pollution has been obtained from East Suffolk Council and was discussed at the last meeting. The Town Council can look at how it can support the reduction of air pollution, but this needs to be considered more widely across the town and in conjunction with other authorities. Quarterly meetings are held with East Suffolk Council, but specific issues arising in the meantime can be raised with the County Council as well.
- 119.3. Any recommendations from other Committees and Sub-Committees on the implementation of other aspects of the Health and Wellbeing Emergency Declaration – There were no specific recommendations to consider at this stage. A discussion about emergency and business continuity planning was requested, including how to protect the health and wellbeing of Lowestoft’s residents. Historically this has been led by the Suffolk Resilience Forum. The town now benefits from the support of a Town Council it did not previously have. The Events and Communications Officer has been tasked with helping emergency and business continuity planning. A co-ordinated effort between authorities is important. A plan was implemented for the 2013 floods in Lowestoft but the Town Council was not in existence at this point. The Town Council’s offices at Hamilton House could provide a command centre, but it is not known where the current centre is, and may need to be at more than one location.

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120. Any advice received on how to manage water usage in the Town Council's parks

This has been considered by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee and a Mulch Policy has been developed. Water butts are not being progressed due to the risks associated with them, particularly Legionella. There are however Friends Groups looking into their own insurance and management arrangements for water bowzers, but these will not provide long term water storage. The Allotments Association manages its own compliance regarding water provision to the allotment sites and asbestos, although the Town Council has previously assisted with matters such as tree management. The Clerk did receive advice that diverting springs, or otherwise affecting their natural flow, may cause other issues. The Clerk will try to seek further advice.

121. The results of the environmental assessments of the Town Council's ponds, if received

The reports should be completed by the end of this week.

122. The presentation from WildEast on 1 December 2020

The project aims to encourage more lateral thinking about re-wilding, including urban areas. A map is being created to show how people have created wild areas, which includes everything from schools to businesses to private gardens. The Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee can also consider this initiative and how the Town Council may wish to be involved. It was suggested that the Council could use Facebook to encourage people to send in pictures of any measures they have taken to re-wild areas of their gardens, why they have done so and the benefits they have seen. The school next to Kensington Gardens did have a piece of land which could have been used as a wild area and educational space, but was made into playground instead. It was suggested the Council could also encourage residential care homes to look at their own green spaces and could offer a prize. There is an area on Green Lane in Kessingland which has become a natural area. Cllr Barnard proposed using Facebook to encourage people to send in pictures of any wild areas they have created; seconded by Cllr Lang; all in favour.

123. Date of the next meeting

2 February 2021 15:30

124. Items for the next agenda and close

It was queried how the wildflower areas for Daffodil Walk and Clarkes Lane are progressing. East Suffolk Norse has provided an indicative quote, which will be considered by the Finance and Governance Committee and Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee. Daffodil bulbs have been planted at Daffodil Walk.

The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream. There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting at 16:33.

125. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:
2 February 2021