

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee

Via Video Meeting
15:30 on 1 December 2020

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sue Barnard, Alan Green, Jacqueline Hardie, Paul Page, Andy Pearce and David Youngman (Chair)

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

94. 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.

95. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Lang. Cllr Sue Barnard had advised she would be late. It was noted that Cllr Graham Parker had resigned from this Committee. All Councillors voted in favour to accept the apologies received.

96. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

97. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 3 November 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

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

Two comments had been received and were displayed. East Suffolk Council has expressed frustration with people disposing of glass in their blue bins, but has removed the doorstep collection of glass which was in operation in parts of the town. The Town Council has been advised that there are no plans to reinstate the 'Bike and Go' scheme at Lowestoft train station, but the local MP has been liaising with Greater Anglia about this.

99. Consideration of the following regarding cycling:

- 99.1. Noting that there are currently no plans to reinstate the former 'Bike and Go' scheme at Lowestoft Train Station – A response had been received to enquiries made by the Council that the scheme was closed due to lack of demand. The train station received more requests for cycle route maps instead. The Deputy Clerk will review the Cycling Strategy in consideration of the points raised in the response. It was agreed the Council should promote cycle maps on its website, rather than producing paper copies. A limited supply of printed copies could be made available to visitors and those who do not access information online. It was suggested that enquiries could be made with East Suffolk Council as to any plans they may have for a tourist information centre. It was suggested the Town Hall could eventually provide a space for this and maps could then be printed out on request.
- 99.2. Consideration of the draft Cycling Strategy and any feedback from Councillors – Cllr Hardie has provided comments via email and Cllr Barnard has responded to East Suffolk Council's map-based consultation. After the Deputy Clerk has reviewed the strategy following feedback on the 'Bike and Go' scheme, the strategy will be reviewed by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee.

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

- 100.1. Implementation of the Sustainability Strategy, Net Zero Policy and other related environmental policies, including consideration of any policy review – The Clerk has reviewed the Environmental Policy and its interrelation to other policies. The Environmental

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Policy now refers to the Council's commitment to net zero, and references to utilities and energy supplies have been strengthened to reflect the Council's position. The Environmental Policy can provide a framework, with other related policies going into more detail. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee has provisionally set a budget for climate emergency related adjustments, which will need annual planning and targeting. This will tie in with the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee's review of Committee and Sub-Committee structures and Terms of Reference. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee is requesting that each Committee and Sub-Committee, feed in details of their projects and priorities for the coming year to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee, to incorporate into the budget considerations.

Cllr Hardie temporarily left the meeting 15:57

It was suggested that the Council could seek professional advice about reducing its carbon footprint. The Environmental Policy will be reviewed by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee next and will be referred back to this Committee if there are any issues.

- 100.2. Supporting the reduction in pollution, including to consider feedback from East Suffolk Council about pollution monitoring

Cllr Hardie returned 15:58

East Suffolk Council has provided information about how pollution is measured and where the data is kept. The Town Council is already trying to make the information it has on its website regarding climate measures more robust, and can build in this information for when the Council considers its environmental objectives, particularly regarding planning. It was queried how many locations in Lowestoft have monitoring devices. This was looked at previously and officers will put as much information as possible on the website. An annual report is produced but it is hoped the devices are monitored more frequently. It was suggested the Town Council could purchase a portable device to do its own monitoring.

Cllr Hardie temporarily left the meeting 16:02

The information available will sit with the Town Council's other environmental decisions, particularly through the Planning and Environment Committee. Lowestoft is multi-jurisdictional town and actions of other authorities still affects what the Town Council does, even if it cannot control those actions. This Committee will be producing a strategy to reduce emissions.

Cllr Hardie returned 16:04

To do this it will need good data. The Council can control its own actions, can discuss these issues with its tenants and can consider for what purpose it would lease or sell land. Whatever the Town Council does needs to be measurable and it was suggested that professional advice could be sought with regard to reducing the Council's carbon footprint and how to measure progress.

- 100.3. Any recommendations from other Committees and Sub-Committees on the implementation of other aspects of the Health and Wellbeing Emergency Declaration – The Council has agreed to ring fence funds towards outdoor fitness equipment, and will need to consider the demand and appropriate locations. The Council is now looking at a strategic approach to its parks, and will be considering five year plans for the development of parks, including the provision of benches, bins and bicycle racks. Measures will have to be staggered, but the plans will at least ensure progress each year. As in previous years, budget provision is also being made to completely refurbish at least one play area each year. Five year plans do not mean that it will take five years before any progress is seen, but will distribute the plan for each park over five years for budgetary purposes and to help decide priorities. A public consultation via Facebook has been run on the topic of outdoor fitness equipment, and the feedback has been largely positive. A variety of equipment is available and a site visit to Fen Park has taken place. The Council has also been considering Normanston Park as a potential location, and could install equipment with different themes at two or three sites. East Suffolk Council is looking to install equipment along the seafront. A Working Group has been

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set up to draw up a proposal.

101. Developing a policy which takes account of climate emergency considerations for utility procurement and contracts

The Council has already decided it would like all energy supplies to move to one hundred percent renewable. The need for due consideration for the environment has been built into the Environmental Policy. There was some concern expressed previously regarding multiplication of policies and some rationalisation was required. The Clerk has now brought some of the policies together and amendments will be reviewed by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee.

102. Progress with the public campaign to promote the local beneficial impact of trees

This has been limited to the website and social media due to the ongoing effect of the pandemic, but lots of work has taken place on the website to place more emphasis on trees and the climate emergency. When the situation allows, the Council can consider other ways to engage with the public. The Town Council has also secured funding from the Tree Council to purchase more trees for its land. Cllr Hardie is awaiting advice from Suffolk County Council on its policy for replacing trees.

103. A review of the Tree Policy, following a review by officers

This is a big policy, which contains lots of general information which is not necessarily policy material. The policy needs to be made more robust and the review is ongoing. The main concerns expressed by Councillors related to legal issues and the rights of members of the public. The general view of the Council is that it would like more flexibility in the policy to consider individual requests, and the Clerk is looking at an appropriate way to build this into the policy, whilst taking into account the climate emergency declaration and the Council's desire to protect trees and the environment. The public have certain legal rights but there will also be policy questions for the Council to consider. The Council also needs to be able to manage risks, such as the removal of trees to stop the spread of disease. The Clerk is trying to simplify the policy and reflect the flexibility the Council is seeking. It was queried whether members of the public can replace trees removed from their street at their own cost. The Council has considered this with regard to memorial trees on its land and this is covered in the Open Spaces Strategy. It is important to manage public expectation. This is only something the Town Council could only consider on its own land, but would need to consider budget implications of watering and maintenance. The review of the Tree Policy was brought about by a specific request from a member of the public to have trees pruned and removed at their own expense, but the policy is prohibitive in this respect.

Cllr Barnard joined meeting 16:31

The Council needs clear rules to abide by and needs to be aware of the impact when it plants trees. An arborist has looked at the specific issue and recommended that no action is taken at this stage.

Cllr Hardie temporarily left the meeting 16:41

The Council has clear principles it would like to cover, and these will be reflected as much as possible in the policy, which will then be considered by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee.

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

This is a difficult issue, particularly concerning insurance and Legionella issues. One Friends Group has advised it could get insurance cover for a water storage device, but the Council needs to consider how this would sit with its own risk management. The Council has previously considered management of natural resources, such as diverting springs.

Cllr Hardie returned 16:44

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A draft Mulch Policy has been developed, which should decrease the Town Council's reliance on water. Abstracting natural water systems could cause issues and the Council would not wish to exacerbate the water shortage issue. The Clerk has contacted Essex and Suffolk Water for further advice and is awaiting a response. Previous attempts to stop up or divert natural springs running across pathways in Sparrows Nest and Arnold's Bequest may have caused a bigger problem, and the Clerk is seeking advice on how best to manage this.

105. The draft Mulch Policy

The type of mulch used could differ depending on the area. There have been discussions about creating leaf mulch in parks. A potential location has been identified in Fen Park, which could be treated as a pilot site. The draft policy will be considered by other Committees and Sub-Committees but this Committee approved of the policy. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to adopt the Mulch Policy; seconded by Cllr Hardie; all in favour. Cllr Green proposed a recommendation to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee to progress the idea to develop an area in Fen Park to produce mulch; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

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

The results had not yet been received.

107. Whether to make any formal recommendations to Full Council on the installation of bottle banks on land owned by the Town Council, including consideration of advice received from East Suffolk Council

This Committee had been exploring the idea of using small parcels of land in the town, which are not currently being used for another purpose, as locations for bottle banks. East Suffolk Council has advised that it would like to resolve outstanding land transfer issues before it will consider any new requests for land transfers. The Town Council has received details of the criteria any potential sites must meet for a bottle bank to be installed. East Suffolk Council has advised there is an issue with people disposing of glass in their blue bins, which demonstrates a need for additional bottle banks. It was suggested this should be revisited when the existing land transfer issues are resolved. It was agreed this matter should be revisited in March, and in the interim enquiries will be made with East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council to see if they would be willing to work with the Town Council on this matter, for the benefit of the town.

108. Signage at The Ness as a deterrent to littering

The Council has an aspiration to have a bin at the entrances to all of its parks. Specific issues have been reported at The Ness. The Council has to pay for litter removal, or risk manage volunteers. The Ness is an important area for wildlife, which litter can damage. Signs deteriorate and are not always effective. It was suggested themed litter bins aimed at children could instil early on the importance of proper litter disposal. The dual bins currently at The Ness suggest that waste will be recycled, however any contamination of recyclable material means it cannot be recycled effectively. The question of the effectiveness of those bins will be raised with East Suffolk Norse and East Suffolk Council. The overall consensus of this Committee was that it is not in support of signage at The Ness as a deterrent to littering.

109. Noting that the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee is considering Committee and Sub-Committee structures and Terms of Reference, and consideration of whether to submit any comments

The Planning and Environment Committee has suggested that this Committee should be part of their Committee, as that Committee covers matters relating to the Environment also, which was a pre-determined construct of the Council, which has been deviated from. There are general concerns that some issues are circulating between several Committees and Sub-

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Committees, which is partly why the review is happening, but some Committees and Sub-Committees have also come into being at different times, and some Working Groups have now become Sub-Committees. Some matters require consideration from the different perspectives of several Committees and Sub-Committees, but their mechanism for effective communication between one another is partly why the review is happening. If the Planning and Environment Committee is to consider all of the Council's environmental matters, it was queried whether this should then also include the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee. It was suggested that Climate Emergency should be a standalone Committee, but this would not prevent it from co-operating with the Planning and Environment Committee, particularly on matters of mutual interest.

Cllr Youngman left the meeting 17:20 and Cllr Page, as Deputy Chair, took over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting

It was suggested the work of this Committee may be too much for the Planning and Environment Committee to absorb, alongside its existing responsibilities, but more thought could be given about how the two Committees could more effectively work together.

110. Date of the next meeting

12 January 2021 15:30

111. Items for the next agenda and close

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

There were no requests for items for the next agenda, in addition to those already being carried forward. 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.

112. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

12 January 2021