

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee
Via Video Meeting
15:30 on 2 March 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Alan Green, Jacqueline Hardie, Peter Lang, Paul Page (Chair) and Andy Pearce

Also participating: Sarah Foote (Deputy Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

126. Welcome and one minute's silence to be observed in respect of the passing of Councillor Sue Barnard

A statement was read and a minute's silence was observed to mark the passing of Councillor Sue Barnard.

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.

127. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr David Youngman. Cllr Page proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

128. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 134. Cllr Hardie declared a local non-pecuniary interest in any items relating to Fen Park.

129. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 12 January 2021 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

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

A comment had been received against the suggestion to include pedestrian safety in the Town Council's Cycling Strategy. A good cycle network in the town would benefit both cyclists and pedestrians. A separate comment had been received against the suggestion of bicycle lock-ups, as it was felt these can be expensive, unsightly and not always effective. The comments will be considered at the relevant agenda items. The Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee has agreed that any consideration of the provision of bicycle lockups would extend to all bicycles and not just electric bicycles.

131. Cycling:

131.1. The draft Cycling Strategy, including specific concerns regarding road safety, and a request from the Community Safety Committee to incorporate pedestrian safety – In order for this to progress, consideration needs to be given to what the Council is trying to achieve with this strategy and what is needed to achieve it. In response to one of the public comments, Cllr Lang clarified that his request to take pedestrian safety into consideration is because segregated cycle and pedestrian lanes frustrate when they are used incorrectly. Some areas are designated as cycle and pedestrian routes without having defined lanes, so all users know to take more care when using them. Pedestrian and cycle routes on raised levels can also be hazardous. The suggestion is that level routes for pedestrians and cyclists should be promoted, without segregated lanes. It was further suggested that Gull Wing should have shared bicycle and pedestrian areas, rather than segregated lanes. Cllr Butler's report raises concerns regarding the road surface of The Ravine, particularly for cyclists. It is understood that Suffolk Highways assesses priorities based on vehicular, which does not include bicycles. It was suggested that the Town Council could advocate on behalf of residents that assessments of highways take account of cycle use as well. Cllr Pearce has contacted the local Member of Parliament in an individual capacity to enquire what role he thinks the

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Town Council could have in a wider multi-jurisdictional cycle strategy. Cllr Pearce will forward his enquiry to officers to follow up. Thanks were offered to Cllrs Butler and Hardie for their comments. It was suggested that certain routes in Lowestoft should not be promoted as cycle routes, particularly where there are known hazards to cyclists, such as parked cars. Cllrs Butler and Hardie have both suggested a designated cycle route connecting both parts of the town and taking in The Ness and Ness Point. The Town Council does not have the authority to create this but it can put forward a suggestion. The Town Council has received a complaint about cyclists using the promenade area near the South Beach when there are signs to say that cycling is prohibited. The Town Council does not own this land but the comments have been noted. The Deputy Clerk has suggested what the Town Council can do within its remit, and has collated what information is available on cycling provision in the town. The Deputy Clerk attended the recent East Suffolk Council Planning Forum, where the results of the map based cycling and walking consultation were discussed. Feedback has been requested from East Suffolk Council on what the next steps will be. It was agreed that it would be misleading to refer to the Town Council's draft document as a strategy. At the moment it is a reference document collating all of the information the Council has so far, and incorporating some thoughts and ideas. A cycle map has now been uploaded to the Council's website. The Town Council cannot implement a town wide strategy but it can advocate. Individual issues can be reported to Suffolk Highways online, but the Town Council can report any common issues it identifies, as well as putting forward positive suggestions. There are certain actions the Town Council can take regarding its own assets, such as maintaining its parks well and ensuring sufficient bicycle storage and clear signage where cycle routes exist through its parks, and providing lit routes where possible to encourage cycling. The issues with the cycle racks at The Ness are being addressed. Whilst not duplicating the efforts of other Committees and Sub-Committees the document could draw attention to what actions the Council is taking to improve cycling provision. It was agreed the document should more of a pledge from the Town Council to do what it can with its own land and within its remit to improve and promote the town's cycling provision, and work with other organisations to support the delivery of outcomes from recent surveys. It was suggested that consideration should also be given to electric scooters as they are becoming more popularly used, although it is still unclear where they can legally be used. Cllr Hardie proposed remodelling the draft Cycle Strategy as a Cycling Pledge, to include the actions the Town Council can take within its remit to improve, promote and support the town's cycling provision; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

- 131.2. Actions to implement the Cycling Strategy – This was covered with the discussion of the previous item and will be revisited when the Council's pledge has been drafted.
- 131.3. The provision of bicycle lock-ups in the Town Council's parks – This is being considered by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee as part of the five year plans.

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

- 132.1. Review and implementation of the Sustainability Strategy, Net Zero Policy and other related environmental policies – A budget has been approved for an assessment of the Council's carbon footprint to be carried out and the Clerk is seeking quotations. The Clerk has also put together some new procedures, such as what the Town Council would expect of its building contractors, particularly for inclusion with tender documents. The Council cannot consider how to implement a Net Zero Policy until the assessment has been completed and actions to achieve net zero have been identified.
- 132.2. Supporting the reduction in pollution – This Committee has previously discussed air pollution monitoring in various places around the town. East Suffolk Council does have some related information and data on its website, but it was suggested that additional monitoring devices are needed, particularly in places where traffic is known to queue. The County, District and Town Councils have all declared a climate emergency, so it was suggested that the three

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authorities should work together to monitor and reduce air pollution levels, such as by using digital signs by the roadside to encourage motorists to switch off their engines when queuing in traffic. Cllr Hardie proposed that enquiries be made with East Suffolk Council to determine if it has plans to install more monitoring devices in Lowestoft, and to determine how the current devices are checked and maintained; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Officers were asked to check what information is available in the public domain. If this is limited, Cllr Pearce proposed that officers make enquiries with the relevant health authorities to see if data is available on the extent and increase of respiratory conditions linked to pollution in Lowestoft; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour. Cllr Green has received a report from a member of the public concerned about a factory having frequent bonfires on its premises, and will report this to East Suffolk Council. There appears to have been an increase around the town in general of dog waste being bagged up and discarded. The Town Council is considering the provision of bins on its land.

- 132.3. Business continuity planning – A draft business continuity plan for Lowestoft Town Council is underway and will encompass measures the Council already has in place. This Committee will primarily consider any wastage, losses and impacts of the Town Council's business planning and continuity ensure that the measures are not excessively wasteful. The Town Council is already looking into ensuring its insurance providers and energy suppliers are ethical and appropriate environmental credentials. The draft plan should take account of this for any interim measures which are required to ensure business continuity, and any suppliers or providers involved should meet the Council's requirements in terms of being ethical and having the appropriate environmental credentials.

133. The installation of dog litter bag dispensers at The Ness

The Ness and North Denes remain a popular dog walking route. A dog litter bag dispenser could be a welcome provision, but there needs to be a sufficient provision of bins along with it. There is a dispenser at Kensington Gardens but there has been an issue with people taking large quantities of bags at once. The Town Council has received a proposal from a nearby business, who would provide the dispenser and refill it. The Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee and Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee supported the idea in principle but had concerns that the specification of the dispenser did not restrict the number of bags which could be removed at once. This Committee would also like to ensure the bags are bio-degradable. Cllr Hardie proposed reporting back to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee that this Committee's position is to support the provision of a dog litter bag dispenser at The Ness in principle, but only if there is adequate bin provision and the bags themselves are bio-degradable; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

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

Suffolk Wildlife Trust has offered some general advice about pond maintenance, which aligns with discussions the Town Council has previously had, particularly with regard to Fen Park and Gainsborough Drive. The Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee will also consider this advice. Although the assessments were thorough, this Committee is disappointed with the lack of proactive recommendations arising from them as to how the Council may resolve the issues identified.

135. Tree works at the Denes Oval

Some contractual works are taking place to remove a tree, as a resident has a legal right to a view from their property. Separately, there have been incidents of unauthorised tree removal at the top of Links Road. The Police are involved and it appears this has been happening over a long period of time and a significant number of trees have now been removed. This Committee will need to consider what can be done to restore the biodiversity of area and the habitats lost. Cllr Hardie has received a separate report of a local caravan park removing trees

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to put in more caravans. If there is no planning consent for this to happen East Suffolk Council's Planning Enforcement Team should be able to investigate this.

Cllr Hardie left the meeting 17:19

With regard to the tree removal at Links Road, witnesses have come forward with significant evidence and the Police are making enquiries. East Suffolk Norse's Arborist will be liaising with the Police onsite and it is hoped a fuller assessment of the extent of the tree removal will be available for the meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed that an assessment of what is authorised and unauthorised work takes place, and this Committee considers arrangements for replacement at its next meeting, in line with the Town Council's Tree Policy. This matter should also be raised with the Community Safety Committee, as an area which may require additional security measures; seconded by Cllr Lang; all in favour.

136. Making amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Town Council's Committees and Sub-Committees to more appropriately reflect how the Town Council's climate emergency declaration is being taken forward

This is still ongoing. Previously, each Committee member was allocated a number of Terms of Reference documents to review. Committee members will be reminded of which ones they were asked to look at and this item will be carried forward to the next meeting. Terms of Reference will be reviewed again at the Annual Meeting so any proposed amendments should be forward in time for this.

137. Date of the next meeting

6 April 2021 15:30

138. Items for the next agenda and close

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

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.

139. Resolution to close the meeting to the public