

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 17 February 2021

MINUTES

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

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

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

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

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.

54. Appointing the Chair of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee

Cllr Pearce proposed appointing Cllr Lang as the Chair until the Annual Meeting in May when Chairs for all of the Committees and Sub-Committees will be appointed again; seconded by Cllr Hardie. There were no further nominations. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

55. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Paul Page and David Youngman. Cllr Alice Taylor had resigned from this Sub-Committee. Cllr Jacqueline Hardie had advised she would need to leave at 17:00. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

56. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

57. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meetings on 20 January 2021 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted. The Committee Clerk was thanked for the comprehensive minutes.

58. Advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda

Cllr Youngman had submitted a statement further to comments he made at the previous meeting of this Sub-Committee, clarifying that the Planning and Environment Committee does not make recommendations to East Suffolk Council on the removal of trees, but notes the applications it receives.

59. Any feedback from other Committees and Sub-Committees, following this Sub-Committee's review of structures and Terms of Reference

The suggested renaming of the Climate Emergency Committee was discussed by the Finance and Governance Committee, who would like to see the word 'emergency' retained in the Committee's title. No formal decision was made and it was suggested that this Sub-Committee should consider this further. Any recommendations relating to this Sub-Committee's review of Committee and Sub-Committee structures will be considered by Full Council at its meeting in February. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference are more important in defining a Committee or Sub-Committee's remit than its name. Cllr Lang proposed a recommendation to Full Council to rename the Climate Emergency Committee as the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

60. Appropriate financial delegations to Committees and Sub-Committees

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 17 February 2021

It was suggested that the quorum of Committees and Sub-Committees should be rationalised at four for Committees and three for Sub-Committees. The Local Government Act refers to quorum as three or one third of the total membership, whichever is the greater number. This could mean that revisions to individual Terms of Reference would be required throughout the year if Committees or Sub-Committees lost members, unless the wording was made more generic. Cllr Pearce made a recommendation to Full Council to standardise the quorum for the Town Council's Committees as four, and to standardise the quorum for the Town Council's Sub-Committees as three, to take effect from the Annual Meeting in May; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. It was agreed that if this recommendation is accepted, this should be reflected in the Town Council's Standing Orders and as well as the individual Terms of Reference. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council that the Deputy Mayor should be given the same ability as the Mayor to sit on any Committee or Sub-Committee with full voting rights, even if the Mayor is also present at the meeting. This would provide continuity and ensure there is still someone with an overview across all of the Committees and Sub-Committees in case the Mayor is unavailable for any reason. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Pearce and all Councillors voted in favour.

The Clerk had prepared a meeting paper on appropriate financial delegations, which had been circulated and was displayed at the meeting. Any delegations granted to other Committees or Sub-Committees would still require appropriate reporting back to the Finance and Governance Committee and Full Council. The purpose of this is to make the running of the Council more efficient, and is not intended to make the processes any less transparent. For any delegations to Sub-Committees, a corresponding delegation should be given to its parent Committee. The Finance and Governance Committee has put forward a recommendation for the Events and Communications Sub-Committee to report to the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee, but retaining its delegated budget, so an appropriate amendment would be required to the AID Committee's Terms of Reference to allow it to grant this delegation. The ordering of bulbs would be suitable for delegation. Currently this has to be considered by several Committees and Sub-Committees. The overall horticulture budget is pre-agreed. It was suggested that this could be delegated to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, or officers in conjunction with that Sub-Committee. Any expenditure would be duly reported to the parent Committee, the Finance and Governance Committee and Full Council. It is understood that the Clerk has delegated authority to make appropriate expenditure from the training budget. It was suggested that it would be beneficial if the Personnel Committee could make decisions on expenditure from the training budget alongside the Clerk, as ensuring appropriate training takes place is a responsibility of this Committee.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council that, in addition to the recommendation which has already been made for the Events and Communications Sub-Committee to report to the AID Committee with its delegated budget intact, a corresponding amendment is made to the AID Committee's Terms of Reference to enable it to confer that delegation; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to delegate the horticulture budget of £23,600 to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, to include ordering bulbs and ongoing maintenance; seconded by Cllr Hardie; all in favour.

It was queried whether authorisation should be granted to Committees to set up Sub-Committees and grant delegated budgets as they see fit. It was agreed that there should not be a requirement to give blanket authorisation in this way, and should a Committee ever wish to do this an appropriate amendment can be made to its Terms of Reference via an agreement by Full Council.

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 17 February 2021

The Finance and Governance Committee has authority to consider expenditure of up to £10,000 per individual item. The Events and Communications Sub-Committee is different as it has a specific delegated budget for events. For those Committees with a delegated budget it was suggested that their per item expenditure should not exceed £5,000 and their overall expenditure should not exceed their delegated budget.

Cllr Coleby temporarily left the meeting 16:50

For Sub-Committees with a delegated budget, their maximum per item expenditure should not exceed £2,500 and overall expenditure should not exceed their delegated budget.

Cllr Coleby returned 16:50

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council that for Committees with a delegated budget, their per item expenditure should not exceed £5,000 and overall expenditure should not exceed their maximum delegated budget. For Sub-Committees with a delegated budget, their per item expenditure should not exceed £2,500 and overall expenditure should not exceed their maximum delegated budget. This was seconded by Cllr Coleby and all Councillors voted in favour. The Personnel Committee can discuss the training budget and request a delegation if necessary. The Clerk has delegated authority which enables her to organise training once a need has been identified. Thanks were offered to the Clerk and the Finance Assistant for their work in identifying appropriate financial delegations.

61. Reviewing the following Town Council policies:

Thanks were offered to all those who have been involved with the preparation and review of policies.

Cllr Hardie left the meeting 16:53

Some of the policies still contain some outdated references.

- 61.1 Grievance Procedure – There was a query raised at the last meeting as to why any grievances about the Clerk are only handled by the Chair of the Personnel Committee. The Clerk has looked into this, and this applies to the investigation stage only, and from thereon would be handled by panels constituted by the Council. If a delegation was made to an entire Committee to handle a grievance about the Clerk at investigation stage it may then prejudice the entire Committee from sitting on a panel or otherwise being involved at later stages.
- 61.2 Legionella Control and Water Hygiene Policy – This is being reviewed by the Clerk and will be carried forward to a future meeting.
- 61.3 Memory Stick Policy – It was agreed that this does not need to be standalone policy, and can be amalgamated with the existing IT, Internet, Social Media and Email Policy.
- 61.4 Noticeboard Protocol – The Protocol currently states that items for display must be submitted to the Council in hard copy format only. This is more difficult with the current social distancing guidelines but post and deliveries are still being forwarded on or collected by officers. The Protocol does not specify that noticeboards will only be sited on land owned by the Town Council, and a query has just been raised about installing one on private land.
- 61.5 Open Spaces Strategy – It was agreed to defer the consideration of the Open Spaces Strategy whilst the five year plans are in progress and further advice about the pond assessments is still pending.
- 61.6 Pandemic Contingency and Recovery Policy – Point 3b references delegated authority to the Clerk. It was suggested that this be extended to the Clerk in conjunction with the Mayor and the Chair of the Community Safety Committee. As part of its Terms of Reference the Community Safety Committee has a responsibility to liaise with the Clerk regarding matters linked to the pandemic. Often, swift action is required so it was suggested that a meeting would not always be required, but liaison could simply be via email or the telephone. Following discussion it was agreed not to apply this amendment as it would be more efficient to allow the Clerk to take action as necessary and report

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 17 February 2021

back as appropriate via the relevant Committees and Full Council. Page three of the policy refers to an additional sum provided to staff to support their ability and obligation to work from home. It was agreed that the wording 'at the maximum allowed by HMRC' should be inserted here to broaden the wording in case the specific sum changes in the future, and to confirm that it is a nationally agreed figure.

- 61.7 Personal Use of the Telephone Policy – The policy does reference how using a mobile telephone, including a handheld mobile telephone, whilst driving is dangerous. Using a handheld mobile telephone is also illegal, and further into the policy it states that a mobile phone should not be used at all whilst driving. It was agreed that points 6.1 and 6.2 could be removed from the policy altogether. The policy has a section on not discussing confidential information in public areas or inappropriate places. It was suggested that wording should be inserted warning of the risk of using Bluetooth, public Wi-Fi or other such technology to share confidential information, although this could lead to potential disciplinary action against staff over something they may not have control over. It was agreed instead to insert wording that staff should be mindful of information security training and prevailing data security regulations.
- 61.8 Petty Cash Policy – It was confirmed that this policy does align with the Financial Regulations regarding the amount that the Town Council can hold in petty cash. Petty cash is rarely used now.
- 61.9 Pond Policy – Section 3.0 contains outdated references. Section 2.1 refers to desilting and oxygenation of ponds, which is relevant and topical, and complements the Open Spaces Strategy which is also being reviewed.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to adopt the Grievance Procedure, Memory Stick Policy (to be incorporated into the IT, Internet, Social Media and Email Policy), Noticeboard Protocol, Pandemic Contingency and Recovery Policy, Personal Use of the Telephone Policy, Petty Cash Policy and Pond Policy, with the amendments as identified; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

62. Date of the next meeting

17 March 2021 16:00

63. Items for the next agenda and close

It was queried whether the Town Council should have a policy for cycles abandoned on its land. Whilst not specifically relating to abandoned cycles, the Council does have a general policy regarding property left on its sites. Decisions have mostly been made so far based on the circumstances and in liaison with East Suffolk Norse, and have mostly been handled under Common Law Trespass Notices and a timescale has been given for property to be removed if not collected within a certain period. A paragraph could be inserted into the Open Spaces Strategy, but consideration would need to be given to how the situation would be monitored and how much time would need to elapse to deem that an item has been abandoned.

This Sub-Committee has undertaken to review all of the Council's policies before the Annual Meeting in May. This Sub-Committee has two more meetings remaining until then and has been working to a review schedule which was displayed. The Standing Orders will be reviewed at one of the two meetings before the Annual Meeting.

The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the livestream of the meeting. There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting 17:30.

64. Resolution to close the meeting to the public