

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
15:30 on 7 December 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Paul Page, Andy Pearce and David Youngman (Chair)

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: There was one member of the public in attendance (in person)

104. Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained and the meeting was welcomed.

105. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Lang. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

106. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllrs Brooks and Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Gunton. Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 112 and 117.

107. The draft minutes of the meeting on 5 October 2021

It was clarified that this should be the minutes of 2 November 2021. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes of 2 November 2021; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

108. Public forum, including receiving information on the 'Use It All' scheme

A member of the public was in attendance to discuss the Use It All scheme. This arose from the Heritage Action Zone with the aim of making improvements in that area to reducing waste, reusing items and recycling. Collection points have been set up for items which are difficult to recycle. Those involved with the service would like to liaise with relevant authorities to expand the scheme and to gather data to address key issues and improve local services. Tetra Pak recycling is a key issue. The Beccles Give and Take group used to have a collection point but has refocused its activities. The multi-agency Environment and Waste Working Group could look at how to improve facilities for items which are more difficult to recycle. The Working Group has discussed whether it would be possible to reinstate a recycling centre in North Lowestoft. Thanks were offered to the member of the public for attending.

The member of the public left the meeting 16:19

109. Monitoring expenditure by this Committee from the climate emergency budget, under delegated authority

There had been no changes since the last meeting. It was suggested that the Theatre Green Book should be considered at the next meeting, and should also be considered by the Finance and Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee, and the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee. The Clerk will circulate the information in the meantime. Cllr Barker attended a meeting of the Marina Theatre Trust recently where ventilation in the Theatre was discussed, which is particularly important for Covid-19 protection.

110. Any matters to raise with Cllr James Mallinder (East Suffolk Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment), and to receive feedback on any matters previously raised

The Environment and Waste Working Group has discussed the idea of skips being made publicly available. The Group will decide what ideas will be taken back to the respective authorities for approval to progress. The cost of the collection of bulky waste is £47 for three items, which is more expensive than other areas. The Working Group is looking into this and is

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due to meet again in January. The purpose of the Working Group is to advocate measures to reduce fly tipping and make the town tidier. Suggested actions need to be approved by the relevant authorities to be progressed. The County, District and Town Councils are represented on the Group.

111. The provision of Tetra Pak recycling facilities

The Committee would like to complement the efforts of local groups, such as Use It All, and help them to build on the work which has already started, to roll it out more widely. Cllr Pearce proposed making enquiries with the Beccles Give and Take group as to why they refocused their activities, and how a Tetra Pak recycling service could run in the town; and to make enquiries with the Greenprint Forum about Tetra Pak recycling generally, and any information about recycling services locally; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

112. Next steps to progressing planned projects at Clarkes Lane, including community engagement and seeking professional advice

Cllrs Barker, Lang and Elise Youngman undertook a site visit. Cllr Barker has been liaising with the Deputy Clerk regarding a public survey. It is anticipated that a further meeting will take place in January, which will be primarily involving the Ward Councillors at this stage. Approval will be sought from this Committee for any measures discussed. The Committee would like the public's views on the proposed wildflower meadow. Norse has advised this could be expensive and difficult to progress, but it may be possible to do on a smaller scale. The Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee has also had discussions about this but has agreed that this Committee should progress the plans, in consultation with the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee. Cllr Barker proposed delegating authority to staff in conjunction with Ward Councillors to progress plans and draft a public survey, which this Committee and the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee can have final sight of and input into before being published; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

113. The current provision of a bus service in Lowestoft

There have been efforts to get the service in Gunton reinstated. The AID Committee is considering the installation of a bus shelter on Harris Avenue. Suffolk County Council's plans seem to suggest that Lowestoft is not being prioritised for improvements. Councillors were disappointed that the services in and around Lowestoft do not run for longer during the night. Cllr Pearce proposed that a Zoom meeting is organised directly with the service provider to discuss the issues, the reasons why the service is as it is and the cost of running the service in the town; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

114. What the initial investment in electric vehicles will include

It is likely that a decision will be made later this financial year or the next, and consideration needs to be given to budget provision. The Finance and Governance Committee has also considered this, but the overall decision will need to be reached by Full Council. The initial purchase of the vehicle could be made without raising funds in the precept. There is an existing budget of approximately £7,100 for electric bicycles and vehicles, and a further £25,000 in the climate emergency reserve. Provisionally, subject to Full Council approving the budget, an additional £7,800 will be added to the electric vehicles budget and £12,500 to the climate emergency budget. Practicalities regarding secure storage and charging points can be considered if the Council decides to proceed. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Council should look favourably upon the purchase of an electric vehicle, particularly as part of the Council's aim to achieve net zero, and should consider the costs not just of purchase but of maintenance, storage and charging points as well; seconded by Cllr Brooks; four Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote. The cost of installing a charging point is understood to be approximately £800. The lowest cost of a small electric van is approximately £17,000, but lease options are also available. The vehicle would be shared

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between officers for the purposes of asset maintenance. A small van would enable the transportation of equipment, particularly if any grounds maintenance services were managed internally. The Committee asked officers to consider where charging points may be required, and the type of charging point that would be needed. It was agreed to defer the next meeting to the second week in January instead, to allow more time for information to be gathered.

115. Lowestoft Town Council's involvement in the 'Way To Go Suffolk' Team's electric cargo bicycles trial

The trial is aimed at organisations and businesses. If the Town Council is eligible, the bicycle could be used for site visits and the Town Council could the electricity costs. Cllr Pearce proposed registering the Town Council's interest in this trial; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

116. A Climate Action Plan

This is in progress and should be ready for the next meeting.

117. An update from the Events and Communications Sub-Committee on the planning of a Climate Event

The Office Assistant has been working on ideas and has already been reaching out to organisations who may be interested in having a presence at the event. The Events and Communications Sub-Committee will be planning the event itself, but would welcome input from this Committee. Fen Park was suggested as a potential location and Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest if this were the case. Officers are exploring if funding options are available to support smaller complementary events in different locations. The Committee would like to see the event take place in the spring or the summer but is mindful of events already scheduled, particularly in June and July. Officers are exploring if funding options are available to support smaller complementary events in different locations, and would also like this Committee's support to seek funding to help projects in the community. Cllr Pearce proposed support for officers progressing external funding opportunities; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed asking the Events and Communications Sub-Committee to treat the Climate Event as a major event; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. The Council usually works with other relevant authorities on major events. It was suggested that Lowestoft in Bloom may wish to be involved with this one. Suffolk Wildlife Trust will also likely be involved.

118. Installing bird houses, bat houses and hedgehog houses in the Town Council's parks

Sample bird, bat and hedgehog houses had been provided by the Lowestoft Men's Shed. The cost should be £5 per unit for the hedgehog house and £4 per unit for the bat and bird houses. It was suggested that the Lowestoft Men's Shed may wish to have a presence at the event as discussed in the previous item to sell the houses. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the purchase of twenty of each, with delegated authority to officers to progress the purchase and installation, subject to receiving confirmation that no harmful products are used in the manufacturing process. An indication of timescale was also requested. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. It was suggested that Arnold's Bequest would be a good location for the bat, bird and hedgehog houses. Cllr Pearce proposed purchasing three of each for Arnold's Bequest, and an item will be added to the Charity Board's agenda to approve the expenditure; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour. The Committee would also like to enquire if it would be possible to purchase bug hotels from the Lowestoft Men's Shed. The Clerk could look into funding opportunities to upscale the project. The Committee agreed to use Town Council funds to make the initial purchase. East Suffolk Council's Nature First small grants scheme was suggested as a possible source of funding. Cllr Pearce proposed enquiring about the purchase of twenty bug hotels. Cllr Pearce further proposed allocating a maximum

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budget of £750 for the purchase of all of the bat, bird and hedgehog house and bug hotels, including those for Arnold's Bequest; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed suspending Standing Order 3y to allow the meeting to continue for fifteen minutes; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

119. East Suffolk Council's involvement in the 'Treebilee' project, and offer of at least one oak tree to the Town Council

Initially, the trees are being allocated as one per Parish, but East Suffolk Council has recognised the size of the Town Council and has offered it first refusal on any additional trees which may become available. Cllr Pearce proposed formally expressing interest in this offer. Practicalities regarding planting can be discussed when more detail is known; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

120. Date of the next meeting

4 January 2022 15:30 – It was agreed that this should be deferred to 11 January 2022 at 15:30.

121. Items for the next agenda and close

The Committee requested an update on efforts to measure the Town Council's current carbon footprint. Data has been sent to the consultant and a response is pending. The installation of swift bird boxes will be considered by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee. The Committee may have recommendations to consider from the Events and Communications Sub-Committee at its next meeting regarding Climate Action Day in 2022.

There were no confidential items for consideration and the meeting was closed 17:51.

122. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

11 January 2022