

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
13:00 on 10 February 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Alan Green, Paul Page, Graham Parker and Andy Pearce (Chair)

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk), James Cox (Finance and Information Officer) and Lauren Elliott (Committee and Project Clerk)

Public: Cllr Nasima Begum was in attendance via Zoom webinar

120. Welcome

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

121. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Nasima Begum, who had joined the meeting via Zoom webinar. It was noted that Cllr Alice Taylor had resigned from this Committee. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

122. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items related to the Lowestoft and Plaisir Twinning Association, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the Gainsborough Drive pond and the Gunton Ward. Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 129.1a and 129.1c. Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items related to the Gunton Ward and Fen Park. Regarding item 129.1c, Cllr Pearce advised that the application had been mentioned during a meeting of the Kittiwake Partnership Group, only because Suffolk Wildlife Trust is represented on the group. Cllr Pearce had indicated to them that they could apply to the Town Council for funding, but this application is separate and unrelated to the Kittiwake Partnership Group.

123. The draft minutes of the meeting on 13 January 2022

Cllr Parker proposed acceptance of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

124. Public forum

No advance comments had been received. Cllr Begum was in attendance remotely via Zoom webinar but there were no members of the public in attendance, either in person or remotely via Zoom webinar. It was requested that a change to the layout of the room is considered for the next meeting.

125. Budget and Loan:

125.1. Monitoring the budget for 2021 – 2022, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – A breakdown of the grants budget had been provided as requested.

125.2. Bank reconciliations – It was noted that bank reconciliations had been completed to the end of December, and January's was underway. The appointment of an additional bank reconciliation signatory will be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

125.3. Delegation to the Clerk of the Norse FM managed budget and the repairs and maintenance budgets for assets – The Norse Contract Working Group would like officer involvement at its next meeting. Cllr Pearce will liaise with the Committee and Project Clerk to make arrangements for the meeting. Existing delegations to the Clerk have a maximum per-item expenditure limit of £5,000, excluding emergency expenditure. This matches the per-item expenditure limit for Committees, with the exception of the Finance and Governance Committee. Officers can currently instruct expenditure from the Norse FM managed budget but an appropriate delegation for the repairs and maintenance budgets for assets would be

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beneficial to address repairs and maintenance issues more efficiently. Of the £72,766 repairs and maintenance budget for 2021 – 2022, there is approximately £42,000 remaining. There is approximately £1,000 remaining in the repairs and maintenance budget for Community Halls and approximately £1,000 remaining in the repairs and maintenance budget for Hamilton House. For 2022 – 2023, there will be a repairs and maintenance budget for the Marina Theatre, of £25,000. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee and Finance and Governance Committee would wish to review these budgets going forward to ensure repairs and maintenance issues can be addressed sufficiently well. Expenditure for planned preventative maintenance is currently taken from this budget and there is no delegation to cover this. Cllr Pearce proposed granting delegated authority to the Clerk as per the agenda item. In addition to this, there are two other budget headings under the Norse contract, in addition to the managed budget, for trees and general compliance. Cllr Pearce further proposed expanding the Norse FM managed budget to include each of these, and to also include the repairs and maintenance budgets for individual assets, including the Marina Theatre, Town Hall, allotments and Community Halls. It had been agreed that drain and gully clearance will be considered as itemised expenditure going forward. Cllr Pearce further proposed delegating this work to the Clerk and leave it to the Clerk's discretion whether this expenditure should be taken from the repairs and maintenance or parks budget. Cllr Pearce further proposed a per-item expenditure limit of £5,000, but for a high value asset or particularly urgent repair the delegation could increase to £10,000 in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee, or their Deputies if they are unavailable. Cllr Parker seconded the proposals and all Councillors voted in favour. It was agreed that telephone calls would be an acceptable form of liaison in an emergency, to be followed up with a confirmation email.

- 125.4. Updates to the Reserves document to reflect the previous decisions of the Council (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllr Pearce will send the document to the Finance and Information Officer to review, to be considered by this Committee at its next meeting.

126. Payments:

- 126.1. The income and expenditure reports for January 2022 and February 2022 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – A query had been raised regarding a payment to Norse, which may have been a duplicate for installation costs for a memorial bench to the late Cllr Sue Barnard, which the Gunton Residents' Association purchased via grant funding from the Town Council. It was confirmed that the payment was not a duplicate. The income and expenditure reports were received and noted as follows: -

January Receipts

Table 1 January Receipts

Date	Received From	Description	Amount
6 January 2022	Eon	Feed in Tariff	£422.82
11 January 2022	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£12
11 January 2022	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£6,300
14 January 2022	Lapwing Suffolk	Whitton Hall Bookings	£336
18 January 2022	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£24
18 January 2022	East Point Business Services	Hamilton House Service Charge refund 1/10/2020 to 30/9/2021	£4,615 + £923 VAT = £5,538
21 January 2022	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50

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Date	Received From	Description	Amount
24 January 2022	Brome and Oakley PC	Deputy Clerk Membership Half Payment	£144.50
24 January 2022	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16

January Payments

Table 2 January Payments

Date	Payment To	Description	Amount
4 January 2022	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park Business Rates January 2022	£187
4 January 2022	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls Club Business Rates January 2022	£110
4 January 2022	East Suffolk Council	Hamilton House Business Rates January 2022	£2,008
4 January 2022	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions December 2021	£5,152.98
5 January 2022	Sword and Trowel	Payslips	£146 + £31.20 VAT = £187.20
5 January 2022	Nicholsons Solicitors	Legal Advice	£1,358.48 + £270.10 = £1,620.58
5 January 2022	Paul Connew	Reimbursement	£63.55
5 January 2022	Northumbrian Water	Legionella Management	£593.97 + £118.79 VAT = £712.76
5 January 2022	East Suffolk Council	Kirkley By-Election	£8,435.15
5 January 2022	Stroud Associates	GELP Survey	£360 + £72 VAT = £432
7 January 2022	Blachere	Festive Light Removal and Storage	£2,744.80 + £548.96 VAT = £3,293.76
10 January 2022	C&C Consulting	Health and Safety Support	£735 + £147 VAT = £882
18 January 2022	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Charges	£120.55
18 January 2022	Stems Florist	Holocaust Memorial Wreaths	£120
18 January 2022	Need2Store Ltd	Civic Artefact Storage	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
18 January 2022	East Point Business Services	Hamilton House Service Charge Q3 2021-22	£8,312.25 + £1,662.45 VAT = £9,974.70
18 January 2022	Sarah Foote	Reimbursement for Wi-Fi Dongle	£36
18 January 2022	Broadland Security Alarms	Gunton Meeting Hall Repairs	£55 + £11 VAT = £66
19 January 2022	PWLB	Marina Box Office Loan Repayment	£7,031.50
19 January 2022	HMRC	HMRC December 2021	£5,104.41
21 January 2022	Salaries	Salaries January 2022	£12,499.82

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Date	Payment To	Description	Amount
24 January 2022	Anglian Water	Denes Oval Water Q3 2021-22	£666.82 + £33.34 VAT = £700.16
24 January 2022	British Gas	Whitton Hall Gas	£9.52 + £0.48 VAT = £10
27 January 2022	Anglian Water	Denes Oval Water	£774.53 + £38.73 VAT = £813.26
28 January 2022	Eon	Whitton Hall Electric	£30.48 + £1.52 VAT = £32
31 January 2022	NPower	Electric Charges	£2,924.41 + £146.22 VAT = £3,070.63
31 January 2022	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall Gas	£59.02 + £2.95 VAT = £61.97
31 January 2022	Sarah Foote	O2 Dongle Reimbursement	£35
31 January 2022	Waveney Norse	Partnership Charge Feb 2022	£37,550 + £7,510 VAT = £45,060

February Receipts

Table 3 February Receipts

Date	Received From	Description	Amount
1 February 2022	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
3 February 2022	Kirkley Friendship Group	Whitton Hall Hire	£380
7 February 2022	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£5,000
8 February 2022	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£24

February Payments

Table 4 February Payments

Date	Payment To	Description	Amount
1 February 2022	East Suffolk Council	Hamilton House Business Rates January 2022	£2,008
1 February 2022	Wendy Brooks	Stationery Reimbursement	£13.49
1 February 2022	Northumbrian Water	Legionella Checks	£593.97 + £118.79 VAT = £712.76
1 February 2022	Northumbrian Water	Water Risk Assessments	£71,27.52 + £1,425.50 VAT = £8,553.02
1 February 2022	Lord Kitcheners MHC	Lord Kitcheners Grant	£1,615
1 February 2022	Trevor Brown	Internal Audit	£250
3 February 2022	NPower	Electricity Charges	£767.85
3 February 2022	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions January 2022	£5,152.98
3 February 2022	Rialtas Business Solutions	MTD Support	£70.80
3 February 2022	Paul Connew	Travel Reimbursement	£56.95
3 February 2022	East Suffolk Council	Planning Application	£117
4 February 2022	NPower	Electricity Charges	£301.15

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Date	Payment To	Description	Amount
4 February 2022	Archant	Lowestoft Journal Adverts	£2,430.40 + £486.04 VAT = £2,916.44
7 February 2022	NPower	Electricity Charges	£827.01
8 February 2022	Norse	Sparrows Nest Resurfacing	£595.80 + £119.16 VAT = £714.96
8 February 2022	Norse	Stoven Close Installation	£6,154.74 + £1,230.95 VAT = 7,385.68
8 February 2022	Norse	Whitton Green Play Area Refurbishment	£66,181.30 + £13,236.26 VAT = £79,417.56
Pending	Archant	Tender Adverts	£72.56 + £14.51 VAT = £87.07
Pending	Community Rail Norfolk	Freedom of the Town Event	£200
Pending	Norse	Whitton Hall Cleaning January	£120 + £24 VAT = £144
Pending	Norse	Whitton Hall Cleaning December	£150 + £30 VAT = £180
Pending	SLCC	Deputy Clerk Membership	£289
Pending	Lowestoft Electrical	Town Hall Reinstating Distribution Board	£1,190 + £238 VAT = £1,428

126.2. Any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were none.

127. Audit:

127.1. The Second Interim Internal Audit Report 2021 – 2022 – Thanks were offered to the Chairs of the Finance and Governance Committee and the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee, and the Clerk and Finance and Information Officer for their work in preparation for the audit. Two thorough audits have now taken place ahead of the year end and an extra date has been arranged for the Internal Auditor to come in to the office to review information, given that previously some of the processes had to be conducted via Zoom. Information regarding the External Audit is pending. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the Second Interim Internal Audit Report 2021 – 2022; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

127.2. Internal Audit and consider the appointment of an Internal Auditor for 2022 – 2023 – The Committee is pleased with standard of audits it is receiving from the current Internal Auditor, who has been responsive and proactive, and has provided detailed reports. The Internal Auditor has indicated he would be able to continue if this role for one more year, if appointed by the Council. It would be difficult to readily find a replacement and further time would be needed to do this. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to appoint this Internal Auditor for 2022 – 2023, and 2023 – 2024 if possible; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

127.3. Arrangements for internal controls and named controllers – The Clerk has circulated the internal control sheet, which has been updated for this year. Cllr Taylor will be carrying out the internal controls in April. Internal Controllers will be appointed at the Annual Meeting in May. Previously the Council has had two named Internal Controllers, but last year had one named Internal Controller and one substitute. It is presumed that the Internal Controllers will not be bank signatories and would perhaps not be members of this Committee. The Council has implemented Committee and officer delegations so a system of checks is important. Every Councillor has the opportunity to view the processes and comment, whether they are members of the relevant Committees or not. Cllr Pearce proposed emphasising to the Annual Meeting the importance of having two named Internal

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Controllers. If two Councillors are not forthcoming to fulfil these roles an Internal Controller and substitute should be appointed instead. Cllr Green seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

128. Governance:

128.1. A governance issue relating to lobbying from external parties (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

129. Grants:

129.1. Grant applications:

129.1a. First Light Festival C.I.C. for £6,000 – The Committee is aware of concerns inside and outside of the Council. It was clarified that this application relates only to the Festival and not any other projects the applicant may be involved with. Committee members were reminded to assess the application objectively and in line with the grant application criteria. The Council does not impose a charge for the use of Kensington Gardens for the Festival. The Committee was disappointed to the reference to Lowestoft as a ‘cultural cold spot’ in the applicant’s Community Interest Statement. Cllr Barker proposed approval of the application, subject to the removal of this reference from the Community Interest Statement; seconded by Cllr Parker; five Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote. As the Council had identified the First Light Festival as a major event it had allocated budget provision to it of £5,000. It was agreed that £5,000 towards the grant funding should be taken from this budget, and the remaining £1,000 from the grants budget.

129.1b. Great Yarmouth and Waveney Diabetes Family Group for £640 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval of this application; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

129.1c. Suffolk Wildlife Trust for £2,000 – It was reiterated that this application is not linked to the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership. A representative from Suffolk Wildlife Trust is a member of the Partnership and was advised that an application for funding could be submitted to the Town Council. The application states that any funding awarded could be put towards this specific piece of work or the murals project in general. It was noted that this specific mural will be within the Lowestoft Parish. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of this application, and for the funding to be put towards this specific piece of work; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

130. Standing Orders and Policies:

130.1. Reviewing the following Town Council policies: - It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

130.1a. Financial Risk Assessment

130.1b. Investment Policy

130.1c. Financial Regulations

131. Other financial matters, including:

131.1. An application from the Lowestoft and Plaisir Twinning Association for annual funding – Cllr Brooks recently attended the Twinning Association’s Annual General Meeting as the Town Council’s appointed substitute representative. If approved, it was agreed funding should be taken from the grants budget this year, but going forward should be included separately in the budget, which the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee will need to consider. It was suggested that the Twinning Association could reach out to schools to boost awareness of the work of the Association. Cllrs Page and Pearce declared they are members of Roman Hill Primary School’s Committee. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the application from the Lowestoft and Plaisir Twinning Association for annual funding, ensuring it is made clear to the applicant that this position will be reviewable each year as part of the budget considerations; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

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- 131.2. Any budget/funding recommendations from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee meeting on 7 February 2022 which exceed that Committee's financial delegation – The Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee recommended allocating a maximum budget of £8,000 to establish undergrowth in an area of the Britten Road play area which is being used for antisocial behaviour, and to erect chain link fencing to protect it. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of this recommendation; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 131.3. The Town Council's Asset Register – The Asset Register does not include scoring of asset condition, but this is reflected in the asset values to an extent. The Asset Register displays the information required under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. Details of condition surveys for the assets are held separately. It was agreed asset names should be accurate and consistent with other documents, such as the grounds maintenance contract. It was agreed to defer this item to March's meetings of this Committee and the AID Committee. It was suggested that the Asset Register could cross reference the condition surveys, or a comprehensive spreadsheet could be created to provide a comprehensive overview of the assets. Formal valuations of the assets were carried out just over a year ago, prior to the insurance renewal. The Clerk has liaised with the Town Council's insurers and it is understood that as rebuild values are increasing, the renewal cost of the Town Council's listed buildings will be approximately 9.5% higher, with other buildings 3% higher. The higher rebuild value is always used for renewal, to ensure that assets are not under insured. The Council has set an appropriate budget to do this.
- 131.4. Investment options – With its precept established for 2022 - 2023, the Council has greater certainty of its cash flow. There is also not so much concern about negative interest. The amount held in the savings account is earning little interest. The Council may wish to consider transferring this into a CCLA account and consider longer term investment options, or alternative short term investment options. It was agreed to consider this further at the next meeting. The Clerk will prepare information about the options, and it was agreed the Investment Policy should be considered alongside this.
- 131.5. Amplification and recording equipment options for the Council Chamber – The Committee was happy with the temporary arrangement provided for the last Full Council meeting. If a more permanent solution were to be progressed, the Committee would be minded to recommend approval of the more expensive quotation, as this would provide portability. In the interim, the Committee would like the temporary solution to continue if possible, with additional handheld microphones. Currently, this is only available for Full Council meetings. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Committee would be minded to support the purchase of the more expensive option, subject to the supplier confirm it would be fully portable. In the interim, officers were asked to make arrangements for the interim solution to continue, with more microphones to be provided; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 131.6. Capital works expenditure – This relates to the grants programme for capital expenditure with East Suffolk Council, specifically regarding Sparrows Nest, the Triangle Market and Kensington Gardens. Kensington Gardens is up to date and no reimbursements are required. The Triangle Market is more complicated and the Clerk has requested further time whilst the Council works through the different aspects. Some work has been proposed for the Triangle Market, including to take up and re-lay some of the paving and replace some of the trees as their root systems are causing issues. It has already been agreed to remove the green struts beneath the Sails. The proposed work will cost approximately £30,000, which is not completely recoverable. The watering costs of any new trees would not be recoverable. Full Council will be asked to consider this. The Triangle Market and Toilet Strategy Working Groups will meet before Full Council to put forward recommendations. Four new stalls could potentially be funded. The Council has approximately £7,000 for the toilets. The quotations received exceed what the Town Council can be reimbursed for. The Clerk is seeking advice as to whether the investment would give an appropriate benefit, in line with future refurbishment plans, which the Working Group will consider. Tarmac works at Sparrows Nest

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would make up a large part of the expenditure and the Committee was asked whether it would support the proposed works in principle. The Triangle Market Working Group has not made a formal recommendation regarding additional stalls at the Triangle Market but would like Full Council to consider this. It was suggested they could be arranged in a way which would also address the issues with illegal parking at the site. Should the Town Council wish to progress its own stalls it will need to communicate this back to East Suffolk Council to inform the Feasibility Study. There were concerns that the link with the Feasibility Study may be preventing the Town Council progressing improvement works to its own assets. Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation to Full Council to withdraw the Triangle Market from the Historic Quarter (Scores and Triangle Market) Feasibility Study; seconded by Cllr Pearce. Static huts, coloured paving, benches, planters and a new traffic management system are being considered under the Feasibility Study. It is not known whether legacy planning is being considered alongside this, and whether the new traffic management system will address the concerns raised by residents and businesses in the area. It was commented that it would be difficult to make long term plans for the Triangle Market until the traffic management system is in place. The Community Safety Committee has considered these issues. The vote on the earlier proposal was taken. Five Councillors voted in favour and one Councillor abstained from the vote. Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation to Full Council to formally request an update from East Suffolk Council on its plans for a new traffic management system for the area including the Triangle Market, with input from Suffolk County Council James Mallinder; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

The Clerk temporarily left the meeting 15:15

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

The Clerk returned 15:15

Cllr Green left the meeting 15:16

A five minute comfort break was taken 15:16 and the meeting resumed 15:21

- 131.7. The implementation of approved capital projects – This item had been covered by discussions earlier in the meeting
- 131.8. The cost of refurbishment of the Sparrows Nest beacon – The Deputy Clerk had provided a meeting paper. Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the works as recommended in the meeting paper; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.
- 131.9. The cost of works required to secure a boundary of the Britten Road play area – This item had been covered by discussions earlier in the meeting.
- 131.10. Progress the Full Council decision to access specialist support for the procurement of a grounds maintenance contract – It was noted that this required further work and would be brought back to the Committee for consideration.
- 131.11. An update on research into the use of software to support the publication of agendas and meeting papers – This had been researched previously and it was felt that there would be insufficient benefit for the work which would be required to make the system effective. It was agreed to revisit this item in three months' time, when the Communications Officer should be in post. It was confirmed that security restrictions on Councillor laptops would prevent them being connected to a home printing device.
- 131.12. An update on asset transfer matters (some aspects may be confidential) – It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.
- 131.13. Potential community asset transfers once existing land transfer matters are resolved (some aspects may be confidential) – It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.
- 131.14. An update on the Hamilton House lease and business rates (some aspects may be confidential) – A representative from the Valuation Office attended Hamilton House today, and it is hoped a reimbursement of the duplicate payment will be received soon. There was no update to report on the lease.
- 131.15. Grounds maintenance resourcing at Normanston Park (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

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132. Date of the next meeting

10 March 2022 13:00

133. Items for the next agenda and close

Cllr Brooks had attended a meeting in Snape Maltings regarding Sizewell C, following an invitation which had been circulated to Councillors. It was advised that the reimbursement of expenses incurred on Council duties could be facilitated. This should be agreed in advance and Councillors should be made aware it is possible to do so.

Cllr Barker proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

134. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

134.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required:

128.1. A governance issue relating to lobbying from external parties (confidential) – As the Town Council’s appointed representative to the First Light Festival Steering Group, Cllr Barker was made aware that this item related to the First Light Festival C.I.C., as this had not been explicitly stated on the agenda. There was a discussion regarding First Light Festival C.I.C.’s involvement in projects associated with Town Council assets. Cllr Pearce proposed suspending Standing Order 3y for a further ten minutes to allow the meeting to continue; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council regarding handling event applications and any other enquiries involving First Light Festival C.I.C. and Lowestoft Town Council assets; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

131.15. Grounds maintenance resourcing at Normanston Park (confidential) – Norse had put forward a suggestion regarding grounds maintenance staffing at Normanston Park. The Committee agreed that it would not make a formal recommendation and that Full Council should consider this. The Committee was however generally supportive of the suggestion and would like to see this proceed on a trial basis initially.

The Chair closed the meeting at 15:52.

Signed:

10 March 2022