

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
14:30 on 4 November 2021

MINUTES

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

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance, either in person or via Zoom webinar

80. Welcome

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

81. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nasima Begum and Paul Page. Cllrs Keith Patience and Alice Taylor had not provided apologies and were absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

82. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 90.6 and 90.11. Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 90.11. Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 88.1, 89.1 and 90.5. Regarding item 90.11, Cllr Parker declared that he is a member of the Gunton Residents' Association, but has no pecuniary or local non-pecuniary interest in this item.

83. The draft minutes of the meeting on 14 October 2021

Cllr Brooks proposed acceptance of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

84. Public forum

No advance comments had been received. There were no members of the public in attendance, either in person or via Zoom webinar.

85. Budget and Loan:

85.1. Monitoring the budget for 2021 – 2022, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – The budget monitoring documents were received and noted.

85.2. Bank reconciliations – It was noted that September's bank reconciliation had been completed and October's was underway.

85.3. The draft minutes of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meeting on 1 November 2021 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

85.4. Updated General and Earmarked Reserves positions, following resolutions made by Full Council in August – Cllr Pearce will update the documents for officers to review ahead of December's meeting.

85.5. Advice from East Suffolk Council regarding the Council Tax base for 2022 – 2023 – A consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme has opened. A response to the consultation will be considered at Full Council, but it is important for this Committee to review the information provided as well.

86. Payments:

86.1. Income and expenditure reports for October 2021 and November 2021 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – The income and expenditure reports were received and noted as follows:

October income

Date	Received From	Description	Amount
4 October 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50

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4 October 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
11 October 2021	Lamarti	Use of Links Road Car Park	£460 + £92 VAT = £552
11 October 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
11 October 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£5,000
18 October 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
18 October 2021	Sarah Foote	Repayment of Credit Card purchase	£15.98
20 October 2021	Roche Chartered Surveyors	Repayment of incorrect printing payment	£2
22 October 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
26 October 2021	East Suffolk Council	CIL	£5,948.60
28 October 2021	Whitton Hall booking	Whitton Hall booking	£56

October expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
1 October 2021	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park Business Rates October 2021	£187
1 October 2021	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls Pavilion Business Rates October 2021	£110
1 October 2021	East Suffolk Council	Hamilton House Business Rates October 2021	£2,008
6 October 2021	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions October 2021	£3,939.76
8 October 2021	MS Oakes	Town Hall Roof Repair	£372.20 + £74.44 = £446.64
8 October 2021	MS Oakes	Martello Coffee Coping Stone	£392 + £78.40 VAT = £470.40
8 October 2021	MS Oakes	Town Hall Repairs	£4,121.50 + £824.30 VAT = £4,945.80
8 October 2021	East Suffolk Council	Hamilton House Business Rates 2018-2021	£25,492.99
8 October 2021	Great Yarmouth Heating	Denes Oval Water Heater Inspection	£83.33 + £16.67 VAT = £100.00
8 October 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Whitton Hall Cleaning	£150 + £30 VAT = £180
8 October 2021	Christina Parnell	Return of Whitton Hall Deposit	£100
11 October 2021	C&C Consulting	Health & Safety Support + Vision	£735 + £147 VAT = £882
15 October	Thomas Fattorini	Freedom of the Town	£1,342.24 +

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2021		Badges	£288.45 VAT = £1,610.69
15 October 2021	Ricoh UK Ltd	Printer Hire and Usage	£207.47
15 October 2021	H Baker	Event Filming	£390
15 October 2021	Michaels Civic Robes	Mayoral Robes	£6,223.30 + £1,244.66 = £7,467.96
18 October 2021	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Charges	£216.52
18 October 2021	Need2Store Ltd	Civic Artefact Storage	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
20 October 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£207.46
20 October 2021	HMRC	HMRC September 2021	£4,047.70
20 October 2021	Andy Pearce	Reimbursement	£12
20 October 2021	Shona Bendix	Reimbursement	£4
20 October 2021	Marina Theatre	Marina Theatre Trust Management Fee	£37,500 + £7,500 VAT = £45,000
21 October 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£884.77
21 October 2021	Essex and Suffolk Water	Water Charges	£361.49
21 October 2021	Langton Brooks Consultants	Neighbourhood Plan Support	£400
22 October 2021	Salaries	Salaries October 2021	£9,542.40
25 October 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£56.63
25 October 2021	British Gas	Whitton Hall Gas	£45
25 October 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Links Road Vegetation Cutting	£230 + £46 VAT = £276
27 October 2021	Sarah Foote	Meeting Wi-Fi reimbursement	£70
28 October 2021	Eon	Whitton Hall electrici	£32
28 October 2021	NPower	Electricity charges	£83.95 + £4.20 VAT = £88.15
28 October 2021	Waveney Norse	Partnership Charge October 21	£37,550 + £7,510 VAT = £45,060
28 October 2021	Disability Advice NE Suffolk	Grant	£1,443.83
29 October 2021	C&C Consulting	Health and safety advice	£42.30 + £8.46 VAT = £50.76

November income

Date	Received From	Description	Amount
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1 November 2021	Market	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
1 November 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
1 November 2021	J Hugman	Hire of Whitton Hall	£42
3 November 2021	C&C Consulting	Return of Double Payment	£42.30 + £8.46 VAT = £50.76

November expenditure

Date	Payment To	Description	Amount
1 November 2021	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall Gas	£57.11 + £2.86 VAT = £59.97
1 November 2021	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park Business Rates November 2021	£187
1 November 2021	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls Club Business Rates November 2021	£110
1 November 2021	East Suffolk Council	Hamilton House Business Rates November 2021	£2,008
1 November 2021	Trevor Brown	Internal Audit	£250
2 November 2021	C&C Consulting	Health and Safety Support (Direct Debit)	£42.30 + £8.46 VAT = £50.76
2 November 2021	Land Registry	Land Registry Searches	£6
4 November 2021	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions October 2021	£4,140.74

Cllr Pearce advised that the payment to himself on 20 October was reimbursement for the hire of Gunton Residents' Hall for the Environmental Waste Working Group meeting. It was clarified that the payment of £50.76 to the health and safety consultant was for mileage (which it has been agreed the Council will pay) and a training course for a new staff member.

86.2. Any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were no payments for approval.

87. Governance

87.1. The interim Internal Audit report – The report had been circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting and was noted.

88. Grants

88.1. Grant applications:

88.1a. The Marina Theatre, for £3,050.21 – The applicant had requested that this application be deferred.

89. Standing Orders and Policies:

89.1. The draft minutes of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee meeting on 20 October 2021 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

89.2. Recommendations from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee:

89.2a. Adopt the following Town Council policies: - Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt those policies as listed in items 89.2ai – 89.2av; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

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- 89.2ai Disciplinary Procedure, as amended
- 89.2aii Equality and Diversity Policy
- 89.2aiii Noticeboard Protocol, as amended
- 89.2aiv Grant Awarding Policy, as amended
- 89.2av Grievance Procedure, as amended
- 89.2b. Reviewing the following Town Council policies:
 - 89.2bi Financial Regulations – It was agreed to carry forward items 89.2bi, 89.2bii and 89.2bviii to December’s meeting of this Committee.
 - 89.2bii Financial Risk Assessment – This was covered with the discussion of the previous item.
 - 89.2biii Freedom of Information Publication Scheme – It was noted that one of the fields in the table, regarding how to obtain information and the cost of doing so, is blank. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt this Scheme, subject to the necessary information being added; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.
 - 89.2biv Friends Groups Policy, taking account of any comments from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee – It was requested that Sparrows Nest be added to the list of parks in Appendix 1. In Appendix 2 there are some formatting issues which need to be addressed. Under the ‘Meetings’ header in Appendix 2 it was suggested that the wording of the last sentence should be amended to read ‘The Friends Group may be guided by the Lowestoft Town Council Standing Orders’ rather than ‘will use’. The Council may wish to tailor a version of the Standing Orders to Friends Groups at a later date. The Policy refers to Stakeholder Forums and it was requested that the process for arranging these is formalised. Under the ‘Elections’ heading in Appendix 2, a secret ballot is referenced as the voting method for the election at the Annual General Meeting. It was queried whether this should be a show of hands instead. Appendix 2 also references the possibility of the Town Council holding a Group’s funds in its account as an earmarked reserve. It was suggested that if this were to be put into practise it should be more widely publicised, or should be removed if it is not possible. Friends Groups can apply for grant funding. Cllr Pearce proposed referring this Policy back to the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee for further review; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
 - 89.2bv Health and Safety Policy – Point 6.2 refers to the Town Clerk by name and it was suggested this should be replaced by the job title instead. It was suggested that the Policy should cross-reference the Pandemic Policy and include a statement regarding the appointment of a Health and Safety consultant and their credentials. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Health and Safety Policy with the suggested amendments; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
 - 89.2bvi Heritage Plaques Policy – Some typographical errors were identified. Regarding point 4.1, the Council has not solicited direct input from residents. This statement will need to be reviewed and amended, or the Council needs to action it. Point 4.2 needs to be reviewed as the administration around heritage plaques is now handled by the Events and Communications Sub-Committee. At point 4.5, it was suggested that the reference to an offer to install a plaque being withdrawn if no response is received within two months should be removed, and each case should be reviewed individually instead. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Heritage Plaques Policy with the suggested amendments; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.
 - 89.2bvii Incident Reporting Procedure – Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full

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Council to incorporate this Procedure as an appendix to the Health and Safety Policy; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

89.2bviii Investment Policy – This was covered with the discussion of item 89.2bi.

90. Other financial matters, including:

- 90.1. Reviewing the Town Council's Asset Register – It was agreed to defer this item to December's meeting.
- 90.2. Timescales and project management arrangements for approved and funded capital projects – This has been discussed previously and agreed that some projects will be managed by appointed project managers and others will be managed internally. It was agreed at October's meeting to allow budget provision to appoint external project managers to each of the agreed projects with a sixteen percent uplift. Since then it has been determined that some projects could be managed internally. Contractors for the Sparrows Nest play equipment and the Normanston Park and Fen Park outdoor fitness equipment have been approved and appointed. Officers are in communication with the tenant regarding a replacement conservatory in Normanston Park and due diligence is being carried out regarding the contractor. This will be managed internally and the work should be instructed before Christmas. Full Council will consider the need for any additional expenditure if costs have increased beyond the maximum budgets previously approved for each project. This Committee and the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee will also be kept informed of progress. Projects involving significant building works, such as the public conveniences and the Sparrows Nest building complex, will need to be externally managed. The Town Hall refurbishment will have a project manager, but the project will still be overseen by Town Council officers. There is a provisional agreement to seek quotations for the refurbishment of the Triangle Market public conveniences. Funds due to be spent within the current financial year can be used to make interim improvements, such as to the lighting, ahead of a full refurbishment next year if required. These more minor improvements will not require an appointed project manager. There may also be some changes to tenant arrangements at the Triangle Market. The Town Council has approximately £56,000 in the Triangle Market reserve, and additional funds of just over £7,200 to be spent this financial year. If quotations are sought it may be possible to progress the refurbishment of the public conveniences this year. The Clerk is also seeking quotations to remove the green pillars beneath the Sails, and to clean the Sails themselves. Replacement of the Sails may be deemed a capital project and the Clerk will check this. A Zoom meeting is being arranged regarding work to the Gainsborough Drive and Fen Park ponds, which should be able to confirm whether there is a requirement to appoint a project manager.
- 90.3. Agreeing a budget for the reinstatement of the Sparrows Nest beacon – The quotation will not be received until after Remembrance Sunday. If urgent, the Committee confirmed it would be happy for the quotation to be sent directly to Full Council for consideration.
- 90.4. The end of season report from the Sparrows Nest Bowls Club and whether leisure fees should apply to this club in 2022 – 2023 – Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to retain the current policy and not charge leisure fees in 2022 – 2023, subject to the same conditions that clubs must provide a satisfactory report explaining how the funds saved have been reinvested, or what efforts have been made to increase the club's membership; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Officers have reviewed the report from this club and are satisfied that the conditions have been met.
- 90.5. The cost of works required to secure a boundary of the Britten Road play area – This is in hand and officers are seeking quotations.
- 90.6. The cost of refurbishment options for the St Margaret's Plain play area – This has been discussed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee and officers are seeking quotations.
- 90.7. An update on the purchase of laptops for Councillors who have requested them – It is hoped the specifications have now been finalised but there have been problems obtaining stock.

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There were concerns about laptops being provided to Councillors who have not been active, particularly without confirmation that they will be used for the intended purpose. Cllr Pearce proposed that, at the Clerk's discretion, Councillors who are currently not attending meetings will be advised that their laptops will be retained at Hamilton House until they can give an indication as to when they will become more actively involved in Council business; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

- 90.8. An update on asset transfer matters (some aspects may be confidential) – It was agreed to defer this item to December's meeting.
- 90.9. Potential community asset transfers once existing land transfer matters are resolved (some aspects may be confidential) – It was agreed to defer this item to December's meeting.
- 90.10. An update on the Hamilton House lease and business rates (confidential) – This item will be carried forward to the next meeting. Cllr Green had a specific comment which it was agreed would be discussed during the confidential session.
- 90.11. An update regarding arrangements for the defibrillator in the Gunton Drive telephone kiosk, and financial implications (confidential) – It was agreed to refer this item to the Community Safety Committee. Cllr Pearce will be meeting with one of the District Councillors involved tomorrow. The Council does have budget provision for defibrillator training.
- 90.12. An update on forthcoming capital works to the Sparrows Nest building complex (confidential) – Part of the works identified by the Chartered Surveyor were the public conveniences. The Council has already agreed to progress refurbishment of them this year. Officers were asked to check with the Chartered Surveyor if they knew of any reason why the refurbishment of the public conveniences could not be progressed separately this year. The works on the entire building could be progressed this year if the Council wished to do so. The only issue that may prevent works on the public conveniences going ahead separately would be any structural changes which may affect the join to the rest of the building but that can be checked and the works can be project managed through.
- 90.13. An update from the Norse Contract Working Group (confidential) – There was no confidential discussion required. The Working Group has been meeting to draw up a Service Level Agreement, and it is intended that by the end of the month the Working Group will be in a position to approach Norse for an indicative cost of the work, which will inform the budget. The work on the contract itself is the second stage. Notice to terminate will need to be given in June 2022. The Working Group will be discussing frequency of inspections at its next meeting and would like to know what the legal requirement is. The Working Group will identify where inspections are required and advice can be sought from there. Norse can assist with this process. The contract should say what the current contractual frequencies are but with elements such as play equipment inspections there will also be a legal frequency. There is an annual independent play inspection report and Norse also completes checks throughout the year.
- 90.14. An update on an earlier approach regarding guardianship of Lowestoft Hospital heritage items, and associated costs (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

91. Date of the next meeting

9 December 2021 14:30 – It would be difficult to arrange officer cover for this date and time. Alternative dates were discussed and it was agreed that the next meeting should be held on Tuesday 30 November. Cllr Begum had advised it would be difficult for her to attend meetings starting at 14:30. The start time of the next meeting was agreed as 13:00.

92. Items for the next agenda and close

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

Cllr Green proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

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93. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

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

90.10. An update on the Hamilton House lease and business rates (confidential) – The latest situation regarding the lease was discussed.

The Clerk temporarily left the meeting 15:37 and returned 15:37

90.14. An update on an earlier approach regarding guardianship of Lowestoft Hospital heritage items, and associated costs (confidential) – The Committee would like more information and the Clerk will liaise with the agent.

The Chair closed the meeting 15:46.

Signed:

30 November 2021