

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 3 August 2021

MINUTES

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

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

Also in attendance: Cllrs Louise Gooch and James Mallinder (East Suffolk Council) and Andrew Reynolds (East Suffolk Council officer)

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

37. Welcome

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

38. Apologies for absence

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

39. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 47 and 48.

40. The draft minutes of the meeting on 14 June 2021

At item 11 it had been suggested by Suffolk Wildlife Trust that an artificial cliff could be erected as a nesting site for kittiwakes. It had not been suggested that it should be installed at Carlton Marshes. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes with the amendment to reflect this; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

41. Public forum

No comments had been received in advance of the meeting and there were no members of the public in attendance, either in person or via Zoom webinar. It was agreed the representatives in attendance from East Suffolk Council would contribute to the discussion of each relevant item.

42. 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

Cllr Pearce will send what he has done so far to officers via email. It was suggested that this Committee's Terms of Reference should be amended to legitimise the working relationship with East Suffolk Council, including more regular liaison, as discussed during the pre-meeting. It was suggested that the new policy on biodiversity net gain could also be appropriately referenced in this Committee's Terms of Reference, and also taking note of the high level of carbon emissions from building and demolition. Officers will suggest amendments to this effect and bring back to this Committee for consideration. It was commented that the Council should also be mindful of the amount of paper it uses, and the purchase of laptops for Councillors should support the reduction in paper consumption, if progressed.

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

The Climate Emergency budget is £25,000, and there has been no expenditure from it so far. It had previously been said that the expenditure for the carbon footprint survey would be taken from the consultancy budget. There are already several items of expenditure being taken from that budget. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance

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Committee that the expenditure for the carbon footprint survey should be taken from the climate emergency budget instead; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

44. Any matters arising from the meeting with Cllr James Mallinder, East Suffolk Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment (directly preceding this meeting)

It was agreed that a standing item be added to this Committee's agendas for any matters of concern to be raised with Cllr Mallinder and to receive feedback. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for site visits to be arranged, particularly around the town centre, to inspect areas of concern. Representatives from other organisations, such as Lowestoft Vision, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Norse could also be invited.

The Town Council has an ongoing concern regarding the traffic situation around the High Street and Triangle Market. The Council would like to make arrangements for a regular market at the site and a feasibility study of the area is also being undertaken, although this seems to have more of a focus on encouraging people to cycle and walk instead. Cllr Mallinder will make enquiries about finding a solution using a multi-agency approach.

45. Cycle storage:

45.1. A request from Suffolk County Council to identify locations in Lowestoft which would benefit from secure, sheltered cycle storage, including to consider any suggestions from Councillors – This was discussed last year, and Cllr Green had put forward some suggestions, although that was limited to land owned by the Town Council only. The Town Council is still considering cycle storage, but is awaiting the final cost of benches and bins first. It was suggested that the town centre and seafront would benefit from more cycle storage, particularly some secure storage along the upper promenade. It was also suggested that cycle storage should be considered at Water Lane and the centre of Oulton Broad. Officers will feed back all these suggestions to Suffolk County Council.

45.2. The possibility of progressing on-street cycle storage for residents in areas of high occupancy, and options for funding – The Town Council has adopted a Cycling Pledge to try to encourage healthy living and outdoor activities. Often residents in areas of high occupancy do not have sufficient space for private cycle storage. Cllr Pearce has written to the local MP about various matters, including how Lowestoft Town Council can play its part alongside other authorities in a town wide strategy to promote and develop cycling, including networks and storage, but is yet to receive a response. Cllr Pearce proposed an in principle commitment to progress on-street cycle storage for residents in areas of high occupancy, and offering support to those who are economically disadvantaged in terms of purchasing a bicycle and appropriate storage, through partnership working with other authorities, such as Lowestoft Vision, East Suffolk and Suffolk County Councils, the East Suffolk Lines and Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnerships and local schools; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. When applicable, specific options will be brought back to this Committee to consider.

46. Implementation of the Sustainability Strategy

The Strategy refers to the Lowestoft Climate Action Group, which has disbanded. It was suggested that the Strategy could reference the new national policy on biodiversity net gain, if it is formally adopted, and how it can be practically implemented. The Council has committed to become a 'net zero' authority by 2030, and is progressing a report to assess its current carbon footprint. Following the earlier pre-meeting, this Committee has committed to an ongoing working relationship with Cllr Mallinder and the East Suffolk Council team, particularly with the Communities Team to implement this Strategy. Cllr Pearce proposed that review and implementation of the Sustainability Strategy is included as part of the monthly liaison with Cllr Mallinder and the East Suffolk Council team; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed putting out an active communication to schools and Friends Groups regarding the proposed 'materiality assessment' as referenced in the Strategy, to

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receive their feedback on what the Council should be reporting on; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

It is understood that pollution assessments are being undertaken as part of the Gull Wing project. The Committee would like to know if there will be an ongoing check on pollution levels, as this will likely change in certain areas as the project progresses. Where pollution is likely to increase it is not thought it will exceed levels requiring further action. East Suffolk Council does regular monitoring in certain areas, in line with advice published by the Government, and publishes a great deal of technical information on its website.

The Town Council understands that improving Lowestoft economically ultimately depends on improving its infrastructure. It was queried whether traffic calming measures at Station Square could harm regeneration. Cllr Mallinder will seek District Cllr Craig Rivett's view on this and feed back.

47. Using a section of land at Clarkes Lane as a community garden

Andrew Reynolds temporarily left the meeting 16:35

The Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee has approved a delegation to this Committee to progress a community garden and orchard. This will need to include communication with local residents and other initiatives already agreed for Clarkes Lane, including a wildflower meadow and pledging of land to WildEast.

Andrew Reynolds returned 16:37

The Ward Councillors (Cllrs Barker and Lang) are both on this Committee and will think about consultation with local residents and the need for a site visit. This could include asking local residents if they would be interested in forming a volunteer group. It was suggested that the Warren School and Suffolk Wildlife Trust could also be approached. It was suggested that the PH levels of the soil should be tested. Norse and Suffolk Wildlife Trust should be able to advise on the best areas for re-wilding, plant species and proximity to the community garden. The boundaries of the land pledged to WildEast have been agreed by Council. The Suffolk Greenprint Forum is a good source of information and may be able to advise on any external funding.

48. The Eco Church initiative and to consider how the Town Council may wish to be involved

This is a Church of England initiative and Cllr Barker recently met with a resident to learn more about the project, which will involve St Luke's Church and St Mark's Church in Oulton Broad. Cllr Barker has explained the legal position about the Council funding a church group. The concept is that each Church can apply for the award and will involve community engagement. The Church group would like to know if the Town Council would like to be involved in any way. If the Committee decides it would like to support the group, officers can look into whether there would be any legal impediment preventing this. Offering support to a faith-based community group does not mean the Town Council is taking a position on the faith and it is not an exclusive arrangement. It is not quite clear exactly what support the group would like, but the Council is not being asked to give funding towards the fabric of any Church buildings. Cllr Pearce proposed that subject to there being no legal impediment preventing the Town Council offering support, that it asks the Church group what sort of relationship it is seeking with the Town Council, and how the Town Council can support this initiative; seconded by Cllr Barker; four Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

The representatives from East Suffolk Council were asked if that had any further comments regarding matters raised in this meeting, or the pre-meeting which preceded it. It was explained that East Suffolk Council does have a plan regarding the oil deposits at Gunton Warren, and is in the process of quantifying and analysing the oil. This will involve intrusive investigations, which will not take place during the summer season. Once completed, this will

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enable a comprehensive risk assessment. Any further exposure will be dealt with if and when it happens. Simply digging out the exposed oil could create a bigger environmental problem. East Suffolk Council has put out press releases periodically and will engage more with the Town Council. The Town Council can publish any statements from East Suffolk Council on its own platforms as well.

Cllr Mallinder has concerns about fly tipping in Lowestoft. A cleaner environment may encourage more responsibility. Some local community groups are interested in litter picking.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the meeting 17:06

There were concerns that a high profile clean-up will take place without a plan for the future. Cllr Mallinder advised that East Suffolk Council is looking at long term solutions.

Cllr Brooks returned 17:08

East Suffolk Council do also liaise with landlords regarding waste left on private land. It was suggested that the Town Council could arranged for skips to be located around the town temporarily for the public to use. This would however be difficult to manage and could attract industrial waste. It was instead suggested that the Council could hire a driver with a van to pick up items from properties to take to the recycling centre. This will be added to the next agenda for further consideration.

49. Date of the next meeting

7 September 2021 15:30

50. Items for the next agenda and close

It was requested that an item be added for the Committee to consider the quotations for the treatment of the Fen Park and Gainsborough Drive ponds with the Schlix product, and also quotations for mechanical de-silting and pump dredging of both ponds.

There were no confidential items for consideration and the meeting was closed 17:16.

51. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

7 September 2021