

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:30 on 21 September 2021
MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks (Chair), Andy Pearce, John Pitts and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Deputy Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

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

53. Welcome

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

54. Apologies for absence

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

55. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 62, 63 and 76. Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 60.4, 62 and 76. Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 60.5, 60.6, 60.7 and 61.

56. The draft minutes of the meeting on 17 August 2021

Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

57. Public forum

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

58. Appointing the Deputy Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Elise Youngman; seconded by Cllr Brooks. There were no other nominations. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

59. Monitoring expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget

The budget monitoring document had been circulated but there had been no expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget.

60. Five-year plans for the Town Council's parks, including the following:

60.1 Specifications for benches – The Sub-Committee was asked what specific design of benches it would like to see in each park. Some suggestions had previously been put together about quantities and designs for each park. This will be circulated to all Councillors, who will be asked to put forward suggestions. The Committee Clerk will collate any suggestions for the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee to consider.

60.2 The cost of over-entrance archway signs – At the request of Full Council, Cllr Taylor has modified her designs to incorporate the Lowestoft Borough insignia. Councillors have suggested blacksmiths who may be able to provide quotations. The Committee Clerk is making enquiries.

60.3 Whether to incorporate a maze in the planting plans for Sparrows Nest – Sparrows Nest has a large open space, which may be able to accommodate a small maze for children. Plans for the winter and sensory gardens are incorporated into the five year plans. Cllr Pearce proposed that consideration is given to Sparrows Nest planting plans at the next meeting, including a small children's maze and incorporating an Alice in Wonderland theme where possible; seconded by Cllr Elise Youngman; all in favour. It

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18:30 on 21 September 2021

was suggested that Norse could offer advice on appropriate plants and once an outline plan has been drafted.

- 60.4 Refurbishment options for the St Margaret's Plain play area – There should be more clarity regarding the play areas budget after the next Full Council meeting, when a decision should be made as to how to proceed with Sparrows Nest. Cllr Pearce proposed carrying this item forward to the next AID Committee meeting; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 60.5 The cost of items relating to the Kensington Gardens centenary – Lowestoft in Bloom celebrated its centenary this year. The ongoing effects of the pandemic prevented events from being progressed, so the Friends of Kensington Gardens would like to progress combined celebrations next year, when Kensington Gardens reaches its centenary. The Friends group is looking to submit ideas to this Sub-Committee ahead of its next meeting. The Events and Communications Sub-Committee will also be considering any commemorative events. The Friends Group previously put forward their comments on the five year plan for Kensington Gardens and these will be circulated again so that an appropriate budget can be agreed and quotations sought.
- 60.6 The cost of Holocaust Memorial items from the Kensington Gardens plan – It was agreed to add this item to the next AID Committee agenda. The Committee Clerk is liaising with the Friends of Kensington Gardens and Norse regarding the planting of the Holocaust Memorial bed, and a site visit is being progressed.
- 60.7 The planting of new gardens/beds in Kensington Gardens, Sparrows Nest and The Ness – Sparrows Nest and Kensington Gardens have been discussed. Consideration of The Ness is ongoing and needs detailed consideration by this Sub-Committee. It was agreed that planting plans should be the focus of the next meeting, and representatives from Norse should be invited to offer advice regarding The Ness particularly.
- 60.8 Public realm enhancement possibilities for Links Road car park and land adjacent to 4 The High Street – The AID Committee had received a public comment requesting a provision of public conveniences at the Links Road car park. The Toilet Strategy Working Group will be meeting to consider this and a schedule for the refurbishment of the Town Council's existing facilities. The Town Council needs to understand more about the environment of that area before any plans to build public conveniences there could be progressed. The Most Easterly Community Group is interested in hiring the Town Green for community events and would be welcome to submit an application. It was suggested that the Town Council could do more to promote use of this land, such as by installing seating. The Marina Theatre has a new outdoor café area with planters. It was suggested that the Town Council could consider some form of small scale planting at the Links Road car park, but would need advice. This will be considered further at the next meeting, where planting plans will be the main focus.

61. An update on the purchase of memorial lecterns for Kensington Gardens and Belle Vue Park

The relevant District and County Councillors have been approached, but so far none have agreed to commit funding to this project. The Council has already provisionally set aside a budget for this work and has agreed it would be progressed from the Council's own funds if locality funding could not be secured. Cllr Pearce proposed progressing the purchase of memorial lecterns for Kensington Gardens and Belle Vue Park from the Town Council's own funds, with expenditure to come from the parks earmarked reserve and with delegated authority to officers to progress the purchase and installation; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 21 September 2021

62. Signage at Cotman Close and other play areas and open spaces

There is a sign at the Cotman Close play area for reporting issues, but it is at ground level. There is no fence surrounding the play area so a post may need to be installed instead. Other play areas have no signage at all but it is understood that a decision was previously made to progress the purchase of additional signage. If not, this Sub-Committee will be asked to consider progressing the purchase of additional signage.

63. The Fen Park play area:

63.1 Adding gates to the gaps in the fencing surrounding the Fen Park play area – There are three openings in the fence which are not gated. One is close to a park entrance which is also ungated, and opens out onto a road. Cllr Pearce proposed installing gates in all three openings in the fence, with delegated authority to officers to progress within a maximum budget of £1,500; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

63.2 An update on issues regarding the matting – Norse have advised that Matta would still be their preferred option for play area matting. Specific issues at Fen Park have been reported to Norse.

64. Belle Vue Park:

64.1 Maintenance of the steps between Belle Vue Park and Sparrows Nest – It was agreed that items 64.1 and 64.2 would be considered together. It was queried whether the Town Council owns the cannon in Belle Vue Park, and if so whether there is an inspection and maintenance regime in place. Similarly, it was queried whether the steps between Belle Vue Park and Sparrows Nest are treated as a separate asset and whether there is a regime of inspection and maintenance in place. Officers will make enquiries regarding both of these items.

64.2 Maintenance and health and safety arrangements for the cannon – This item was covered with the consideration of the previous item.

64.3 The current status of the former public conveniences and whether they could be reinstated – Asbestos has been removed from the structure. The water has been stopped up but it is not known whether the plumbing is still in place. The Toilet Strategy Working Group will consider whether the toilets could be reinstated and officers will make enquiries regarding this in the meantime.

65. The condition and future of the ‘nature walk’ area of the Great Eastern Linear Park

A recommendation has already been made to Full Council to remove and not reinstate the boardwalk. This Sub-Committee would like to understand what the current grounds maintenance contract covers at this site. The ‘nature walk’ is very overgrown and if it is to continue to be signposted as a nature walk, the Council will be responsible for its upkeep as such. Officers were asked to clarify what the current contract covers and feed back at the next meeting. Once this information is received, the Sub-Committee will consider whether and how this area is maintained.

66. How to progress planting plans in 2021 – 2022

Planting of the Tree Council funded trees and for the Queen’s Green Canopy needs to be considered, and a bulb order needs to be progressed. A schedule of bulbs needed at certain sites is usually produced annually. It was suggested that an order should be placed using last year’s schedule as a guide. The Committee Clerk will liaise with Norse and Cllr Breakspear to put an order together.

67. The Britten Road play area:

67.1 Maintenance work required, including feedback from recent site visits – Item 75 also relates. The Council received an approach about sale/transfer of part of the land. Although this was declined, the Council agreed to address concerns raised regarding

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 21 September 2021

maintenance of the land. As well as being overgrown in places, lots of litter has accumulated behind the trees and hedges, and barbed wire has also been put up. The Clerk has undertaken a site visit recently with Norse to look at some of the issues. Legal advice may be required regarding the unregistered land. It was requested that a site visit is arranged before this Sub-Committee's meeting in October.

67.2 The installation of a music-themed piece of art or play equipment, in celebration of Benjamin Britten – Cllr Brooks has found an artist who could be commissioned to create a sculpture for this site. Cllr Pearce proposed that officers make a formal approach to the artist to ask what would be feasible for the site and to request an estimation of the cost; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

68. An update on an overall timeframe for play area site visits, with early consideration given to scheduling of Bentley Drive, Britten Road and Clarkes Lane

Five-year plans have been developed and the Council is moving to five year budgeting. The AID Committee has been asked to determine a priority order for play area refurbishments. The AID Committee have requested site visits, to take place in time for recommendations to be made to inform the 2022 – 2023 budget.

69. Arrangements for the Normanston Park Skate Park, including measures to address littering and anti-social behaviour

There have been several incidents of graffiti. An article in the local press had highlighted concerns regarding littering and anti-social behaviour involving gas canisters. The Sub-Committee agreed it would like to engage more with local Police and East Suffolk Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team. It would be difficult to secure the skate park overnight, as it is on different levels, but options can be explored and officers will approach Norse. Cllr Pearce proposed arranging a meeting between representatives from Lowestoft Town Council, the Police Community Engagement Officer, Lowestoft Rising, Norse, East Suffolk Councillor Letitia Smith (or an officer on her behalf) and Suffolk County Councillor James Reeder (or another local County Councillor on his behalf) to discuss town-wide issues including littering and anti-social behaviour, and how authorities can work together to make communities feel safer; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

70. An update on Compass Street pocket park project/stakeholder meetings, legacy planning for ongoing maintenance and an update on the transfer of the land to Lowestoft Town Council

There had been discussions about ownership of the land transferring to the Town Council. The Most Easterly Community Group would like to manage the land but not legally own it. The housing association and East Suffolk Council had been supportive of the idea. East Suffolk Council subsequently secured pocket park funding for the land. The Heritage Action Zone Manager held an inception meeting with representatives from the Town Council and the Most Easterly Community Group but there had been no updates since. Cllr Pearce proposed that officers approach East Suffolk Council to enquire if grant funding is still available for that site and whether any ongoing maintenance plans have been put into place. If not, it was proposed that enquiries be made with East Suffolk Council regarding transfer of the land to the Town Council; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

71. A commemoration for Cllr Sue Barnard

It was suggested that the Town Council could consider naming one of its outdoor spaces in commemoration of the late Cllr Barnard. The open space adjacent to 4 The High Street was suggested. It was agreed that Cllr Pearce would approach Cllr Barnard's family and local residents to see if they would be happy in principle with this idea.

72. Development of a public art policy, including current sculpture trail and Banksy art trail concepts

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

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18:30 on 21 September 2021

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee for an in-principle agreement for a public art policy to be developed. As well as the commissioning and creation of artwork it could also include provision for an appropriate delegation to purchase certain pieces of art at auction. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Brooks and all Councillors voted in favour.

73. Creating provision for creative/artistic space for all ages in Town Council parks and open spaces

The idea of a chalkboard or similar has been discussed for Sparrows Nest. A creative space had been suggested as part of the Pocket Park funding for the land on Compass Street adjacent to the Town Hall. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee for an in-principle agreement to consider provision of a creative/artistic space in the Town Council's parks, as part of the development of the play areas and parks; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

74. An update regarding arrangements for the 'Rope Walk' at The Ness

Full Council has made a decision to proceed in line with advice from the contractor. Officers will check this has been actioned.

75. The unregistered land behind the youth shelter at Britten Field

This may impact what the Town Council can legally do to tidy the area. The Clerk is seeking advice and the AID Committee can be provided with an update on the legal position.

76. A report of unlicensed trading at the Links Road car park (confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

77. The start time of future meetings of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

Cllr Pearce proposed to formalise 18:30 as the start time for meetings of this Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

78. Date of the next meeting

19 October 2021 18:30.

79. Items for the next Agenda and Close

The Sub-Committee would like planting plans to be the focus of the next meeting. Representatives from Norse will be invited.

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

80. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

76. A report of unlicensed trading at the Links Road car park (confidential) – There have been reports of unlicensed trading at the car park. Councillors were advised to contact officers if they see an unlicensed trader at the site.

The Chair closed the meeting 20:17.

Signed:
19 October 2021