

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee
Whitton Residents' Hall, Hawthorn Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9BB
15:30 on 2 August 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks (Chair), Alan Green, David Le Grice and Graham Parker, plus non-Councillor member Deborah Ray

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

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

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 Sonia Barker, Peter Lang, Paul Page and Andy Pearce, who had provided reasons. Cllr Parker proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Le Grice; all in favour.

39. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 47 and 50.

40. The draft minutes of the meeting on 5 July 2022

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

41. Public forum

The member of the public in attendance spoke of the importance of the Town Council's 'Great Big Green Weekend' as high profile way of publicly spreading the message of the Climate Emergency, particularly given the impact of recent record high temperatures.

42. The meeting schedule of the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee

The Clerk advised that there is currently no legislation enabling Committee members to vote in meetings if they do not attend in person. Of those present, it was agreed that Mondays would be preferable. Officers advised scheduling would need to take place around other Committees which meet on Mondays, and therefore the third Monday of the month would be preferable. Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation to Full Council to schedule future meetings of this Committee on the third Monday of each month at 15:30; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

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

The budget monitoring spreadsheet had been circulated. In response to a query regarding the Town Council's contribution towards the Kittiwake Officer, the Clerk advised that the Council had not yet been invoiced, but payment would be made from the Climate Emergency reserve. Cllr Parker advised he would need to leave the meeting at 16:55.

44. Any matters to raise with Cllr James Mallinder (East Suffolk Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment) and/or the Environment and Waste Working Group, and to receive feedback on any matters previously raised, including the following:

44.1. A proposal from the Environment and Waste Working Group regarding bulky waste collection to target fly tipping – Cllr Brooks requested deferral of this item, pending a meeting with Norse's Waste Management Officer.

45. An update regarding liaison with Peter Aldous MP on Lowestoft's Blue Flag status

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The Project and Committee Clerk advised that a Zoom meeting had been arranged with Mr Aldous. Cllr Brooks explained the history of this item for the benefit of Ms Ray.

46. Feedback from East Suffolk and Suffolk County Councils regarding their activities during 'No Mow May', and next steps

The Project and Committee Clerk advised she had not yet received feedback from either authority. Cllr Green did not consider the initiative to have been well advertised, and would like the Town Council to encourage more residents to get involved. Cllr Brooks had requested 'Pardon the Weeds, We're Feeding the Bees' signage from East Suffolk Councillor James Mallinder, but was told there would be a cost to provide these. Cllr Green proposed ensuring the Town Council advertises this initiative in future; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

47. Feedback from a Town and Parish Council Zoom meeting regarding Sizewell C

Cllr Brooks advised that she and Cllr Le Grice attended this meeting, and information had been circulated with the Councillor update. It had been noted that Councils were seemingly being approached individually by those involved with the project.

48. Feedback from the Kittiwake Conference

Cllr Pearce had advised he would be providing a report.

49. Ponds and waterways:

49.1. Feedback from a meeting regarding a biomass collection device for the Town Council's ponds and waterways, and to consider next steps – The Project and Committee Clerk had attended a Zoom meeting and gave information about how the device would work. The Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee would like to await the outcome of a trial of the device in Plymouth before considering this item. Cllr Parker proposed asking officers to make enquiries with neighbouring Parish Councils to see if they may be interested in sharing the device, if the Town Council were to proceed with it. Cllr Green advised that the disposal of collected waste would need to be considered. Cllr Le Grice recommended caution with leasing options, which may work out more expensive than purchasing the device outright. Cllr Brooks seconded Cllr Parker's proposal and all Committee members voted in favour.

49.2. Recommendations regarding the management and ongoing maintenance of the Town Council's ponds and waterways – The AID Committee had made a recommendation to Full Council to proceed with works identified in the report. The Project and Committee Clerk explained that a quotation had been included for removal of the boardwalk, which had already been instructed with another contractor. A potential issue with the Kensington Gardens boating lake had also been identified since the report had been received. Officers will look to seek further detail on some of the recommended works ahead of the Full Council meeting. Friends Groups will be kept informed of any works. Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation to Full Council to approve the works identified in the report, to be taken forward via the Facilities Maintenance Officer and Community Warden; seconded by Cllr Le Grice; all in favour.

50. Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Conservation Report of the Great Eastern Linear Park, and progressing any required works

Cllr Brooks praised the report. The Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee had started considering wildlife signage and information boards. Suffolk Wildlife Trust had suggested these could include QR codes to link to relevant apps, including those to identify birdsong and to log wildlife spotted at particular sites. Cllr Brooks proposed asking the Community Warden to review the report, identify a schedule of works and seek quotations; seconded by Cllr Le Grice; all in favour.

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51. Next steps for assessing the Town Council's carbon footprint

The Clerk advised that a Zoom meeting had been held to identify next steps and suggested approaching the Town Council's tenants. The Marina Theatre had already advised it would be happy to provide data. The Council may be limited on enforcing changes through its tenants but it is hoped tenants would be working towards the same goal anyway. It would be easier to influence change where there is a financial relationship other than the main tenancy. The Marina Theatre is working towards compliance with the Theatre Green Book. A budget had been agreed for assessing the Council's carbon footprint. It is understood some of this budget remains and could be used to progress some of these assessments. Following this, the Council can then consider how to uplift its position and reduce its carbon footprint. The Clerk will try to obtain more data in the first instance, seek support on how the Council may improve its assets in this respect and will come back with a schedule of works. Currently the Council cannot assess its contractors' carbon footprints. Cllr Green proposed approval of the next steps as detailed by the Clerk; seconded by Cllr Le Grice; all in favour.

52. Whether the Town Council should declare itself an Earth Protector Town

Ms Ray had requested inclusion of this item on the agenda and explained what it would mean to become an Earth Protector Town. The Town Council could also consider participating in the Transition Towns or Incredible Edible initiatives. Each initiative provides a framework to introduce long term changes to how people live, including making improvements to the environment, working with communities to produce fresh food and lobbying the local Member of Parliament to bring about grassroots changes. Cllrs Brooks and Page attended a climate conference in Woodbridge, but officers have not yet received further advice about the Community Kitchen Garden which had been discussed there. The Office Administrator is looking into Greenprint Forum funding following a suggestion from Cllr Brooks. The Clerk advised there is not specific funding linked to these initiatives. The Earth Protector Town initiative is seeking funding towards its campaign to make ecocide a crime at an international level. The Clerk offered to put together a paper for the next meeting, which could be put forward to Full Council with a recommendation, with information about the Earth Protector Town initiative, what the Town Council is currently doing and how it could take this forward, with specific actions. Cllr Green suggested Carlton Colville and Corton should be involved as well, as they were part of Lowestoft prior to the Reorganisation Order. Ms Ray advised Todmorden in West Yorkshire was a good example of a town following the Incredible Edible initiative. Cllr Green proposed deferring this item to the next meeting, pending a paper from the Clerk with further information and actions; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

53. Town Council land and building use in light of the cost of living crisis

The Clerk advised that due to the ongoing effect of the cost of living crisis, some areas had made plans to make places available for people to go for support, food and warmth. To complement the work of larger authorities, the Town Council could make its community halls available for this purpose, working with management committees where applicable. Cllr Green had attended a Lowestoft Ambassador Event and had been asked by East Suffolk Council to make the Town Council aware of its Warm Room initiative. Cllr Green proposed in principle support to use the Town Council's community meeting halls to help other authorities address the cost of living crisis; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

54. Whether to submit an application to the Woodland Trust for free trees

Ms Ray asked the Committee to consider submitting an application. The Town Council had previously purchased trees with funding from the Tree Council and had involved young people with the planting. Planting and ongoing watering costs would need to be considered. Ms Ray advised that a variety of species were available. Cllr Green suggested tree protectors should also be purchased if an application is submitted, and suggested that the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee should identify potential locations.

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55. Making recommendations to the Personnel Committee on officer home working arrangements in the Flexible Working Policy

Cllr Parker would like to see a plan which ensure the office is appropriately staffed and which would potentially enable an extension of office hours. The Clerk advised this is the purpose of the Flexible Working Policy. As the staff base expands, officers with different roles may require different hours of work. Some existing staff already have contracts for flexible working outside of recognised office hours. From this Committee's point of view, the Policy also takes account of Climate Emergency related issues. The Policy states that an application for flexible working from the Clerk would need to be considered by the Mayor and Chair of the Personnel Committee. Cllr Brooks would prefer such an application to be considered by the Mayor and Personnel Committee, so as not to elevate Committee Chairs to positions of authority. This request can be considered by the Personnel Committee and the Clerk asked Councillors to review the content of the policy ahead of the Personnel Committee meeting.

56. An update on plans for the Great Big Green Weekend events, and provision of a transport service to the event

Cllr Brooks had received an update from the Office Administrator and was grateful for the effort which had gone into the planning of the event so far. Cllr Brooks queried whether provision of a transport service was necessary. The Clerk advised that officers had been looking into this but it would be difficult to anticipate where pick-up locations should be and how much demand there would be for the service. Cllr Brooks suggested local cycle shops could be approached to hire out electric bicycles for future events. Ms Ray suggested approaching Greater Anglia for reduced ticket prices for those attending the event from other areas. Cllr Green suggested bicycle storage should be considered.

Cllr Parker left the meeting 16:52

The Clerk advised promotion of the event will encourage people to use public transport, walk or cycle, and officers will try to assess the number of people who bring cycles. Cllr Green proposed seeking Cllr Newsome's advice on running a park and ride service; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. The Project and Committee Clerk advised that the Office Administrator had been in liaison with East Suffolk Council to organise a window display competition for shops from the High Street through to Kirkley. East Suffolk Council had responded positively to the Town Council's plans for the event and would like to be involved. Cllr Brooks asked the Office Administrator and Project and Committee Clerk to liaise and agree the extent of East Suffolk Council's involvement in the event.

The member of the public left the meeting 16:58

57. Submitting comments to the Lowestoft Neighbourhood Development Plan Local Green Spaces consultation

Cllr Brooks reported that the AID Committee had also considered this item and had agreed that individual Councillors should respond to the consultation before it closes on Friday. Cllr Butler had circulated the criteria a green space must meet to be included.

58. The 'Food Hub' project and any suitable locations

Cllr Green declared a local non-pecuniary interest in this item. Cllr Brooks gave further information about the project and advised it had also been considered by the AID Committee, who had requested further information. The Project and Committee Clerk advised that the AID Committee had identified three potential locations, at Gunton Community Park, Clarkes Lane and Britten Road. The Project and Committee Clerk will contact the organisers of the project to see if any of those locations would be viable. Cllr Green suggested this project would need to co-ordinate with local food banks and other similar organisations in the town. Ms Ray asked officers to check if this is linked to the Incredible Edible initiative. Cllr Brooks proposed endorsing the request of the AID Committee to seek further advice; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

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59. Date of the next meeting

6 September 2022 15:30 – As per item 42, this is subject to change, pending Full Council approval of the new meeting schedule.

60. Items for the next agenda and close

Ms Ray requested an item to consider the provision of drinking water fountains and recycling bins along the seafront. Cllr Brooks advised the Town Council does not own the land along the seafront. Cllr Green advised the provision of drinking water fountains had been considered previously but could not be progressed. Cllr Brooks would like to see the provision of recycling facilities at the Great Big Green Weekend event.

There were no confidential items for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting 17:06.

61. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed: