

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
13:00 on 22 August 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, Alan Green (Chair), Graham Parker and Keith Patience

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Town Clerk) and James Cox (Finance and Information Officer)

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

17. Welcome.

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

18. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Youngman. Cllr Brooks proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Patience; all in favour.

19. Declarations of Interests and dispensations.

20. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 11 July 2022.

Cllrs Brooks proposed approval of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Patience; all in favour

21. Public forum.

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

22. To discuss contingency assumptions for 2023/24 budget including inflation.

This item was moved to below 26.

23. To consider budgeting for the toilet refurbishment programme in light of escalating capital costs.

Cllr Patience said that he had not been able to find the report of the toilets owned by the Town Council and requested this item be delayed. Cllr Brooks summarised the toilet working group's progress and that we are still waiting for quotes. Cllr Parker requested an impact assessment be done on the impact these toilet refurbishments will have on the budget. Cllr Patience highlighted that building cost for materials has increased by over 10% and that quotes are only for valid for a short time.

24. To consider funds in bank accounts over and above funds in managed budgets/reserves (some aspects may be confidential).

This item was covered at an earlier meeting.

25. To look at budget and streams for managing 2022/23 Town Hall development phase cashflow.

We are currently looking at any measures that need taking before a strip out of the Town Hall to reduce repairs before the redevelopment. A report was received earlier in the day which shows the measures we can take to minimise degradation which needs reviewing.

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26. To review the 2022 – 2023 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves (some aspects may be confidential).

The current budget position was shared and the budget headings where there is a forecast overspend or underspend were highlighted. These headings included Utilities, Business Rates and the Grants and Community Engagement Earmarked Reserve and the total shortfall was £46,416.52. Cllr Green highlighted the importance of the grant scheme. Cllr Brooks mentioned that during the annual general meeting the chair of Lowestoft Vision mentioned we should not be paying the BID levy for both Hamilton House and for the Town Hall and officers will check with Lowestoft Vision if a refund is due. Recommendations will be brought to next meeting for where the shortfall could come from. Cllr Patience questioned if Town Council grant funding could be given during the pre-election period as District and County Councillors are unable to give funding during the period. The Town Clerk clarified that as grants are given by the Town Council as a corporate body instead of individual councillors it is slightly different however during the pre-election period care would need to be given to make sure that any expenditure could not be seen to benefit existing councillors.

22. To discuss contingency assumptions for 2023/24 budget including inflation.

The draft budget for 2023/24 was displayed which currently shows the 2022/23 budget plus 10% RPI and without using reserves leading to a large increase in the precept. A discussion took place about the increase being due to the use of reserves in the 2022/23 financial year and that we need to prioritise what work needs doing over the coming years. Cllr Patience asked if the Band D equivalent figure is updated annually and the Finance and Information officer confirmed that it is.

Cllr Brooks proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Patience; all in favour.

27. Date of the next meeting.

5th September 2022 at 13:00

28. Items for the next Agenda and Close.

29. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the Meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely any legal issues relating to the matters on this agenda.

A discussion took place around the budget for the grounds maintenance contract for next year.

Cllr Patience declared a local non-pecuniary interest as a member of East Suffolk Councillor and as a close relative works for East Suffolk Norse

Cllr Brooks requested that the budget for public conveniences for 2023/24 is added to the next meeting along with another budget heading.

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The chair closed the meeting at 14:05

Signed: 
5 September 2022