

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 17 July 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Janet Craig, Paul Page (Chair), Andy Pearce, Deborah Ray (Deputy Chair), plus non-Councillor member John Sillett

In Attendance: Shona Bendix (Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

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

41. Welcome

To explain the fire evacuation procedure, welcome the meeting, and remind councillors and members of the public of the right to report.

The Clerk joined the meeting at 15:33

Cllr Pearce joined the meeting at 15:34

42. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr D Youngman and Ms Bunn with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of apologies received; seconded by Cllr Page; six voted in favour and one against.

43. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

43.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Brooks declared she had joined the Greenprint Forum. Cllr Craig declared she was an East Suffolk Councillor. Cllrs Barker and Brooks declared they were members of Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Cllr Pearce declared he was a Town Council representative on the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership. Mr Sillett declared he was an appointed Town Council representative on East Suffolk Travel Association.

43.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

44. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 19 June 2023

Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

45. Public forum

An opportunity for the public to make comments on any matters on this agenda, and to consider any advance comments from the public – A member of the public commented on the proposed closure of the Lowestoft Railway Station ticketing office and provided a petition to the Committee. This would be reviewed individually by Councillors and any signature would be in their personal capacity.

Cllr Brooks proposed item 49.6a and 49.3a be brought forward for consideration in the agenda; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

49.6a. To consider an objection to the proposed closure of the Lowestoft Railway Station ticket office – Concerns were raised about the short-notice of the closure and how it was counter-productive to the aims of Lowestoft Town Council and the regeneration of the town. Cllr Pearce proposed Lowestoft Town Council object to the closure of the offices on grounds of the quality impact assessment, safety concerns and its opposition to the regeneration of

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Lowestoft, noting the importance of the retention of the rail presence in Lowestoft for local and tourist use; seconded by Cllr Brooks. This would be recommended to Full Council as this Committee have no delegation to sign a consultation on behalf of Lowestoft Town Council and it was noted that the deadline for consultation was 27 July 2023. A vote was held with all in favour.

52. 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

Cllr Brooks proposed the meeting be taken into confidential session to discuss this item; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

The member of the public temporarily left the chamber at 16:00

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 16:00

49.3a. To receive an update from the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllr Pearce provided an update to the Committee.

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

The Chair moved the session back into the public meeting at 16:30

The member of the public returned to the chamber at 16:30

46. To monitor expenditure by this Committee from the climate emergency budget, under delegated authority

No expenditure was reported to date and an update would be provided at the next meeting. Officers would clarify with the Finance and Information Officer that the funding for extra street cleaning and deep cleaning was delegated to this Committee and reflected in the expenditure document as 'pledged funding'.

47. To consider and set a monthly target to be reported at the next meeting of this Committee

This item had been previously requested with a view to the Committee setting and achieving monthly targets focussed on the climate emergency. It was agreed to have this item removed from future agendas and to only be added if specifically requested by the Committee.

48. To consider any matters to raise with Cllr Rachel Smith-Lyte (Cabinet Member for the Environment) or Cllr Caroline Topping (East Suffolk Council Leader with responsibility for Parish Liaison) and/or the Environment and Waste Group, and to receive feedback on any matter previously raised

Item 49.3a would be raised with Cllr Caroline Topping.

The Committee thanked the Clerk for the letter sent to East Suffolk Council (ESC) regarding street cleaning for London Road North.

The Committee requested an update via email from the Deputy Clerk on the tender deadline for the bulky waste trial.

The Committee suggested Cllrs Rachel Smith-Lyte and Caroline Topping be informed of Lowestoft Town Council's recent declarations of becoming an Earth Protector Town and the ecological emergency and formally request cooperation with ESC to achieve these aims. The Clerk suggested this instead be included in the Quarterly Liaison Meetings with ESC.

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Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council for there to be no more than four Lowestoft Town Council representatives (ordinarily) plus one officer, with the Mayor or Deputy Mayor to be the standing attendee, to attend the quarterly meetings with ESC. The selection of representatives would be delegated to officers, in consultation with all Councillors, and based on which Councillors are most appropriate to attend per the agenda. If the agenda is primarily focussed on climate concerns, then representatives should be selected from this Committee.

Cllr Craig left the chamber at 16:48

Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

Cllr Pearce suggested the Committee consider approaching East Suffolk Council on regaining Lowestoft's Blue Flag status.

Cllr Pearce left the chamber at 16:51

49. To consider the following items:

49.1. Earth Protector Town Status:

- 49.1a. To consider Lowestoft's plastic-free commitment, per the Earth Protector Town requirements – Officers were asked to query the implementation of the refill scheme with Lowestoft Vision as a key step in the plastic-free commitment. A Lowestoft Community had already been established on the Plastic Free Communities website and officers would attempt to contact the named lead again to offer the support of the Town Council. The Communications Officer would update the Town Council's website and social media with information about the plastic-free commitment. It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting for further discussions. The Clerk confirmed the office was actively reducing reliance on plastic at Town Council events. Officers were asked to create a spreadsheet database tracking the initiatives and actions concerning the plastic-free commitment.

The member of the public left 16:58

49.2. Climate Action Plan:

- 49.2a. To discuss changes to the Climate Change Draft Action Plan – Cllr Brooks requested the document name be changed to Climate Emergency Action Plan. Changes were suggested for item GM10 with community resilience to be specifically linked to heatwaves and flooding, with a focus on educating the community on how to manage in these extreme situations. It was agreed for officers to provide educational information on heatwaves and floods via information on the website and social media.

The progress of the Greenhouse Gas Report was queried per item EM1. Officers were exploring the possibility of the report extending to include more tenants but noted that some tenants had total occupation control of sites and would not be included as the Town Council had no control over their energy usage. Officers would review the 2019 report and ensure the most up-to-date report is provided to this Committee.

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Cllr Ray suggested that with those amendments reviewed at the next meeting, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Draft Action Plan be recommended to Full Council for approval. The Clerk noted that the inclusion of nature on the plan was intended to challenge this Committee as it faces external pressures in its decision making. Cllr Page proposed a standing item on the agenda to review the decisions of this Committee with the perspective of nature to be considered; seconded by Cllr Ray; all in favour.

49.3. Natural Environment:

- 49.3a. To receive an update from the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership (some aspects may be confidential) – This item was brought forward in the meeting and discussed in confidential session.
- 49.3b. To consider the planting of suitable trees around The Ness play area, and to consider the planting of trees in the vicinity of all play areas owned by Lowestoft Town Council to provide shade for the users – This item had been requested due to social media posts highlighting the lack of shade in The Ness play area. The Committee were informed that the trees near The Ness were not in a healthy condition due to the location and contaminated land and shrubs had been suggested as alternatives.

Cllr Barker proposed officers, in consultation with this Committee, consider the installation of circular benches near trees and alternative shaded structures, with a recommendation to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee to discuss the inclusion of this proposal under the five-year plans; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

49.4. Energy/Water/Built Environment:

- 49.4a. To consider the Town Council's ethical stance regarding its energy supply – The Committee had received an initial database of potential suppliers and the item was deferred to the next meeting.
- 49.4b. To receive an update on the provision of water bottle refill stations and refill schemes – The Committee Clerk confirmed the refill stations were being queried with Essex and Suffolk Water and Lowestoft Vision would be contacted on the status of the implementation of the refill scheme.
- 49.4c. To receive an update on water collection, storage and access in parks – The Committee Clerk confirmed advice was being sought from Northumbrian Water Ltd and Greener Suffolk on how to progress implementation of water storage and mitigate the associated risks.

49.5. Waste/Pollution:

- 49.5a. To receive an update regarding liaison with Peter Aldous MP on Lowestoft's Blue Flag status – The Committee Clerk had chased Peter Aldous and not received a response. Officers would approach the new administration of East Suffolk Council on how to progress this item.

49.6. Transport/Travel

- 49.6a. To consider an objection to the proposed closure of the Lowestoft Railway Station ticket office – This item was brought forward to the beginning of the meeting.

49.7. Finance – No items to discuss.

49.8. Land Use – No items to discuss.

49.9. Community Engagement:

- 49.9a. To receive an update on the formation of a Lowestoft Pupils Climate Committee – Ms Bunn was not in attendance and the item was deferred to receive an update at the next meeting.
- 49.9b. To receive feedback on the Terms of Reference of this Committee regarding non-Councillor members and if there is a minimum age requirement – Officers would clarify whether all Committee members would require DBS checks if the minimum age for non-Councillor members was sixteen.

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An increase in the number of non-Councillor members permitted for this Committee would require approval of Full Council, however, as Ms Bunn was exploring the inclusion of a student as a non-Councillor member, it was agreed to defer this decision.

At 17:31 Cllr Brooks proposed to suspend standing order for five mins; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

49.9c. To consider collaborative work with the Greenprint Forum and East Suffolk Council – Cllr Brooks proposed the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee formally join the Greenprint Forum; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour. Cllr Brooks noted the Greenprint Forum use noticeboards for information about the climate emergency and suggested this be done to educate the public with information about heatwaves.

50. Date of the next meeting

Monday 21 August at 15:30. Cllr Barker gave her apologies for this meeting.

51. Items for the next agenda and close

It was requested for any items to be emailed to the office. Cllr Brooks suggested ‘save the planet’ be included under the agenda heading for this Committee.

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Communications Officer the production of leaflets informing the public on what to do during extreme weather conditions such as heatwaves, with these to be made available online and displayed in the Lowestoft Town Council noticeboards.

52. 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

The Chair closed the meeting at 17:36

Signed:

21 August 2023