

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:00 on 22 April 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker (ex officio) Wendy Brooks, Paul Page (Deputy Chair), Andy Pearce (Chair) and Bernadette Rappensberger

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk), James Cox (Finance and Information Officer) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Public: Two members of the public were in attendance (in person)

165. Welcome

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

166. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Begum and Parker with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.
Cllr Coleby was absent with no apologies received.

167. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

167.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Brooks declared she was acquainted with the Suffolk Sober Spaces group and was not pre-determined on the grant application. Cllrs Pearce and Rappensberger declared they were acquainted with the representative from the Suffolk Sober Spaces in a previous capacity. Cllr Pearce declared he was Chair of the Gunton Residents Association. Cllr Barker declared she was acquainted with a key member of Lowestoft Shopmobility. Cllr Pearce declared he was acquainted with a member of Lowestoft Shopmobility in a different capacity at Disability Information Advice Line, of which Cllr Pearce was a trustee.

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

168. To consider the draft minutes of the meetings on 13 February and 12 March 2024

Cllr Rappensberger proposed approval subject to the correction of spelling errors; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The Finance and Information Officer temporarily left the chamber at 18:09

169. 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 – The members of the public were in attendance to speak on item 173.1b as the Chair and Vice-Chair of Suffolk Sober Spaces.

The Finance and Information Officer returned to the chamber at 18:10

The representatives delivered an overview of the services provided by Suffolk Sober Spaces and discussed their business plan and how the grant would be used to contribute to their subsistence and potential growth, with a summary of their finances to date.

The Committee agreed to bring item 173.1b forward in the meeting.

173.1b. Suffolk Sober Spaces - £1,980 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the grant and to

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have follow-up discussions on how Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) could assist the group in the future; seconded by Cllr Pearce who requested the rental and rent increase be funded from the Community Engagement budget and the balance be funded from the Grants budget; all in favour.

170. To consider the following items deferred from the previous meeting:

170.1. To consider governance terms for the Lowestoft Youth Forum/Council – It was suggested to have an item on the May Annual General Meeting (AGM) to form the steering group (four to five members) as a tentative external body to undertake the work of setting up the Forum and provide the Forum's statement of purpose that would differentiate it from the other forums in the area.

170.2. To consider the merits of Lowestoft Town Council adopting a bespoke Code of Conduct – The Code of Conduct used by LTC was the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct which the three tiers of council in Suffolk were signed up to. do not regulate and any complaints are handled by ESC monitoring officer. This item would consider the merits of a bespoke Code of Conduct compared to the current Suffolk Model, and it was clarified that any resolutions sought through the Code of Conduct can only be adjudicated by the East Suffolk Council Monitoring Officer as it was their statutory responsibility and LTC would not legally be able to undertake that role internally.

Cllr Brooks suggested an alternative procedure separate to the Code of Conduct be considered for LTC where there is an agreed code on how Councillors behave towards each other and the public, similar to a grievance or internal complaints procedure.

As this was a separate issue from the item it was agreed for suggestions to be brought to the Acting Town Clerk to discuss the legal parameters and an item be on the next agenda to consider the suggestions.

170.3. To consider the implementation of the Town Council's IT Policy with regard to email correspondence – It was agreed to defer this item to the next agenda as the Councillor who requested it was not in attendance.

171. Budget and Loan:

171.1. To monitor the budget for 2023 – 2024, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – No comments were raised.

171.2. To note any bank reconciliations – February 2024 was with Cllr Page and March 2024 was to be completed.

171.3. To consider the Reserves Policy and make a recommendation to Full Council – The appendices had been altered so that the paragraph explaining the approval procedure for expenditure from the reserves moved to the body of the main document. Only the statement of purpose for the specific appendix has been left in the appendices.

Cllr Barker left the meeting at 19:13

Cllr Pearce proposed the draft be recommended to Full Council with two years of attainment to be added to the original target dates of the General Reserves with the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee this year to consider a timescale to reach the initial four months target and whether this would be done through rental income or recommend a precept of a General Reserves top-up contribution in the 2025-2026 budget; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

171.4. To note the consideration of the year end EMR positions and any EMR transfers required – All accruals for year-end had been added to the budget document with suggestions from the Finance and Information Officer on corrections of budget allocations to manage any overspend. Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the suggested corrections; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

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The Finance and Information Officer was thanked for his work and vigilance with the budget and the confidence this gave to LTC.

172. Payments and Receipts:

- 172.1. To note the income and expenditure reports for February 2024 and March 2024 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – Cllr Brooks proposed acceptance of the reports; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 172.2. To consider any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were no payments for approval.

173. Grants & Sponsorships

- 173.1. To note the received of the following grant applications and consider whether they require urgent consideration:
- 173.1a. Pakefield Bowls Club - Amount to be determined by this Committee – Cllr Pearce proposed to fund the full project cost of £1,750, with half allocated from the Grants budget and the other half from the Community Engagement budget; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.
- 173.1b. Suffolk Sober Spaces - £1,980 – This item was brought forward in the meeting.
- 173.1c. Lowestoft Shopmobility - £210 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

174. Other financial and governance matters, including:

- 174.1. To consider the list of delegations – It was planned for April Full Council review the list of delegations and receive an officer report on the required standing delegations.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council for all one-off delegations to progress or complete projects remain in place and the standing delegations to officers are renewed for another twelve months and be reviewed in quarter one of the following year. Furthermore, the delegation of the entire Legal and Staff Contingency budgets to officers would remain with the Legal budget to be shared with this Committee once a month and the Staff Contingency budget to be shared with the Personnel Committee once a month, for monitoring purposes. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

- 174.2. Grounds Maintenance:

- 174.2a. To receive an update on the expenditure against budget for the changes to grounds maintenance operations from 2023/2024, including areas where the budget may be challenged (some aspects may be confidential) – There was no update and it was agreed for this item to be monitored as part of the Budget and Loan section rather than as an individual item.
- 174.3. To consider the cost and budget allocation for the service costs of grounds maintenance vehicles – It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting and receive information on the insurance costs and any other running costs. Officers were looking at the cost to move to a fleet and would check the servicing arrangements on the new finance scheme for the vehicles.
- 174.4. To consider the budget allocation for the protection measures for the Fen Park Pond aeration device – Cllr Pearce proposed the funds be allocated from the Waterways and Ponds earmarked reserve; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 174.5. To consider the budget allocation for the purchase of a defibrillator for Unit 2 – Cllr Pearce proposed the funds be allocated from the Community Safety budget; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.
- 174.6. To approve a maximum budget of £750 for the purchase of event chairs – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Page. Cllr Pearce requested an amendment for the budget to be allocated from the 2024-2025 Events budget, which was agreed. A vote was held with all in favour.

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174.7. To consider the installation and funding of Wi-Fi at the Denes Oval pavilion – A full fibre package quote had been received for £32 per month for an eighteen-month contract which had been obtained by the Cricket Club. Cllr Pearce proposed to set a maximum budget of £1,000 for a twelve-month contract and delegate it to officers to progress sourcing and choosing a quote, with the Wi-Fi to be installed in the clubhouse at the earliest opportunity in time for the majority of the 2024-2025 season; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

174.8. To consider feedback from a meeting with the Cricket Club and any urgent budget or expenditure requirements – This had been discussed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee where it had been reported that the Cricket Club would await the outcome of LTC’s decision regarding the scheduling of refurbishment works at the pavilion, noting that no urgent works had been identified in the condition survey.

It had been previously agreed to replace the cricket nets in 2024-2025 ahead of the 2025 season and the Community Infrastructure Levy bid for funding had been recently submitted.

Cllr Pearce proposed officers look to progress commissioning a preventative repair report for the walls and clubhouse to inform discussions on the timescales for works and the funding approach; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

175. Date of the next meeting

14 May 2024 10:30

176. Items for the next agenda and close

No items were requested.

177. 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 employment matters and legal issues relating to the matters on this agenda, including the following:

177.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required – There were no resolutions.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:01

Signed:

14 May 2024