

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
14:00 on 6 April 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Alan Green, Christian Newsome, Graham Parker and Andy Pearce

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

93. Welcome

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

94. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies and all Committee members were in attendance.

95. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

95.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – There were none.

95.2. Written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – There were none.

96. The draft minutes and confidential note of the Extraordinary Meeting on 2 March 2023

Cllr Brooks requested an amendment to phrasing of the minute at item 86 and proposed approval of the minutes and confidential note; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Brooks requested an update following a request from the Committee at its last meeting for officers to contact an organisation regarding lobbying. The Clerk had received and circulated a response. The Committee considered that the organisation had not satisfactorily responded on the points raised by the Clerk and it was agreed for the Clerk to go back to them.

97. Public forum

No advance comments had been received and there were no members of the public in attendance.

98. Reviewing the Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee, including reviewing and considering implementation of the following responsibilities:

98.1. Ensuring appropriate arrangements are established for hearing a grievance or disciplinary matter for the Clerk (and any staff appeals) – Cllr Pearce advised that respective policies reviewed by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee and Full Council within the last year. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of this Term of Reference without amendment; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

98.2. Supervising and performance managing the Clerk's work, administering their leave requests, monitoring absences and making recommendations to Council on salary reviews and terms – Cllr Pearce requested the consideration of items 98.2 and 98.3 together. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of these Terms of Reference, with the overall responsibility being with the Committee, but in practise delegated to the Mayor and Chair of the Personnel Committee, subject to the resolution passed by Full Council – to take effect from the Annual Meeting - for the Mayor and the Chair of the Personnel Committees, plus their respective Deputies, to receive appropriate Appraisals training. Cllr Pearce advised the cost of this would likely be met from the Councillor training budget. Cllr Barker seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

98.3. Delegating confidential aspects of the above responsibilities to the Mayor and Chair of

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the Personnel Committee in a framework which recognises the Chair's (or a nominated other person's) day-to-day management-type role, e.g. in relation to permitting leave – This item was included in the consideration of the previous item.

- 98.4. Appointing a panel of six Councillors from amongst the members of this Committee to consider complaints which have been referred – Cllr Pearce advised this may have been amended following a review of the Complaints Procedure. If still relevant, Cllr Pearce suggested the panel should be drawn from the whole Council rather than just the Personnel Committee, as the Committee may not always have six members. Cllr Green requested an amendment that it should be an odd number and Cllr Parker requested an amendment that it should be a minimum of five and maximum of seven, depending on the nature and scope of the complaint.

The Clerk temporarily left the meeting 14:15 and returned 14:16

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to amend this Term of Reference to appoint a panel of five to seven Councillors from amongst the whole Council, and to amend the Complaints Procedure and any other related documents accordingly to reflect this; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour. Should a panel need to be appointed, it was suggested officers would email Councillors seeking volunteers.

99. The Redundancy Policy, including considering the inclusion of redundancy arrangements in terms and conditions of employment

The Clerk was seeking assistance from a Human Resources Adviser. There did not appear to be any issues with what had been proposed, but consideration needs to be given to how to implement it in an appropriate way. If it can be progressed in the way the Committee intends, the Clerk will look at the appropriate contract and policy changes. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting to receive the advice of the Human Resources Adviser.

100. Signing up to be Disability Confident

The Project and Committee Clerk explained the initiative to the Committee. The Clerk advised that the Committee would not wish to make a decision on this during the pre-election period, but assuming the Committee is supportive in principle, officers can consider how to implement this following the pre-election period. Cllr Barker proposed asking the Council to consider signing up to be Disability Confident after the election, including considering its integration with the Mental Health and Wellbeing policies for officers and Councillors, and the accessibility of the Council's buildings, including liaison with tenants where necessary; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

101. An update from the Clerk on any staffing issues (some aspects may be confidential)

The Clerk advised there were no issues in general terms, but any specific matters will be considered during the confidential session.

102. An update on current and future staffing, including for grounds maintenance (confidential)

The Clerk advised there were no issues in general terms, but any specific matters will be considered during the confidential session.

103. Date of the next meeting

1 June 2023 14:00 (subject to approval of the meeting schedule at the Annual Meeting)

104. Items for the next agenda and close

Items 101 and 102 may require a further update based on the prevailing situation. Item 100 will be considered again post-election.

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

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105. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

105.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required

101. An update from the Clerk on any staffing issues (some aspects may be confidential) – The Clerk advised that the Asset Management Officer (AMO) had been appointed and provided an update on his current priorities.

102. An update on current and future staffing, including for grounds maintenance (confidential) – The Clerk provided an update on the appointment of grounds maintenance officers and seasonal workers. The Clerk asked the Committee to consider a delegation to her regarding a change to a member of staff’s terms and conditions. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of this request, as a recommendation to Full Council if necessary; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The Clerk advised that officers had undertaken litter picking at four major sites plus Whitton Green that day. The Community Payback team were still working on the Great Eastern Linear Park, and were interested in working with the Council on other projects. Cllr Barker reported that East Coast College has also been undertaking litter picking at the Great Eastern Linear Park and the Project and Committee Clerk has contacted them regarding this. Cllr Brooks considered there should be more public awareness regarding littering and dog fouling. Cllr Pearce proposed formally recording the Committee’s thanks to officers for their work; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

The Clerk was continuing to explore options regarding waste management and the Council will be asked to consider a proposal in due course.

In response to a query from Cllr Pearce, the Clerk advised that the AMO has been involved with the Town Hall project, including liaising with the Architect, and should be involved in the degradation works. Cllrs Barker and Green would welcome an opportunity to informally meet the new staff.

Officers are progressing the purchase of grounds maintenance equipment. This is being done in stages and only includes items which the Council has the appropriate storage for. The Clerk advised on the arrangements being considered for mowing. Cllr Barker requested that officers put out a statement on the purpose of wildflower areas.

Cllr Pearce would like the Council to have more control over the decision making on planting plans. The Clerk agreed that visual plans of each site should be produced, and the procurement of tree mapping services should assist with this. Cllr Barker offered her thanks to the Clerk and the staff team on behalf of the Committee.

As Chair of the Committee, Cllr Barker offered her thanks to everyone involved in the Committee for their contribution and for how this period of change has been handled. On behalf of the staff team, the Clerk offered her thanks to the Committee for its support.

Signed:
1 June 2023