

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 14 March 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Andy Pearce and Bernie Rappensberger. Non-Councillor members Helen Johnson and Ben Porter (East Suffolk Council Officers)

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Also in Attendance: Sheila MossKing (Project Manager)

61. Welcome

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

62. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Patience and Youngman with reasons provided. Cllr Rappensberger proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

63. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

63.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from Councillors and members on items on the agenda – No interests were declared.

63.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

64. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 15 February 2024

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

65. 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 – No advanced comments had been received and no members of the public were in attendance.

66. Finance, budget monitoring and payments (see report):

66.1. To note and consider income and expenditure, including:

66.2. To monitor the budget – £240,721.49 had been spent to date and an increase was expected once the funds have been paid to UK Power Networks to secure the substation, the budget allocation for which has been agreed.

66.3. To consider any payments for approval – The latest round of professional fees submitted have been paid and allocated to the relevant accounts.

66.4. To consider reporting requirements for the NLHF and Towns Fund – The quarterly reports for the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) would be sufficient for the Towns Fund. The Committee thanked East Suffolk Council (ESC) for the first payments received from both the ESC grant and Towns Fund grant.

67. Town Hall Project Tender Evaluation Sub-Committee:

67.1. To receive and note the draft minutes and confidential note of the Town Hall Project Tender Evaluation Sub-Committee on 15 February – Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Helen Johnson; all in favour.

68. To consider the appointment of a Procurement Consultant (some aspects may be confidential)

This would be dealt with in confidential session.

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69. To appoint a shortlist and interview panel for the role of Heritage Manager

Applications were due to close 25 March 2024.

Cllr Pearce requested an item on Full Council to consider a delegation to appoint the role of Heritage Manager; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The interview panel was suggested to be held the week commencing 8th April - before the next Committee meeting.

Cllr Pearce proposed a delegation to the evaluation panel be requested from Full Council with this Committee and Personnel to be informed on the appointment once the position has been accepted; seconded by Cllr Barker. Cllr Pearce suggested the evaluation panel be comprised of Councillors from this Committee and Personnel, with one officer and Jess Johnston in attendance in an advisory capacity.

Cllr Brooks requested all Councillors be invited to volunteer for the panel as the role is for an employee of Lowestoft Town Council. The Committee agreed it could be open to all Councillors but those on the panel needed to be aware of the project details and have knowledge of staffing matters.

The Project Manager advised the panel should be members of this Committee as the post would be funded by the NLHF for five years and it would be a major risk to include Councillors who were not aware the project details, the activity plan and community engagement in relation to delivery of the interpretation plan.

The Committee agreed and Cllr Pearce proposed the four Councillors in attendance today (Cllrs Barker, Brooks, Rappensberger and Pearce) and the Acting Town Clerk be on the interview panel, with Jess Johnston in attendance in an advisory capacity; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed Full Council be asked to grant a delegation to the evaluation panel to appoint the Heritage Manager; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

70. To consider a contract for the Contract Administration

HAT Projects have queried if this should remain a separate contract or be incorporated into their contract as the Design Team. The Project Manager advised that due to the detailed specification for the Contract Administration Role, it would be best to keep it separate due to the risk that some details may be omitted when incorporated with the Design Team contract. The Project Manager also advised if the separate contract be used with the tender specifications and term and conditions, that the contract be checked by a legal advisor.

Cllr Brooks proposed this be checked with the solicitor and receive their advice on how to proceed. The Acting Clerk noted confirmation of the budget allocation for the legal fees would be required. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed if the solicitor was unable to commit to the required turn-around time, then alternative bespoke legal advice be sought; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

71. To consider a report from the Project Manager, including progress with the following:

71.1. Review the programme plan – The programme plan was displayed and the Project Manager provided an overview.

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The Committee would need to establish how to make the final report and claim, and any interim claims, to NLHF as this project would not finish until September 2028.

The Project Manager informed the Committee that the projected opening date of the Town Hall would be 20th April 2026. As any delays could result in a longer period of professional fees to pay, it was suggested to hold standalone meetings during the budget round-up in 2024 and 2025 to consider the impact of out-of-project scope expenditure on the budget.

The Acting Town Clerk temporarily left the chamber at 10:56

The final evaluation report for NLHF and ESC would be provided in 2028 and would explain what was delivered with the grant funding.

The Acting Town Clerk returned to the chamber at 10:57

The ESC Towns Funds deadline was in 2026 and the ESC Officers would confirm if there would be a team handling the legacy information for the project up to 2028. The Project Manager would include writing an end of funding report for the Towns Fund into the project plan for March 2026.

The Committee queried if the co-working space would be competing for resources with other projects in town. The Committee would need to understand the impact on the project if other Town Hall staff, such as café staff, had access to the pension scheme. The Project Manager advised the Committee that bringing the café inhouse would have significant implications for risk and organisational management.

The meeting was temporarily paused for a fire alarm at 11:10

The meeting was resumed at 11:20

As Full Council had not been asked to decide on the café operator model, it was suggested the Project Manager review the model and for the decision to be made before the end of the calendar year to allow for the staffing cost in the budget.

A 'soft launch' two-week long period would also be required where the Town Hall is occupied but not open so that staff are familiarised with how the building operates.

- 71.2. A timetable for procurement of the Main Building Contract – Cllr Pearce noted the internal decision to engage a specialist for procurement advice in relation to the Main Building Contract and proposed the company discussed be appointed based on the quote received; seconded by Cllr Brooks; five votes in favour and one abstention.
- 71.3. Engagement events for possible contractors – The Project Manager would check with the procurement advisor whether it would be permissible to have a Town Hall Open Day on 15th April.
- 71.4. The boundary agreement and process of registering with the Land Registry – The Chief Executive Officer had given the mandate for this transfer, however ESC first required an evaluation of the land, and it was queried if a letter of support with the condition that the transfer was pending a land evaluation would be adequate for Permission to Start. NLHF had confirmed the Permission to Start documentation could be submitted with the ESC letter of approval on the land transfer to follow, which the Project Manager advised would be preferable.
The evaluation needed to be arranged as soon as possible and it was requested this be

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relayed and escalated within ESC.

As the Project Manager already had authority to submit for Permission to Start, Cllr Pearce proposed the Project Manager proceed and submit the documentation on the basis that the letter of support from ESC would follow and the issue of the land evaluation be appropriately escalated to expedite the matter; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

72. To receive a list of planned actions from the Project Manager to be authorised for progression

To ensure this could proceed if not already delegated, Cllr Pearce proposed the Project Manager be given permission to progress the agreed pre-Permission To Start actions, including to submit the Permission-To-Start documents and liaise with the procurement consultant; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

73. To receive an update on the Heads of Terms for the Registrars, including consideration of the rent appraisal (some aspects may be confidential)

This item would be discussed in confidential session.

74. To consider appointing a member of the public to this Committee and making a recommendation to Full Council to approve the change to the Terms of Reference

Cllr Brooks had been approached by a member of the public who had prior experience in construction and wanted to be involved as a non-Councillor member. An agreed specification would need to describe what expertise the Committee required.

Cllr Brooks proposed this be considered with no more than two non-Councillor members on the Committee, and that the expertise required on the Committee was in construction.

The Committee would need to carefully consider what value this role would bring to the Committee and address the need for confidentiality within the project.

It was suggested there be only one non-Councillor member as the quorum of this Committee required half of the voting members present to be Lowestoft Town Councillors.

Cllr Brooks amended the proposal to recommend to Full Council to appoint one member of the public to this Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce who requested Helen Johnson and Ben Porter provide their feedback via the office for consideration.

The Project Manager suggested this be instead deferred to the next agenda with a draft prepared on what expertise the Committee required and the voting rights of the non-Councillor member. It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting and bring a recommendation to Full Council in April.

75. To review the updated risk register

As full funding had been secured a risk had been removed. The risks associated with acquiring the main contract would be reduced due to the decision to seek professional advice.

76. To consider any recommendations to Full Council

As agreed under item 69.

77. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 11 April 2024 – 10:00

78. Items for the next agenda and close

79. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be

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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:

79.1. To consider any legal issues, including those above as required – Cllr Rappensberger proposed the meeting be moved to confidential session; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 11:53

68. To consider the appointment of a Procurement Consultant (some aspects may be confidential)

This item was covered per the proposal under item 71.2.

73. To receive an update on the Heads of Terms for the Registrars, including consideration of the rent appraisal (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Barker left the meeting at 11:59

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

The meeting was closed at 12:09

Signed:

11 April 2024