

**Lowestoft Town Council**  
**Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee**  
**First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE**  
**10:30 on 12 November 2024**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Cllrs Connor Blowers, Neil Coleby (Deputy Chair), Andy Pearce (Chair) and Bernadette Rappensberger

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

**76. Welcome**

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

**77. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Paul Page and Graham Parker with reasons provided. Cllr Coleby proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

**78. Declarations of Interests and dispensations**

78.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllrs Blowers and Rappensberger declared they had an informal discussion with a representative from the Seagull Theatre in relation to items 83.1a and 83.1b, but were not involved in the project or the Committee. Cllr Pearce declared he had advance knowledge of the application under item 83.1b and had queried the applicant on when funding would be required. Cllr Pearce declared he had advance of the application under item 83.1c and had notified the applicant of the application submission deadline.

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

**79. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 8 October 2024 and the extraordinary meeting on 28 October 2024**

Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 8 October, noting that the financial report was due to be inserted; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour. The minutes of the meeting on 28 October were in progress.

**80. 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.

**81. Budget and Loan**

81.1. To monitor the budget for 2024-2025, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – Through the Budget and Loan Working Group, the Committee were aware of which budgets may be challenged and would await further monthly briefings from the Budget and Loan Working Group.

81.1a. To consider possible costs in relation to the BoxUp installation at Normanston Park following Year One (some aspects may be confidential) – Previously, landowner permission had been given for a BoxUp installation near the sports facilities in Normanston Park, with funding sourced via the Community Partnership. This service provides the free hire of sports equipment at no cost to Lowestoft Town Council (LTC).

The initial one-year rental was likely due to expire on the Normanston Park installation.

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 12 November 2024

The rental could be renewed for a further year, or it could be purchased (and the purchase cost would be discounted by the accumulated cost of the first-year rental). There was uncertainty on whether East Suffolk Council (ESC) intended to exercise the right to renew the one-year rental (and whether they would also seek a contribution from the parish) or if they would consider exercising the right to buy or ask LTC to consider exercising the right to buy. It was requested this be discussed further with ESC and to confirm if the Budget and Loan Working Group need to factor this into the budget consideration.

- 81.1b. To consider legal costs still to be invoiced (confidential) – This item would be discussed in confidential session as it related to a specific legal cost.
- 81.2. To note any bank reconciliations – August had been completed and September was in progress.
- 81.3. To review progress with preparation of the 2025/2026 budget and consider associated timescales and communications (some aspects may be confidential)
  - 81.3a. To consider consultancy costs (some aspects may be confidential) – This item would be discussed in confidential session.
  - 81.3b. To consider possible costs in relation to the BoxUp installation at Denes Oval and other potential locations (some aspects may be confidential) – The installation at Denes Oval had been agreed by the Community Partnership, but they were in the process of taking an overall poll of opinion from all members who were not in attendance at the meeting. It would need to be confirmed if ESC intended to install a locker as agreed at the Community Partnership meeting and what they proposed to do at end of the first year of rental so it could be accommodated in the 2025/2026 budget if required.

### 82. Payments and Receipts:

- 82.1. To note the income and expenditure reports for October 2024 and November 2024 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the report as a true and accurate record of payments and income; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

The precept demand was due to be submitted by January 2025, therefore the Budget and Loan Working Group may need to arrange extra meetings to cover the Town Hall, the Marina Theatre, staff related matters including training, offices, consultancy costs and professional services. A separate meeting would also be required to discuss the budget for Unit 2 and grounds maintenance, with input to be received from the Grounds Maintenance Team and Facilities and Contracts Manager by December 2024. It was suggested the Project Manager for the Town Hall attend the meeting to discuss the Town Hall budget. The meeting concerning the Marina Theatre budget would have access to the Project Manager's report with all known costs and would also need to cover the theatre costs for the financial year separate to the project with an order of priority provided by the Marina Theatre.

It was agreed to have a poll sent to members to try and schedule in at least two meetings a week in the lead up to the Finance and Governance meeting on 9 December and the Full Council meeting on 19 December. A presentation could be provided to the Finance and Governance Committee from the Budget and Loan Working Group and Finance Manager to set out the budget recommendations and rationale.

- 82.2. To consider any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were no payments for approval.

### 83. Grants and Sponsorships

- 83.1. To note the receipt of the following grant applications and consider whether they require urgent consideration:

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 12 November 2024

- 83.1a. The Seagull Lowestoft CIC - £1,500 – It was noted that this project was to be done in partnership with the Claremont Pier, however no funds would be provided to the Claremont Pier. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the application, with a delegation to officers to liaise with the applicant to review the schedule of performance fees prior to payment, only to ensure the payment is for performance fees and not a different element that the grant application scheme is not able to cover. Once the booking details were available and could be verified, the grant would be paid out within the agreed £1,500. Cllr Blowers seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.
- 83.1b. Lowestoft Carnival - £6,710 – Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the application with communication of the early decision to reassure the applicants that funding has been secured and can be cited as match-funding if required. The payment itself would be made in April 2025 from the 2025/2026 Grants budget. Officers would also ask the applicant that in planning for year two and onwards, they would give consideration to avoid scheduling conflicts with the Beccles Carnival and to try and bring in other stakeholders, with Suffolk County Council engaged as the Highways Authority to try and secure funding for the bridge closure, or waiver of fees, to facilitate a cross-town carnival; Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.
- 83.1c. Paper-works - £1,469.40 – It was noted the application was from a business and had been reviewed for eligibility. Cllr Pearce noted its eligibility in line with the following sections from the Grants Policy:
- 1.2 – Lowestoft Town Council reserves the right to deviate from the policy if it is considered appropriate to do. It was noted this should not be exercised arbitrarily.
  - 2.1a – Eligible organisations include Lowestoft-based charities, clubs, associations, groups or other organisations whose activities benefit the community. This application would be classed as an ‘other organisation’ that benefits the community.
  - 3.1b – Non-eligible applications are defined as those from individuals, private business and for profit organisations. This application was not from a ‘for profit’ organisation. It’s works includes the production of a newsletter which is distributed for free. The applicant covers the printing costs for the newsletter with some support from advertising.
  - 4.1 – The project must make Lowestoft a better place to live and provide a long lasting and sustainable benefit to Lowestoft. This application will provide a benefit to the community by communicating and promoting events in the arts and cultural sector. The area it is focussed on is a target regeneration area.
  - 5.1 – The listed items under what was unlikely to be funded was considered to not be applicable to this application.

Cllr Coleby suggested if the applicant were to seek long-term funding then Full Council could agree an annual sponsorship or advertisement arrangement.

Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the grant with three of the twelve months funding to be allocated from this year’s Grants budget and paid in January 2025, and the following nine months to be allocated from the 2025/2026 Grants budget. Officers would initiate a discussion with the applicant if they would like to consider a sponsorship arrangement to cover the following years. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal.

The Acting Town Clerk noted that the issue itself requests £100 for sponsorship per issue and queried if that matched the annual fee the application is seeking. The Committee agreed the £100 sponsorship may not cover all costs required in the production of the newsletter, which has been covered in the application

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 12 November 2024

form.

The Acting Town Clerk queried how the Committee wished to proceed should the newsletters funding by Lowestoft Town Council also carry advertisements and sponsorships of other organisations that are contrary to Lowestoft Town Council's policies. Furthermore, with Lowestoft Town Council funding the printing, production and distribution of the newsletters, would the partnership still accept sponsorship for those issues.

The Committee noted this and whilst the original proposal was maintained, officers were asked to request reassurance from the applicant on how LTC could avoid being associated with a sponsoring organisation that may be contrary to its policies, such as by the placement of the acknowledgement to Lowestoft Town Council. It was noted this was not a condition of the grant. A vote was held with all in favour.

### **84. Other financial and governance matters, including:**

- 84.1. To consider the feedback from the Finance and Governance Committee Schedule poll and make a recommendation to Full Council on a new regular meeting schedule – All efforts had been made to find an alternative meeting date that would ensure the highest level of attendance to the meetings and minimise the risk of inquorate meetings. The poll results had indicated a majority preference for the second Monday of the month at 15:00. It was noted Cllr Begum and the Acting Town Clerk would not be able to attend on that date. Cllr Pearce proposed the seconded Monday of the month at 15:00 be recommended to Full Council as this Committee's new schedule; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour.
- 84.2. To note the award of the contract to replace cricket nets at Denes Oval – The awarding of the contract was noted and the work would be completed before March 2025.
- 84.3. To consider costs for additional tennis and pickleball equipment – Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the officer recommendation for a maximum budget of £550 for additional equipment, with a delegation to officers to spend within that maximum budget and a delegation to the Finance Manager to decide the budget allocation; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour.
- 84.4. To consider approval of hire of additional vehicle for grounds maintenance from 1 December 2024 to 31 March 2025 – The temporary hire of a vehicle was to enable a new member joining the Building Maintenance Team to undertake their work without the need to schedule in vehicle use with the wider Grounds Maintenance Team. Cllr Pearce proposed approval with a delegation to the Finance Manager to determine the budget allocation of the hire, subject to the hire period being the specified four months and having a further discussion on vehicle leasing in the 2025/2026 budget and its potential addition to the fleet insurance and servicing costs; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.
- 84.5. To consider any recommendations from Personnel Committee for expenditure on consultancy services (some aspects may be confidential) – This item would be discussed in confidential session as it related to the circumstances of individual employees.
- 84.6. To consider a request to provide a Councillor with a Town Council mobile device (some aspects may be confidential) – This item would be discussed in confidential session as it related to the personal circumstances of an individual Councillor.
- 84.7. To consider a delegation to officers to receive and resolve requests from Councillors to be provided with a Town Council mobile device to access Town Council emails – All Councillors were allocated an LTC laptop, however issues had been raised with access in particular circumstances where it would not be feasible to carry a laptop. Full Council had resolved to allow the allocation of a LTC mobile device, in addition to the laptop, noting that the data security of the council was the most important priority, and any data should only be accessed from a LTC device. However, Councillors could only receive a mobile device if they could demonstrate how the current system disadvantages them that necessitates the provision of a mobile device.

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 12 November 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed a delegation be made to officers to evaluate any future requests from Councillors and make the decision on whether the case presented warrants the use of a mobile device, and when assessing the request to discuss with applicant if there would be any accessibility issues with an alternative device; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

84.8. To consider additional procurement advice (some aspects may be confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk advised this item be discussed in confidential session as the matter was contractually sensitive.

### 85. To review the following policies:

85.1. Acquisitions and Disposal – The following changes were suggested:

- Merge 3.6 and 3.10 in 3.3 by adding following paragraph: ‘Before the Town Council acquires any artefact, it will satisfy itself that the artefact has not been obtained through illicit or unethical means and that any licence or other legal requirement has been or can be secured. Similarly, the Town Council will ensure that the care or disposal of any artefact in its possession will be carried out legally, ethically, and with due diligence.’
- Amalgamate 3.11 into 3.9 with the following wording: ‘The care of artefacts will take into account any appropriate preservation and remediation requirements that may be necessary, where practicable. If the Town Council is unable to meet the specialist care requirements of any significant documents in its possession, it will seek to place them in a suitable repository that can meet those needs, and where possible a repository within or close to Lowestoft.’
- The following amendments to 3.16:
  - ‘Or made under delegation’ reword to ‘including those made under delegation’.
  - ‘Including in relation to’ reword to ‘regarding’.
  - ‘Acquisitions, disposal and storage’ reword to ‘acquisitions, storage and care, and disposal’.
- 4.4 reword ‘destruction is acceptable’ to ‘destruction may be acceptable’.

Cllr Pearce proposed the policy be recommended to Full Council for adoption, subject to the amendments made as listed; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council to consider an addition to the policy that should any item be available for sale at an auction, then a delegation be made to officers in conjunction with the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee (AID) to make a decision on the acquisition, but only where the purchase would be time sensitive and the per item value was £2,500 or less. This would be subject to the majority number of AID members in favour of acquisition being equal to the quorum of the Committee. This delegation should be used as a last resort, if time permits then the acquisition would be discussed and decided by AID. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

85.2. Financial Regulations – It was agreed to carry this policy forward the Annual General Meeting and review in 2025 as there had been no changes since the new model was adopted in July 2024.

It was noted that previously the Council had required two Councillor signatories to authorise payments, now only one Councillor and one officer was required. Officers were asked to clarify why this change had occurred and report back to the Committee.

85.3. Grant Awarding – Officers were drafting a spreadsheet to track grant applications and their outcome and impact per 6.1d of the policy. The following changes were suggested:

- 1.3 to be cross-references with 8.1 to ensure a consistent approach to grant applications. Both statements need to confirm grants are considered every three months as a standard, but where it can be demonstrated that urgent consideration was required then the Committee can consider the grant outside the three-month cycle.

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 12 November 2024

- 5.1a needed to be amended to allow the flexibility to approve grant funding for replacement equipment as the asset may be at end of life and needed to ensure the organisation can continue to function.

Cllr Pearce proposed this policy be recommended to Full Council for adoption with the amendments made as requested, with a caveat that the policy be kept under review through year as there may be additional suggestions; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

- 85.4. Infrastructure Investment Plan – The External Infrastructure Audit figure needed to be checked to ensure the number of schools was correct.

The Community Infrastructure Needs should be cross-referenced to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee and the Public Transport Working Group as there was an overlap in the topics covered.

The section on Expected Growth may need to mention the Union Lane development as it is in Waveney Local Plan. It was noted that the Kirkley Waterfront site was listed as being near Normanston Park and officers were asked to review this section to ensure it would align with the Neighbourhood Plan.

It was queried if the Town Council's ability to bid annually for Community Infrastructure Levy should be mentioned under Projected Income, as opposed to what is automatically received.

Cllr Pearce proposed this policy be revisited in December with officers to review and update the section on Expected Growth; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

- 85.5. Investment – The following amendments were suggested:

- Regarding 1.2, 1.3 and 4.1, officers were asked to check if there were briefings from NALC or Suffolk Pension Fund that may be under review and subject to change regarding the possibility of consolidation of local government pension funds into one national fund.
- As all existing delegations expired at the May 2024 Annual General Meeting, it was queried if the specific delegation under 5.2 and 5.3 was renewed or if it had lapsed.
- Officers were asked to review 5.4 and provide a comment to the Committee of whether it was still relevant or should be removed.
- Officers would confirm if the statement in bold under 6.1 was still current.
- Regarding 2.5 and 7.2, it was suggested to have an annual standing item on the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee agenda to review 2.5 and provide feedback to this Committee to consider in the annual policy review.

Cllr Pearce proposed the policy be recommended to Full Council for adoption, subject to the updates as discussed and a request to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee to separately review the relevant aspects in 2.5; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

- 85.6. Reserves – It was agreed to defer the review of this policy to December 2024 or January 2025 as its content would be dependent on the budget recommendations, particularly the revised target level attainment for general reserves.

- 85.7. Sponsorship and Advertising – The following amendments were suggested:

- In relation to 3.5 it should be noted that officers, whilst not subject to a code of conduct, were still subject to the Nolan Principles and should declare personal interest or bias that may affect their judgement and advice pertaining to a specific advertising or sponsorship approach. The Acting Town Clerk confirmed this was already covered in the employee contracts.
- Officers were asked to consider if 3.11 would require a declaration to be signed or if it should be established that no offer of sponsorship or advertising might be

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 12 November 2024

encumbered and called into question.

- It was queried if the climate and health emergencies, alongside other prime examples, should be added to 4.1h.
- On the table of delegations under 5.1, the relevant boxes would need to be updated to reflect the maximum single item expenditure cap for Committees (£7,500) Sub-Committees (£3,750) and the Clerk (£7,500).

*At 12:29 Cllr Coleby proposed to suspend standing orders for fifteen minutes; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.*

Cllr Pearce proposed this policy be revisited in December with officers to provide further suggestions on 3.11; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

### **86. Date of the next meeting**

10 December 2024 - 10:30. If Full Council approves the recommended change to the schedule, then the next meeting would be 9 December 15:00.

### **87. Items for the next agenda and close**

No items were requested.

### **88. 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:**

88.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required – Cllr Rappensberger proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour.

*The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 12:31*

81.1b. To consider legal costs still to be invoiced (confidential) – It was agreed to roll this item over to the next meeting.

81.3a. To consider consultancy costs (some aspects may be confidential) – There was a confidential discussion concerning consultancy costs. Officers would discuss and form a budget recommendation to be considered by the Budget and Loan Working Group and factored into the budget considerations.

*The Committee Clerk left the chamber at 12:35*

84.5. To consider any recommendations from Personnel Committee for expenditure on consultancy services (some aspects may be confidential) –

84.6 To consider a request to provide a Councillor with a Town Council mobile device (some aspects may be confidential) –

84.8 To consider additional procurement advice (some aspects may be confidential) –

*The Chair closed the meeting at 13:09*

Signed: .....

9 December 2024

# **Lowestoft Town Council**

## **Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee**

**First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE**

**10:30 on 12 November 2024**