

Lowestoft Town Council

Full Council Meeting

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

18:30 on 22 October 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum (Mayor), Connor Blowers, Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, John Murray, Christian Newsome, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Senior Committee and Project Clerk)

Also in attendance: Sheila Moss King (Town Hall Project Manager) (remotely) (for part) and Emma Bellward (Marina Theatre Project Manager) (remotely) (for part)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

134. Welcome

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

135. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Janet Craig, Jen Jones, Christine Moore, Paul Page, Keith Patience, John Pitts, Bernadette Rappensberger, Deborah Ray and Nick Webb, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

136. Declarations and dispensations

136.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr Blowers declared he is an employee of the Marina Theatre. Cllr Brooks declared she is a member of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and a financial supporter of Stop Sizewell C. Cllr Parker declared he is a member of East Suffolk Council. Cllr Barker declared she is a member of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Greenpeace.

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

137. The draft minutes and confidential note of the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 8 October 2024

The minutes and confidential were unavailable for this meeting and would be deferred to the next meeting.

138. Public forum

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

139. Finance and Governance

139.1. Receipt and consideration of the following:

139.1a. 2024 – 2025 budget and reserves – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the version supplied as a true and accurate record of the current position; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

139.1b. Any bank reconciliations – There was no update for this meeting.

139.1c. Payments and income for the month ending 30 September 2024 and October 2024 to date (see schedules) – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the income and expenditure reports supplies as a true and accurate record; seconded by Cllr Barker/all in favour.

139.1d. Payments for approval – There were none.

139.2. A request from Cllr Blowers to join the Finance and Governance Committee – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this request; seconded by Cllr Coleby. Cllr Coleby requested to join

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- the Personnel Committee and this would be added to the next Full Council agenda. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.
- 139.3. The draft minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 8 October 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.
- 139.4. The external audit report for the year ending March 2024 – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the external audit report and thanked all staff involved; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.
- 139.5. The interim internal audit report for the year ending March 2025 – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the interim internal audit report and thanked all staff involved; seconded by Cllr Coleby; nine Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.
- 139.6. Setting a target percentage increase for the 2025 – 2026 budget – Figures were not being discussed publicly at this stage, as the budget-setting was still underway. The budget was due to be discussed by the Finance and Governance Committee at its meeting on 12 November, and it should be in a position to at least provide an update to Full Council at that stage. Reports of the requirements from the Facilities and Contracts Manager and Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager should also be received at that meeting. A clearer indication of the precept increase should be known by early December. The draft budget document was not yet in a position for any conclusions to be drawn about percentage increases. Councillors were encouraged to consider joining the Budget and Loan Working Group. Cllr Parker proposed to refer this back to the Budget and Loan Working Group; seconded by Cllr Pearce; nine Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote. It was noted the Working Group would next meet on 4 November, to present a working budget document to the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 12 November.
- 139.7. A delegation to officers to appoint a contractor for the replacement cricket net training area at the Denes Oval, following completion of the procurement process – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this delegation; seconded by Cllr Murray; all in favour.

140. Town Hall Project

- 140.1. The draft minutes of the Extraordinary Town Hall Project Committee meeting on 15 October 2024 – The draft minutes were not available for this meeting.
- 140.2. The delivery stage of the redevelopment of the Town Hall:
- 140.2a. Appointing the main build contractor and approving the issuing of a letter of intent (confidential) –

The Town Hall Project Manager joined the meeting 18:51

This item was to be considered during the confidential session.

Cllr Newsome arrived 18:51

- 140.2b. A progress report from the Project Manager (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllrs had been provided with the report, which contained some confidential aspects. An uplift application had been submitted to the National Lottery Heritage fund. An uplift application to the Public Works Loan Board was also being progressed. Full building control approval had been given for the RIBA 4 designs. It had been formally agreed that the Registrars would be moving into the Town Hall, subject to agreement of a cap on the service charges. In terms of delivering outcomes for the Town Hall, the Registrars would play an important role in bringing footfall to the building on a daily basis.
- 140.2c. Adoption of the Volunteer Policy – Amendments were being applied as agreed by the Town Hall Project Committee. The requirement for references was discussed, and the Committee had agreed to reduce the requirement to one reference. Any volunteers working with vulnerable people may also require a DBS check. The capacity for discretion was discussed, and this would depend on whether the individual was a regular volunteer, or appointed for a 'one-off' piece of work. Cllr Barker proposed to adopt the Town Hall Volunteer Policy, as amended by the Town Hall Project Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. The Town

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Hall Project Manager would join the meeting again for the confidential session.
The Town Hall Project Manager temporarily left the meeting 19:02

141. Marina Theatre

141.1. The draft minutes of the Extraordinary Marina Theatre Project Committee meeting on 30 September 2024 –

*Cllr Blowers temporarily left the meeting 19:02 for the consideration of items under this heading
The Marina Theatre Project Manager joined the meeting 19:03*

The draft minutes were not available for this meeting.

141.2. The Marina Theatre Redevelopment Project:

141.2a. An update on the award of the main build contract (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

141.2b. A progress report from the Project Manager – The UK Power Networks works to reroute the cable under the link were on course to start at the end of October, across six days. This would not impact the Theatre's programming. The existing gas supply had been disconnected. A date had been agreed with Cadent, which had been dependent on securing a permit from National Highways and agreeing traffic arrangements. This had not been achieved and Cadent had to delay the works. This did not affect the project timeline overall, but the Theatre had been left without heating. Options had been discussed and the favoured option was for night works, with traffic management in place. The priority was to secure a date for the works to go ahead. Building Control was happy with the project and had asked to see the current fire strategy. One fire exit would not be usable during the works, and a Fire Consultant was therefore needed to check the balcony capacity. Lowestoft Town Council had approved the quotation and the assessment would be undertaken shortly.

The Marina Theatre Project Manager left the meeting 19:08

141.2c. An update on legal matters (confidential), including:

To be considered during the confidential session.

141.2ci. Licence for Alterations

141.2cii. Towns Fund funding agreement

141.2ciii. Liquidated damages

141.2civ. Existing management agreement to 31 March 2026

141.3. An update on the new lease (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

142. Assets, Inclusion and Development

142.1. The draft minutes of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee meeting on 7 October 2024 –

Cllr Blowers returned 19:08

The draft minutes were received and noted.

143. Planning

143.1. The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting on 10 October 2024 – It was noted this meeting had been inquorate and did not go ahead.

144. Personnel

144.1. The draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting on 3 October 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

144.2. A progress report on job profiling evaluations and further implementation of the three-tier staffing structure (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

144.3. Matters relating to any staff absence (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

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145. Climate and Ecological Emergency

145.1. The draft minutes of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee meeting on 21 October 2024 – The draft minutes were not available for this meeting.

145.2. Recommendations from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee:

145.2a. Asking East Suffolk Council to obtain scientific answers from Sizewell C on coastal erosion and the shortage of water –

Cllr Parker temporarily left the meeting 19:09 for the consideration of this item

It was understood Essex and Suffolk Water had declined applications for business expansions which required more water, due to a water shortage in the Suffolk area. Sizewell C had until 2030 to provide a plan of where its water would be sourced from. Desalination would have issues, such as using a significant amount of energy, being potentially toxic to wildlife, and generally only being used as temporary solution. Cllr Brooks considered East Suffolk Council to have been elected on the basis of being pro-environment and anti-Sizewell C, and would like to see them asking more questions. Cllr Brooks proposed to ask East Suffolk Council to obtain scientific answers from Sizewell C on coastal erosion and the shortage of water; seconded by Cllr Pearce. Cllr Murray supported this, but considered any question asked of East Suffolk Council needed to be specific. Cllr Brooks amended her proposal to approach the Resilient Coast organisation with the same question. In terms of the questions to be raised, the Town Council would like East Suffolk Council to obtain scientific answers from Sizewell C on how it will obtain water supplies to run its operations, how it will prevent or mitigate the impact on coastal erosion through this development and how that proposal would impact existing development plans for the region. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

146. Outside bodies

146.1. Feedback from the East Suffolk Council Quarterly Liaison Meeting on 1 October 2024 and any actions for the Town Council – The notes from the meeting had not yet been finalised. There had been an agreement for representatives from East Suffolk and Lowestoft Town Councils to visit the High Street, including liaison with business owners there, to discuss trading and regeneration. A business owner had made suggestions for improvements to the area. The proposed date for the visit was 22 January. Cllrs Barker, Begum, Coleby, Pearce and Youngman volunteered to attend. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve those attendees; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour. Waste management was also discussed, and it was requested that an item be added to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee agenda when the notes of the meeting are ready, for relevant actions to be picked up, on the condition that discussion would take place during the confidential session of that meeting, as the Quarterly Liaison Meeting was not held in public. The proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) had also been discussed. So far, the Town Council had only considered the issues around these in its Planning Committee meeting, which limited the scope of discussions. It had been agreed that a separate meeting would be held with East Suffolk Council to consider the wider issues around HMOs, including social and regeneration implications. Officers were asked to make the necessary arrangements for the meeting to take place. The Town Council's Planning Committee had recently recommended refusal of an application for an HMO in a conservation area, which had subsequently been approved by the Planning Authority whilst the consultation was still open. The effect of such decisions on the Local Plan would be discussed at the meeting.

146.2. Appointing representatives to the Lowestoft North Cliff Community Garden CIO –

Cllr Parker returned 19:27

The organisation had completed its registration as a charity. A condition of the grant was to appoint a representative from the Town Council. Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Ray, who had already confirmed she would be willing to accept; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in

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favour. The CIO had suggested appointing two Councillors. Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Page, subject to his acceptance; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

147. Legal matters (confidential):

- 147.1. An update report on legal matters – To be considered during the confidential session.
- 147.2. Completion of any land transfer or lease arrangements – To be considered during the confidential session.

148. Date of next meeting

26 November 2024 at 18:30

149. Items for the next agenda and close

The Personnel Committee had suggested a wellbeing survey for Councillors, which would require the support of Full Council. The Acting Town Clerk was working on this and anticipated this would need to go back to the Personnel Committee prior to Full Council consideration. Cllr Pearce proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour.

150. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

150.1. Any matters, including those above as required –
A comfort break was taken 19:32 and the meeting resumed 19:38
The Town Hall Project Manager returned 19:38

- 140.2a. Appointing the Town Hall project main build contractor and approving the issuing of a letter of intent (confidential) – An update was provided by the Project Manager. It was identified that an Extraordinary Full Council meeting would be required in one to two weeks' time.

The Project Manager left the meeting 19:53

- 141.2a. An update on the award of the Marina Theatre project main build contract (confidential) –

Cllr Blowers temporarily left the meeting 19:54, for the consideration of items relating to the Marina Theatre

The Acting Town Clerk and Facilities and Contracts Manager would be attending a meeting at the Theatre the following day.

- 141.2cii. Marina Theatre Towns Fund funding agreement – The Town Council's lawyer had been in liaison with East Suffolk Council and was content that the funding agreement could be amended rather than reissued.
- 141.2ci and 141.2ciii. Licence for Alterations and Liquidated damages – These were being built into one, but there was no update to report.
- 141.3. An update on the new Marina Theatre lease (confidential) – The new lease was being worked on, but there was no update to report.
- 141.2civ. Existing Marina Theatre management agreement to 31 March 2026 – The Acting Town Clerk provided background information for this agenda item. Cllr Pearce made a proposal; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Cllr Blowers returned 20:06

- 144.2. A progress report on job profiling evaluations and further implementation of the three-tier staffing structure (confidential) – Cllr Pearce made a proposal regarding a member of staff's terms and conditions; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Structural changes to the organisation were broadly agreed at the end of January, subject to minor amendments. Cllr Pearce requested that the job titles of line managers be written into staff contracts. All staff who had had a job title change would also receive an updated job description and a letter explaining the updated organisational structure and confirmation of who they will report to. Cllr Pearce requested a discussion later in the meeting about further organisational change, without officers present.

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144.3. Matters relating to any staff absence (confidential) – Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Brooks; seven Councillors voted in favour; four Councillors abstained from the vote.

Cllr Pearce made a further confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Begum; ten Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against.

147.1. An update report on legal matters – A report had been provided to Councillors, to note.

Cllr Parker left the meeting 20:29

Cllr Pearce proposed to make additions to the legal document to be delivered under that schedule, and provided details. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

Thanks were offered to the staff for arranging and facilitating the recent asset tour.

The Acting Town Clerk and Senior Committee and Project Clerk left the meeting 20:35 for the remaining agenda items

Signed:

26 November 2024