

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
19:00 on 2 December 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Robert Breakspear (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Jen Jones, John Murray, Andy Pearce and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Lauren Elliott (Senior Committee and Project Clerk)

Public: No members of the public were in attendance

103. Welcome

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

104. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Christian Newsome and Bernadette Rappensberger, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

105. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

105.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from Councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr Pearce declared he is the Chair of the Gunton Residents' Association.

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

106. The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 4 November 2024

Cllr Brooks proposed to approve the minutes and confidential note, but queried why the minuting of the alternative proposal for the drying racks was vague. An 'in-house' option had been discussed, and officers had been asked to provide costs as a comparison to the quotation received from an external body. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

107. Public forum

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

108. Monitor expenditure by this Committee and its Sub-Committees from their delegated budgets

There were no comments.

109. Parks and Open Spaces:

109.1. The draft minutes of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee meeting on 19 November 2024 – There were no comments.

110. Events and Communications:

110.1. The draft minutes of the Events and Communications Sub-Committee meeting on 27 November 2024 – There were no comments.

110.2. A request from Cllr Coleby to join the Events and Communications Sub-Committee – Cllr Jones proposed to approve this request; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

110.3. Recommendations from the Events and Communications Sub-Committee:

110.3a. Holding a 10K Race event in 2025 as a major event – The event had been proposed by the Sports Development Officer. Cllr Brooks proposed to approve the event. It was noted that a £10,000 maximum budget had been

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recommended for upfront costs, though it was anticipated the event would become self-funding with the charging of an entry fee. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal and requested the addition of an item on the Finance and Governance Committee's agenda to consider approval of the £10,000 maximum budget, and a delegation to officers to organise the event. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

110.3b. Making Suffolk Day 2025 a major event and allowing Lowestoft Town Council to host and consider major budget and allocation – The organiser of the event had spoken with the Events and Communications Sub-Committee the previous week. Suffolk Day occurred on the same day as the First Light Festival, and the Events and Communications Sub-Committee had discussed the interaction between the two events. The Events and Communications Sub-Committee had recommended to approve the Suffolk Day event, on the condition it is a standalone and separate event to the First Light Festival, hosted at an alternative location, though the two events would work co-operatively and signpost to one another. Cllr Brooks proposed to endorse the Events and Communications Sub-Committee's recommendation; seconded by Cllr Pearce. The Town Council had been asked to host the event on its land and contribute funding, but not to organise the event. It was requested that detail of what the Town Council is being asked to fund be provided to the Finance and Governance Committee to consider. Six Councillors voted in favour of the proposal; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

111. Allotments

111.1. The draft minutes of the Allotments Sub-Committee meeting on 20 November 2024 – There were no comments.

112. Community Safety

112.1. The draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting on 20 November 2024 – There were no comments.

112.2. The impact of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill (Martyn's Law) – A meeting paper had been provided. In the meeting paper, the Committee had been asked to consider making four specific recommendations to Full Council, which Cllr Pearce read out. It was recognised there would be logistical and financial implications for the Town Council, and specific implications for the Town Council's tenants, including the Marina Theatre Trust and Town Hall. Contingency budgeting for additional security measures would need to be considered. With regard to the fourth recommendation, Cllr Pearce suggested it would be prudent for this Committee, as the parent Committee, to grant a delegation to the Community Safety Sub-Committee, to enable it to liaise with other Committees as required. On the staff side, it was suggested the Events and Office Manager and the Facilities and Contracts Manager should take the lead, and in the case of the Facilities and Contracts Manager, to ensure the compliance of the Town Council's tenanted buildings with the new legislation. Cllr Coleby did not agree with event organisers being passed the responsibility of anti-terrorism work, when they were not receiving briefings on this. Cllr Pearce made the following recommendations to Full Council regarding the Bill:

- Council welcomes the intent behind Bill, but is cautious - pending further information - regarding the implications logistically and financially for a Parish Council; but confirms its commitment to optimising its risk management of public security/safety for moral, legal and practical reasons, even where the operation might fall outside of scope.
- Council continues to monitor the progress and likely impacts of the Bill, reviews any emerging guidance and liaises with partners as appropriate on the

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introduction of reasonable measures; and

- Council reviews its existing public security/safety measurement at premises and events (ahead and subsequent to the legislation coming into force), including how it interacts with tenants, event organisers/venue hirers and considers implementing enhanced procedures with defined responsibilities (recognising that there will be some cost implications).
- Council confirms that the Community Safety Committee is the lead Committee for this purpose and will liaise with other committees as necessary. Designated staff owners will be the Events and Office Manager (primarily for open spaces) and the Facilities and Contracts Manager (in relation to the implications, including physical implications, for buildings).

Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

112.3.A request from Cllr Coleby to join the Community Safety Sub-Committee – Cllr Jones proposed approval of this request; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

113. The Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee's relationship to its Sub-Committees

Cllr Brooks had provided notes and considered the Committees and Sub-Committees may not be as effective as they could be. Cllr Brooks considered the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee and AID Committee had become repetitious of one another, and suggested the AID Committee have more of a focus on built assets, whilst Parks and Open Spaces could become a Committee itself and focus on planting, ponds trees and allotments. Cllr Brooks suggested to move the responsibility for inclusion to the Events and Communications Sub-Committee.

It was noted that the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee already had the responsibility for horticulture and trees in its Terms of Reference. High value projects, such as play areas, would always require Full Council approval. The AID Committee had responsibility for liaison with Friends and stakeholder groups and would therefore need to retain the inclusion element of its brief. It was considered that some overlap between a Committee and its Sub-Committees would be inevitable, but if Parks and Open Spaces were to become a Committee it may be difficult to decide where certain items should be considered. It was considered that management of allotments was subject to different legislation, and the Sub-Committee would therefore not easily be subsumed into another Committee or Sub-Committee. It was anticipated the work of the Community Safety Sub-Committee would increase, with the consideration of the provision of CCTV and the impact of Martyn's Law.

Whilst it was considered that the current structure was functional if respected, it was agreed an increase to the per-item expenditure limit of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee would reduce the number of items requiring the subsequent approval of the AID Committee. Cllr Pearce suggested an increase to £6,000, to be monitored over the next six months. Cllr Coleby suggested an increase to £7,500. Cllr Pearce proposed to increase the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee's per-item expenditure limit to £7,500 and review after six months, with monitoring to take place in the interim; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour. With regard to the Committee and Sub-Committee structure, Cllr Pearce proposed for the structure to remain unchanged for now and be reviewed in May, with the Standing Orders and Policies Working Group to review this ahead of May, with officer input, and make recommendations to Full Council via the Finance and Governance Committee, with any proposed changes to take effect from the new civic year. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

114. Budget requirements for the 2025-2026 financial year and make a recommendation to Budget and Loan Working Group for consideration

114.1.Feedback from the Sports Development Survey stand-alone meeting and consider relevant actions and budget requirements – A meeting paper had been provided.

Priorities needed to be identified, and it was suggested another standalone meeting to

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discuss the priorities of the five-year plans should be held. A running track, possible access to netball facilities and additional outdoor fitness equipment had been identified as key points. Cllr Pearce requested for the raw data from the sports development survey to be circulated, and advised the five-year planning would need to work within the available capital budget.

- 114.2. Priorities of the Ness Park projects and scheduling into the Five-Year Plans – A standalone meeting to discuss priorities for the five-year plans was requested, however, the Senior Committee and Project Clerk noted that time was running out for recommendations to be made to inform budgeting for 2025 – 2026, and considered that the drying racks was the most developed of the projects proposed for The Ness. Though information was pending from officers with regard to an ‘in-house’ option, Cllr Pearce considered contingency allowance should be made in the budget for the works on the drying racks to proceed, in line with the results of the public survey, which could be sourced from more than one budget. The sea wall mural would depend on the outcome of the ongoing legal work. With regard to the coastal garden, Landscape Designers who had been approached had submitted quotations for several thousand pounds to produce detailed designs. It had since been discussed that the Grounds Maintenance Team should develop a small experimental coastal garden area themselves, which could be expanded upon if successful. Officers were asked to put together an indicative proposal on design and location. It was considered that a meeting was required to give an overview of all the proposed projects across the Town Council’s assets, to determine where they then should be scheduled into the plans. It was agreed a standalone meeting should take place before Christmas and another in January, before the budget is finalised. A parks annual calendar, designed by Cllr Coleby, to inform preparation of projects, budgeting and scheduling, would be considered by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee.
- 114.3. Plans and costs for the site adjacent to the Triangle Market and scheduling into the Five-Year Plans – The Committee was supportive of the officer recommendations for the play panels, but preferred the shaped bench design incorporating planters, which had been suggested for this site when the ‘Happy to Chat’ bench concept was being considered. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the staff recommendation for the play panels, as set out in the meeting, for the array of six panels, plus the individual ones. The cost of this would be just under £5,500, and Cllr Pearce proposed for this expenditure to be met from the parks capital budget. With regard to the benches, Cllr Pearce proposed for officers to provide costs for the bench design as discussed previously, and provide this to the next Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee meeting. The durability of the play panels was discussed. Similar designs had lasted well in other play areas. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. It was suggested there should be no more than six planters at the site, including the two which would be part of the bench. It was agreed for the planters to be considered by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee also, to ensure the design was complementary to the bench.
- 114.4. The timetable for procurement of a pump track – An indicative cost had been received. Scheduling the project into the five-year plans was to be considered. The Town Council would not be able to directly fund the project in one year, but external funding may be an option. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to progress the pump track in principle, with officers to seek further information on the process and project timetable, which may also be informed by the tender process, where bidders would inform the Town Council of their timescales. The specialist contractor whom the Town Council had met with had also provided an indicative cost for a secondary pump track at another site. As part of the tender process, bidders could be invited to submit proposals for a secondary site. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

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115. Details of the condition of the play surface of the multi-use games areas and any recommendations for improvements

The outcomes of the most recent inspections of multi-use games areas (MUGAs) had been provided, and no significant issues had been found. Cllr Murray had undertaken a visit to the Clarkes Lane site, where users of the MUGA had requested a softer surface, which may also benefit other sites. Committee members found some of the independent inspection findings alarming, particularly as the inspection reports had recommended no actions, and officers were asked to seek clarity on these findings. Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the officer recommendation to schedule in the recommended works or seek quotations if required, and to determine the severity of the risks identified. Even where the MUGA surfaces have been identified as requiring no urgent works, Cllr Pearce further proposed to ask officers to explore any options for a softer/rubberised surface without having to break out the concrete. The Senior Committee and Project Clerk explained the risk was determined by the severity versus the likelihood of it happening. Any issues which could be rectified by the Grounds Maintenance Team were tended to as soon as possible following the inspections being carried out. The Grounds Maintenance Team undertook their own regular inspections, in addition to quarterly inspections being undertaken by an independent professional body and annual inspections being undertaken by another independent professional body. Cllr Murray seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

116. The installation of fencing around the proposed community garden in Gunton Community Park

Cllr Brooks endorsed officer comments, that it would be problematic to call the area a community garden if it were to be fenced off. Cllr Youngman suggested monitoring the site for any issues and considering a gated fence which could be locked at night, if necessary. Cllr Brooks proposed to accept the officer recommendation not to install a fence at this stage, but monitor the situation to see if it becomes necessary. Cllr Coleby suggested the planting itself could create a defined boundary for the garden. A meeting between The Conservation Volunteers and the Grounds Maintenance Team was being organised. It was unclear which and how many members of the community had made the request for the fence. The Senior Committee and Project Clerk had asked The Conservation Volunteers for more information, and had subsequently been informed there was a public desire for the site to be fenced so it could become an exercise area for dogs. The Committee agreed that a community garden was not the appropriate site for this, and it seemed the intended purpose of the community garden had already become unclear. At 21:00, Cllr Pearce proposed to suspend Standing Order 3y for a maximum of fifteen minutes, to allow the meeting to continue; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Cllr Coleby advised there was a community garden at Kessingland which worked well and could provide inspiration for this project. The Committee agreed it would wish to support the space as a community area. A safe space for dogs to exercise would need to be considered as a separate item and should not share the same space as a community garden. Cllr Pearce seconded Cllr Brooks' proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

117. The purchase of replacement communications equipment for the Marina Theatre

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of this item; seconded by Cllr Pearce, who added that expenditure should be taken from the Marina Theatre repairs and maintenance budget. All Councillors voted in favour.

118. The requirement for a replacement ride-on mower and make a recommendation to Full Council on the purchase of a different model at a cost of £14,480 + VAT

The Police had recovered the equipment. It was understood it was in the same condition and the Grounds Maintenance Team would be able to make do with the equipment they had in the meantime. The Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager had identified a need for

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mowers at Normanston Park and Sparrows Nest. Cllr Pearce had asked him to confirm if this mower was one of the new ones or one of the inherited mowers from the previous grounds maintenance contractor, and if the request for a replacement was therefore approved, would there be a requirement to only replace three mowers in the coming year, bringing the total to seven mowers, or would this be an increase to eight mowers in total, with a requirement to replace four in the coming year. Cllr Pearce requested an answer to this question, with the item needing to go to Full Council for approval anyway, due to the amount.

119. Improving the accessible entrance at Links Road Car Park

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of this item; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour. Expenditure was to be taken from the parks capital budget.

120. A quote for fencing around the Sparrows Nest bowls greens (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Brooks did not support the design of the fencing, and considered consultation with the Bowls Club would be required, particularly as the site is in the conservation area. Cllr Breakspear would not support fencing the bowls greens at all. Given the damage and anti-social behaviour, Cllr Jones considered fencing may be worthwhile. Cllr Pearce agreed that whilst fencing would not be ideal, continual repairs to the bowling greens were expensive and time consuming. Cllr Pearce proposed for this item to be considered by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, with officers asked to liaise with East Suffolk Council regarding the conservation area, and give advice on how installation of the fence would be affected by the public footpaths and steep bank. Cllr Coleby suggested planting could be used to soften the look of the fence. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

121. A recommendation to Full Council for the repair of the Euroscope (some aspects may be confidential)

An answer regarding land ownership was required from East Suffolk Council. Cllr Pearce proposed for a confidential item to be added to the Full Council agenda, for this item to be considered if required, in light of any advice received from East Suffolk Council in the meantime.

122. Date of the next meeting

Monday 6 January 2025 – 19:00

123. Items for the next agenda and close

Councillors were asked to send any requests to the office.

There were no confidential items for consideration and the meeting was closed at 21:16.

124. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

124.1. To consider any legal issues, including those above as required:

Signed:

6 January 2025