

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 5 December 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Jen Jones, John Murray, Christian Newsome (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger and Nick Webb

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

95. Welcome

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

96. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Keith Patience and Elise Youngman, with reasons provided. Cllr Jones proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour. Cllr Parker advised he would need to leave at 11:40.

97. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

97.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from Councillors on items on the agenda – There were none.

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

98. The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 7 November 2024

Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

99. Public forum

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

100. Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget

The Acting Town Clerk had requested an update from the Finance Manager.

101. An external report relating to data protection (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

102. Staffing:

102.1. A report on the implementation of the grounds maintenance staffing structure and any required revisions (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

102.2. Making a recommendation to Full Council on staff terms and conditions (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

103. An update on a proposal to assist with the implementation of the Councillor Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy (some aspects may be confidential)

The action to arrange bespoke training was in hand. The first meeting would be held in January.

104. A programme of Councillor training and building this into the Council's Training and Development Policy

The Training and Development Policy and Terms of Reference for a couple of the Committees stipulated statutory training requirements, such as members of the Planning Committee being

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required to undertake planning training within three months of the joining the Committee, and the Mayor and Chair of the Personnel Committee, and their respective Deputies, being required to undertake appraisals training. When looking at governance and Councillor wellbeing, a lot of this comes down to how meetings are Chaired, however there was currently no requirement for Councillors to undertake Chairperson training, and it was suggested this should be built in for the start of the new Council year and open to all Councillors. It was suggested members of the Personnel Committee should also receive appropriate training for dealing with employment matters. Cllr Barker proposed for members of the Personnel Committee to be required to undertake personnel training. Outcomes of the training must then be applied, which would include Chairs ensuring the application of Standing Orders and Clerks supporting them to do this. With more courses becoming available, it was suggested Councillors should explore options and advise of any training they would like to do, and it was suggested a matrix could be developed to show the training available, what is mandatory and what is beneficial, referenced against each Committee. Training courses offered by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils was added to the Councillor Update every week. Cllrs Brooks suggested that training to identify the roles of Town Councillors and staff, and the interaction with District and County Councillors would be beneficial for new Councillors. Cllr Coleby suggested experienced Councillors could act as mentors. Cllr Barker amended her proposal to include Cllr Brooks' suggestion, and Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal. The Good Councillors' Guide was provided as standard to all new Councillors. The vote was taken and ten Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote. It was suggested a review of the Council's performance and functionality could form part of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy. It was considered officers should intervene more should meetings become disruptive, and refer the Chair to section two of Standing Orders. Any training would need to build in flexibility for Councillors who work.

105. Date of the next meeting

The meeting had been scheduled for 2 January 2025. The Acting Town Clerk would not be able to attend. Outcomes from the Full Council meeting on 17 December may inform the date. Officers would contact members to agree a meeting date.

106. Items for the next agenda and close

Councillors were asked to send any requests to the office.

Cllr Webb proposed to move the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

Regarding item 100, the Finance Manager had confirmed the year-end estimate was the same as the last meeting, and there had been no expenditure from the contingency budget.

107. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

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

101. An external report relating to data protection (confidential) – The report had been circulated. The training would be taking place prior to December's Full Council meeting. It was clarified that the training was webinar-based, but it was considered it would be beneficial, where possible, for Councillors to undertake and discuss the training together. Any Councillor who could not attend in person would be provided with the link.

102.1. A report on the implementation of the grounds maintenance staffing structure and any required revisions (confidential) – The grounds maintenance staffing structure was displayed at the meeting and explained. The structure and function of the Buildings Maintenance team was explained. A new member of staff had joined the team recently. An additional Toilet Caretaker had been appointed. It was clarified that the Team Leader covered buildings and grounds maintenance.

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The structure and function of the Horticulture team was explained. The resourcing of certain parks was discussed. Officers requested to retain the hours of a recently retired member of staff in the salary bill, and requested a delegation to do what officers think best in terms of appropriate cover for a park which would be without a designated member of the team. Officers considered that the appointment of two additional seasonal litter pickers would be beneficial. This would be in addition to retaining the hours of the retired member of staff at Normanston Park. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to support this request. It was not a policy decision of the Council to have members of the Grounds Maintenance Team designated to specific sites, and a decision on whether or not to do this would be for relevant managers. Cllr Pearce endorsed the recommendation of officers to retain the hours of the retired member of staff in the salary budget and in the Grounds Maintenance Team staffing structure, to give officers the discretion to backfill as appropriate, and endorse the staff recommendation to appoint two additional litter pickers. The staffing structure did not quite match the budget with regard to another site, following the retirement of another member of staff earlier in the year. One member of the Grounds Maintenance Team would be based there during the summer season. Deployment of the team would be an operational decision for managers. Cllr Webb seconded Cllr Pearce’s proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. The possibility of the Town Council offering apprenticeships had been discussed earlier in the year. Officers were asked to check with the Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager and Facilities and Contracts Manager if this would be something they would like to explore. A work experience placement with the Grounds Maintenance Team earlier in the year had been successful.

102.2. Making a recommendation to Full Council on staff terms and conditions (confidential) –

The Senior Committee and Project Clerk left the meeting 10:41 for the consideration of this item

Signed: