

Lowestoft Town Council

Full Council Meeting

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

18:30 on 30 May 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Nasima Begum (Mayor), Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Jen Jones, Christine Moore, John Murray, Christian Newsome, Andy Pearce, John Pitts, Bernadette Rappensberger, Deborah Ray, Nick Webb and Elise Youngman

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

Public: There was one member of the public in attendance (in person). Cllr Coleby was in attendance via Zoom webinar.

23. Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained, and the meeting was welcomed. Cllr Begum extended her thanks to Cllr Barker for her work as the Mayor over the past year. Cllr Begum advised the Council that meetings would be run in accordance with its adopted Standing Orders. The Mayor or Chair of the meeting would be responsible for managing the order in which members spoke, and the repetition of points already made was discouraged. Members were reminded they should only speak once on an agenda item, for a maximum of three minutes, and were reminded to act in accordance with the Nolan Principles. Cllr Brooks queried the rule on only speaking once to an agenda item, and was advised this was a provision in Standing Orders.

24. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sonia Barker, Connor Blowers, Neil Coleby, Janet Craig, Paul Page, Graham Parker and Keith Patience, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

25. Declarations and dispensations

25.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr Brooks declared she is a supporter of Stop Sizewell C, which may be relevant to item 34.1a. Regarding item 34.1b, Cllr Ray declared she is a member of the Use Your Voice group. Cllr Moore declared she is an employee of East Suffolk Council.

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

26. The draft minutes of the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 14 May 2024 and the Annual Meeting on 21 May 2024 and the confidential notes of the Full Council meetings on 9 and 23 April 2024

Cllr Pearce had sent in comments regarding the allotments lease item from the 9 April confidential note. The Acting Town Clerk advised this would be reviewed and brought back to the next meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the other minutes and confidential notes as listed in the agenda item; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

27. Public forum

No advance comments had been received. Cllr Coleby was in attendance via Zoom webinar. Matt Stebbings from the Suffolk County Football Association was in attendance regarding item 31.3. Mr Stebbings had received an invitation from Cllr Pitts to speak to the Council regarding improvements to the facilities at Normanston Park. The refurbishment of the changing rooms had first been considered approximately eighteen months previously, and Mr Stebbings considered there was a need for equal access and wider opportunities beyond men's football. Normanston Park had seen a decline in the number of teams using the site. An increase in the number of pitches would support a larger number of teams, and Mr Stebbings had provided some information ahead of the meeting to outline potential funding sources. From this, it was

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hoped there would be potential to explore refurbishment of the changing rooms. which could also support the refurbishment of the changing rooms. A survey had been circulated to the current clubs approximately eighteen months ago, to establish what facilities they would like to see at the site, but there had not been a good response rate. There were however new teams looking to use Normanston Park. Mr Stebbings gave details of the Football Foundation's Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund, and advised it may be able to offer grant funding towards the changing rooms, especially if the intention was to use them to support other sports. The Town Council had already committed to this in principle and had set some funding aside. Ongoing maintenance requirements would need to be understood, which would require input from the Town Council's facilities staff. It was understood a delegation had been approved for officers to make a decision regarding the marking out of the additional pitches ahead of the new season.

28. Finance and Governance

28.1. The following recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee:

28.1a. The Town Council's IT Policy and reminding Councillors of the provisions in the policy regarding email usage – Councillors were reminded to familiarise themselves with policy, particularly with regard to excessive emails.

28.1b. Renewing the existing Financial Regulations for two months (from the Annual Meeting to July 2024), noting it may be obsolete in parts given the new Model Financial Regulations – This had been resolved at the Annual Meeting, but Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the recommendation of the Committee; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

28.1c. The purchase of two mowers, from the ring-fenced £20,000 budget in the capital earmarked reserves – Cllr Brooks proposed approval of this item; seconded by Cllr Pearce. Budget provision had already been made for the purchase. Staff had advised there was a requirement for six mowers and had four currently, which were nearing end of life. An item would be added to the agenda for the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee to consider budgeting for the purchase of four replacement mowers next year. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

28.2. Receipt and consideration of the following:

28.2a. 2024 – 2025 budget and reserves – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the budget document provided as a true and accurate record of the latest position; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

28.2b. Any bank reconciliations – It was noted that April's bank reconciliation was still to be done.

28.2c. Payments and income for the month ending 30 April 2024 and May 2024 to date (see schedules) – Cllr Youngman proposed to accept the income and expenditure reports provided as a true and accurate record of the current position; seconded by Cllr Jones; twelve Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

28.2d. Payments for approval – There were none.

29. Town Hall Project

29.1. The delivery stage of the redevelopment of the Town Hall:

29.1a. A progress report from the Project Manager –

The Town Hall Project Manager joined the meeting via Zoom 19:01

The Project Manager's report had been provided. Aside from the main tender, the RIBA Stage 4 drawings had been completed. There had been a presentation on the draft designs for the interpretation.

29.2. Approving the main-build tender documentation – This had been due to go out in mid-May, but the Project Manager had taken the decision – in consultation with the Quantity Surveyor, Design Team and the Procurement Consultant - to delay its issue until the week commencing 24 June. This would enable the development of a fully peer-reviewed Bill of

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Quantities. The Project Manager explained its meaning. It was now estimated that the opening of the Town Hall would be around May 2026. The Project Manager requested a delegation to the Project Committee to review and approve the issuing of the tender. The responsibility for appointment of the contractor would remain with Full Council. Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate authority to the Project Committee to read through and give its consent to the final version of the tender, on the understanding that if no agreement could be reached on the price/quality weighting it would come back to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger. Cllr Brooks requested clarity on the price/quality weighting and was given an explanation from Cllr Pearce. Cllr Pearce was concerned that other discussions were taking place whilst he was trying to give his explanation, and at 19:09 the livestream of the meeting was temporarily paused whilst Cllr Begum called the meeting to order again. The livestream resumed at 19:11. The Project Manager would like the Project Committee to consider the scoring mechanism, which was part of the reason for the request for the delegation. The vote was taken on the earlier proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. It was noted East Suffolk Council were intending to charge rent for the compound for the new substation, and Cllr Pearce had asked for this to be challenged, a stance which was supported by one of the East Suffolk Council delegates on the Project Committee. The Chief Executive Officer had previously promised full co-operation. A proposed figure for the rent had not yet been given.

The Town Hall Project Manager left the meeting 19:16

30. Marina Theatre

30.1. The Marina Theatre Redevelopment Project:

30.1a. A progress report from the Project Manager –

The Marina Theatre Project Manager joined the meeting via Zoom 19:16

A highlight report had been provided. Design team meetings with the architect had continued and the mid-point review was approaching. This would include presentation of the detailed plans, plus up-to-date costs and timeframe. This will enable consideration of whether the project can be delivered within the budget and timeframe. Survey work quotes have been received. The Project Manager had been liaising with Suffolk Wildlife Trust regarding the ecology assessment for the building. No money had yet been spent from the Towns Fund funding as the grant agreement was being finalised. The Town Council had paid the first instalment to the architect and had paid for some of the survey work, which would be reimbursed. Project risk was considered by the Project Committee at its last meeting. The Project Manager would not be available for the next meeting but would provide a highlight report.

30.2. An update on the lease to the Marina Theatre Trust (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

30.3. Receipt of the party wall survey report regarding the East Suffolk Council Marina Centre/Marina Theatre Box Office building –

The Marina Theatre Project Manager left the meeting 19:21

The report had been uploaded to the members' area but had not been seen by all members. It was explained that it was an independent and impartial survey, conducted to give the current condition of the party wall at the start of the project. It was confirmed the Marina Theatre Trust had received the report also.

30.4. Requirements for repairs to gas supply to the Marina Theatre and potential replacement of boiler and heating system. Consideration of the application of Financial Regulations to engage existing consultants and contractors to deliver required solutions – There was an issued with the gas supply going into the theatre. The works could be done in conjunction with any other works which go ahead as part of the improvement project. There were provisions in the Town Council's Financial Regulations (11.1a(i) and 11.1a(iv)), which would enable liaison with contractors on site undertaking RIBA 4 works, to seek their opinion on the most cost-effective measures to resolve the issue. Under the provisions of

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Financial Regulations 11.1a(i) and 11.1a(iv), Cllr Brooks proposed to approve engaging an existing consultant to carry out the works needed, without going out to competitive tender, subject to alternative energy solutions being considered as part of this; seconded by Cllr Pearce; twelve Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

- 30.5. Expenditure of up to £18,000 to replace internal fire doors, and delegate authority to the Finance and Governance Committee to determine the budget allocation – Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the expenditure to enable this important health and safety work to proceed, and to delegate authority to the Finance and Governance Committee to determine the budget allocation, once there is an indicative cost of the heating and ventilation works arising from the previous item; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 30.6. Budgeting for refurbishment of the Marina Theatre stage – This had arisen from the Quarterly Liaison Meeting with the Marina Theatre Trust and had been discussed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee. It was understood works to maintain the stage had to take place every three to five years, at a cost of £10,000 - £12,000, with the works having last been completed in 2019. Cllr Pearce proposed to budget to a maximum of £12,000, provisionally from the Marina Theatre capital budget, though this may be subject to change, depending on the cost of the heating and ventilation works, and to ask the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee to put £2,000 - £2,500 aside every year so that the funds are available for these works every five years; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

31. Assets, Inclusion and Development

- 31.1. A request from Cllr Pitts to join the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee – Cllr Jones proposed approval of this request; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 31.2. Recommendations from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee:
- 31.2a. The agreement of the year one priorities under the five-year plans – Cllr Brooks to endorse the recommendations of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee and the AID Committee regarding the first year priorities of the five year plans, and thanked those who had been involved in progressing the projects identified; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 31.3. A proposal from the Suffolk County Football Association relating to Normanston Park – At its meeting on 14 May, the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee had approved a delegation to officers to liaise with Cllr Pitts and the Suffolk County Football Association following their meeting, with a ring-fenced budget of £1,000 approved, should officers see fit to approve the pitch-marking costs. Cllr Pitts declared he is a Committee member of the Suffolk County Football Association but was not involved in facilities development. The Acting Town Clerk considered Cllrs Pitts did have an interest in this item and advised he should leave the room.

Cllr Pitts temporarily left the meeting 19:37 for the consideration of this item

Cllr Begum considered this would require a significant amount of work, and suggested a delegation to the AID Committee. Rather than be constrained by the AID Committee's meeting schedule, Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate authority to officers to arrange a meeting with Mr Stebbings, the Town Council's facilities staff and any Councillors who would like to be involved, with staff to make a decision on whether to accept the funding and proceed with the pitch marking, based on whether it aligns with the Town Council's ethos and in-principle commitment, and does not confer any long-term financial obligations on the Town Council, aside from the ongoing maintenance. The delegation did not extend to capital expenditure at this time. Cllr Begum seconded the proposal. Cllr Brooks suggested a Working Group could be formed to consider this, however a delegation could not be given to a Working Group and all Councillors would be given the opportunity to attend the meeting. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

Mr Stebbings left the meeting 19:40

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Cllr Pitts returned 19:40

32. Planning

- 32.1. The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting on 23 May 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.
- 32.2. An update on the Neighbourhood Development Plan – The SEA and HRA screenings had been received from East Suffolk Council, as the Local Planning Authority, and there were some comments to work through. The Plan was reaching a critical stage and an item would be added to the Planning Committee’s next agenda to consider forming a Neighbourhood Development Plan Sub-Committee.

33. Personnel

- 33.1. Recommendations from the Personnel Committee:
 - 33.1a. Adopting and issuing revised model contracts of employment (some aspects may be confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.
 - 33.1b. Adopting the staff handbook – Cllr Pearce proposed to adopt the staff handbook, subject to the content of policies which relate to staff only being contained within the handbook, rather than as standalone policies, and the cross-references to those policies therefore being removed in the handbook. Staff were working through this and making the relevant changes to the handbook. Cllr Jones seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.
 - 33.1c. Approving a delegation to the Personnel Committee for it to make expenditure from the staff contingency budget, with a per-item expenditure limit of £2,500 – Cllr Pearce clarified this would not be for staff pay, but for single items of expenditure. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the delegation as per the agenda item; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.
- 33.2. Any matters relating to staff absence (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.
- 33.3. Staff terms and conditions for 2024/25 (confidential) - To be considered during the confidential session.

34. Outside bodies

- 34.1a. Cllr Ray’s report from the First Light Festival Steering Group meeting on 11 April 2024 – It was noted that the Police had raised questions regarding the presence of Sizewell C at the event, and it was understood that no representatives from Stop Sizewell C or Together Against Sizewell C had been invited. The organisers had not received negative feedback about Sizewell C’s presence and considered it would provide visitors the opportunity to engage with them, should they wish.
- 34.1b. Cllr Murray’s report from the ‘Threat Posed to Coastal Communities by Flooding Risk’ meeting on 25 April 2024 – Cllr Murray noted there may have been some errors with the costs quoted in his report. It was noted that some of the political parties had plans and Cllr Murray suggested appropriate engagement following the election. Cllr Murray proposed for this to be considered further by the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee; seconded by Cllr Begum. The representative from the Town and Country Planning Association who had presented previously considered that the Waveney Local Plan was not climate resilient in the longer term. The Local Plan was premised on the flood barrier being in place, which had now been postponed indefinitely, therefore undermining the climate resilience of the Plan. The Town Council had requested input into the review of the Local Plan but had been ignored. Cllr Pearce proposed to add to the items to be discussed with the East Suffolk Planning Alliance how the Town Council is treated when it asks for consultation and input into items of major local importance. The vote was taken on Cllr Murray’s earlier proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. Cllr Brooks seconded Cllr Pearce’s proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.
- 34.1c. An update from the Lowestoft Town Council representatives on the Lowestoft Charity

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Board (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllr Pearce had provided the minutes of the meeting, rather than a report. It was agreed to circulate the minutes and bring any queries back to the next Full Council meeting.

34.1d. Any outstanding matters from the Annual Meeting regarding appointments to outside bodies – There were no appointments to be made at this meeting. Officers were checking the status of those which had been queried at the Annual Meeting and were compiling details about what each of the outside bodies does.

35. Legal matters (some aspects may be confidential):

All items under this heading to be considered during the confidential session.

35.1. Renewal of an existing tenant's lease (confidential)

35.2. Signing of the lease for Unit 2 (confidential)

35.3. The draft allotments lease (confidential)

35.4. Completion of land transfer matters (confidential) for the following:

35.4a. Pakefield Green play area

35.4b. Lowestoft Cemetery toilets

35.5. An update report on legal matters (confidential)

36. Date of next meeting

25 June 2024 at 18:30

37. Items for the next agenda and close

Cllr Murray requested an item to consider installing Microsoft Office on Councillors' laptops. It was agreed this should be considered by the Finance and Governance Committee and officers were asked to seek an estimate of the cost.

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

38. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

38.1. Any matters, including those above as required:

A comfort break was taken 20:02 and the meeting resumed 20:08

30.2. An update on the lease to the Marina Theatre Trust (confidential) – This was discussed at the Quarterly Liaison Meeting with the Marina Theatre Trust, following the receipt of further advice from the lawyer, and an update was provided. Officers were asked to review the section in the funding agreement which referred to the new lease.

33.1a. Adopting and issuing revised model contracts of employment (some aspects may be confidential) – The Personnel Committee had made this recommendation. All staff would be issued with new model contracts of employment, which would bring them up to date with any changes in employment law. Cllr Brooks proposed to endorse the recommendation of the Personnel Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

33.2. Any matters relating to staff absence (confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk provided an update. The Personnel Committee would be considering matters relating to staff absence.

33.3. Staff terms and conditions for 2024/25 (confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk would be putting a meeting paper to the Personnel Committee. Any proposed changes relating to staff pay or terms and conditions would be brought to the next Full Council meeting.

35.1. Renewal of an existing tenant's lease (confidential) – A legal update paper had been provided. The Acting Town Clerk provided an update on an existing tenant's lease.

35.2. Signing of the lease for Unit 2 (confidential) – The lawyer had provided comments on the licence and alterations. There was a discussion regarding the service charge, which the lawyer would take forward.

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35.3. The draft allotments lease (confidential) – A lease for the Stradbroke Road site had been agreed. The management fee the Town Council pays to the Allotments Association had already been approved and would be index-linked. There as a discussion regarding the rent review cycle.

35.4. Completion of land transfer matters (confidential) for the following:

35.4a. Pakefield Green play area – With regard to items 35.4a and 35.4b, Cllr Begum proposed to note the completion of these land transfer matters and approve the signing of the land transfer paperwork by the Mayor and Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

35.4b. Lowestoft Cemetery toilets – This was included with the previous item.

35.5. An update report on legal matters (confidential) – It was noted there was one minute of the meeting remaining. The Acting Town Clerk advised there were no urgent decisions needed under this item. Cllr Begum proposed to defer this item; seconded by Cllr Youngman. Cllr Brooks preferred to suspend Standing Orders to extend the meeting. It had been agreed previously that an Extraordinary Meeting would be called for any item deferred more than once. It was noted there was a mistake on the document, as a later Council decision had been overlooked. Cllr Pearce had also submitted comments regarding another property. Cllr Begum proposed to defer this agenda item to an Extraordinary Meeting; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The meeting was closed at 20:34.

Signed:

25 June 2024