

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Full Council Meeting

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

18:30 on 23 July 2024

### MINUTES

**Present:** Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum (Mayor), Connor Blowers, Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Graham Parker, Keith Patience, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger, Nick Webb and Elise Youngman

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

**Also in attendance (via Zoom):** Sheila Moss King (Town Hall Project Manager) and Emma Bellward (Marina Theatre Project Manager)

**Public:** There were no members of the public in attendance

#### 65. Welcome

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

#### 66. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Neil Coleby, Janet Craig, Jen Jones, Christine Moore, John Murray, Christian Newsome, Paul Page, John Pitts and Deborah Ray, with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.

#### 67. Declarations and dispensations

67.1. 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. Cllrs Parker and Patience declared they are East Suffolk Councillors. With regard to item 73.2, Cllr Pearce declared he is the Chair of the Gunton Residents' Association, though it had no agreed corporate position on this item. Cllr Brooks declared she had called a residents' meeting regarding this matter, which Cllrs Parker and Pearce had attended.

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

#### 68. The draft minutes and confidential note of the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 2 July 2024

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes and confidential note; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

#### 69. Public forum

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

#### 70. Finance and Governance

70.1. A grant application from the Lowestoft North Cliff Community Garden CIO and The Conservation Volunteers for £15,000, including to consider options following the receipt of legal advice (some aspects may be confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session. Cllr Patience declared he had visited the site the previous day.

70.2. Adoption of the new Model Financial Regulations – Cllr Begum offered her thanks to members of the Finance and Governance Committee, who had reviewed the document. Cllr Brooks proposed to adopt the new Model Financial Regulations; seconded by Cllr Pearce, who noted there were some review actions for the Finance and Governance and Assets, Inclusion and Development Committees to take forward, but this did not affect adoption of the Regulations; all in favour.

70.3. Receipt and consideration of the following:

70.3a. 2024 – 2025 budget and reserves – Cllr Pearce proposed to acknowledge receipt of

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the latest budget and reserves document, confirming it reflected the current position; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

70.3b. Any bank reconciliations – There were none to note at this meeting.

70.3c. Payments and income for the month ending 30 June 2024 and July 2024 to date (see schedules) – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the income and expenditure reports received as a true and accurate record of the current position; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

70.3d. Payments for approval – There were two payments for approval, as follows:

- Two Stihl blowers/vacuum shredders - £296 plus VAT each.
- One Stihl hedge cutter - £509 plus VAT.

Total £1,101. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve both payments; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.

70.4. Recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee:

70.4a. The Committee's meeting schedule – The Committee had recommended to keep its current meeting schedule of the second Tuesday of the month at 10:30, for the time being. Cllr Parker had advised this may be difficult for him currently, but his circumstances may be changing in September. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the Committee's recommendation; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; ten Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

70.4b. Contacting Jess Asato MP to request representation be made in central government regarding food relief in Lowestoft – Information had been received from East Suffolk Council and Community Action Suffolk. The Town Council makes financial provision of £15,000 annually to support food relief in the parish. Part of the current food network is funded by central Government, and it was understood that funding was being withdrawn in September/October, leaving a £46,000 funding gap in local food relief. Discussions were being held with the principle authority, however, the Finance and Governance Committee had also made a recommendation to ask the local MP to make representations in Government for the funding to be reinstated, even if only on a temporary basis, or for other funding to be made available for central Government, even if only on a temporary basis, to enable local stakeholders to find a solution. Cllr Barker noted Norfolk and Waveney has the highest number of hospital admissions for malnutrition in England. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the Finance and Governance Committee's recommendation; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour.

70.4c. Continuing with the election of Chairs of Committees at the Annual General Meeting of the Council – A discussion had been held at the Finance and Governance Committee meeting and it had been proposed to recommend that Committees should appoint their own Chairs, but this motion was not passed. Cllr Patience proposed to continue to appoint Committee Chairs at the Annual General Meeting of the Council; seconded by Cllr Blowers; ten Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against.

### 71. Town Hall Project

71.1. The draft minutes of the Town Hall Project Committee meeting on 11 July 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

71.2. Delivery stage of the redevelopment of the Town Hall:

71.2a. A progress report from the Project Manager – It was agreed to defer this item to later in the meeting, when the Town Hall Project Manager was in attendance.

### 72. Marina Theatre

72.1. The draft minutes of the Marina Theatre Project Committee meeting on 11 July 2024 – *Cllr Blowers temporarily left the meeting 18:49 for the consideration of the items relating to the Marina Theatre*

The draft minutes were received and noted.

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72.2. The Marina Theatre Redevelopment Project:

72.2a. A progress report from the Project Manager – It was agreed to defer this item to later in the meeting, when the Marina Theatre Project Manager was in attendance.

72.3. Progress on procuring quotations for new heating system – An outcome regarding the re-routing of the gas supply should be received by the end of August, and should mean that a temporary heating solution is not needed. The re-routing will not however take place until a decision is made on whether the project is going ahead, which will not be until later in September. Cllr Pearce noted that would not leave much time for a temporary heating system to be installed, should it be required, and suggested the parties involved do some contingency planning around worst case scenarios. The Acting Town Clerk advised preparations had already been made for the temporary heating solution if required.

*The Marina Theatre Project Manager joined the meeting 18:52*

72.2a A progress report from the Project Manager – The Project Manager advised the project was currently on track. Design Team meetings with the Architect had been continuing. The updated cost report had been received and provided more certainty that the project is affordable. The next project milestone would be going out to the market in early August, but the issuing of the tender would not constitute a commitment from the Town Council to appoint a contractor. The grant agreement between East Suffolk and Lowestoft Town Councils had been executed as a deed, enabling the first draw down of Towns Fund money to be received by the Town Council. There was an urgent requirement to secure a date with UK Power Networks to move the cable, which would need to be at an appropriate time for the Theatre. A survey had been undertaken to better understand the building foundations, and new columns were required as a result. No unexploded ordnance had been discovered during the survey. The final version of the ecology survey should be available shortly. Project risk had been considered again by the Project Committee.

*The Marina Theatre Project Manager left the meeting 18:57*

*Cllr Blowers returned 18:57*

71.2a A progress report from the Town Hall Project Manager –

*The Town Hall Project Manager joined the meeting 18:57*

A written report had been provided in advance. East Suffolk Council had confirmed it would not be imposing a charge for use of its land as a site compound and site accommodation for the substation. East Suffolk Council would also undertake site clearance at its own cost. The tender period for the main contractor had been extended by two weeks. The recruitment process for the Heritage Officer was being finalised. The Heritage Manager had resigned and would be replaced. The Project Manager would be reviewing the research for the business plan for the café, in terms of its offer and the local competition. With regard to the co-working space, other projects in the town, such as the former Post Office building and the Cultural Quarter, have made reference to provision of cafes and co-working spaces. The Project Manager would be assessing the demand being met by this provision and whether there would be an over-supply of this in the town. The Town Council passed on its thanks to East Suffolk Council regarding its decision in relation to use of its land for the compound for the substation. Cllr Pearce noted a co-working space had also been mentioned in the plans for the railway station Buffet Building.

*The Town Hall Project Manager left the meeting 19:07*

### **73. Assets, Inclusion and Development**

73.1. The draft minutes of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee meeting on 1 July 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

73.2. The prospective sale of ancient woodland at Foxburrow Woods, including any options available to the Town Council – It was noted that two public meetings had been organised

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by Cllr Brooks and had been well attended. It was agreed this item should be considered in confidential session.

### 74. Planning

74.1. The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meetings on 27 June and 11 July 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

74.2. Approving the formation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Sub-Committee and note date of the first meeting as Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> August 18:45 – Cllr Pearce proposed approval of this item. Councillors had put their names forward to join the Sub-Committee via the Planning Committee. Cllr Rappensberger seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

### 75. Personnel

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

75.2. Any matters relating to staff absence (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

75.3. Staff terms and conditions for 2024/25 (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

### 76. Climate and Ecological Emergency

76.1. The draft minutes of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee meeting on 15 July 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

76.2. Recommendations from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee:

76.2a. Supporting exploring the possibilities regarding the implementation of 20 mph in Lowestoft – Cllr Brooks reported that where this has been implemented it has been successful in reducing car usage and accidents, but could be more difficult in a town the size of Lowestoft. Decision making on this initiative is not within the Town Council's remit, and would sit with the District Council. The claim that 20mph speed limits reduce carbon emissions is controversial. Cllr Pearce noted the Gunton Residents' Association is seeking to advocate for the introduction of 20mph speed limit at a specification location, for safety reasons. It was considered that the Town Council could make recommendations to the County Council to implement 20mph on specific roads or areas, however it was considered that a piecemeal approach may not be as effective. The Town Council had previously approved speed indicator devices for certain locations, and Cllr Brooks had requested a warning sign for the location for which the Gunton Residents' Association was advocating for the 20mph speed limit. Cllr Patience noted that one location which had been reduced to 20mph may be going back to 30mph as it had not been successful. It was understood the blanket introduction of a 20mph on restricted roads in Wales was also being reversed. Cllr Blowers proposed to explore this and look at different possibilities for different roads; seconded by Cllr Begum. Cllr Barker considered a survey of public opinion would be necessary, and as a cyclist noted that the south side of the town is safer than the north, and different areas may therefore require different approaches. Cllr Brooks requested an amendment to the proposal to explore the possibilities and look at certain roads or areas. Cllr Blowers agreed to amend his proposal; seconded by Cllr Begum; ten Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against. The Acting Town Clerk advised that a budget for speed indicator devices had been approved, but officers had not had the time or resources to progress the decision. Looking at individual roads or areas in the town is outside of the Town Council's remit and there would not be time or resources available to support this. It was considered that the Town Council would not be involved in delivering this initiative but could advocate for change.

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### 77. Outside bodies

77.1. Feedback from the East Suffolk Council Quarterly Liaison Meeting on 8 July 2024 and any actions for the Town Council –

*Cllrs Parker and Patience temporarily left the meeting 19:25*

There had been a detailed discussion about the provision of food relief in the town, as discussed earlier. provision as discussed earlier. There had also been a discussion regarding the removal of the remainder of the Lowestoft Records Office to The Hold, and Suffolk County Council's attitude towards this. Additionally, there had been a discussion regarding the funding for the flood defences. The formal notes of the meeting had not been received but would be circulated to Councillors when they were.

*Cllrs Parker and Patience returned 19:31*

### 78. Legal matters (confidential):

78.1. An update report on legal matters – To be considered during the confidential session.

78.2. Completion of land transfer matters for the following:

78.2a. Whitton Green – To be considered during the confidential session.

### 79. Date of next meeting

27 August 2024 at 18:30

### 80. Items for the next agenda and close

The Arnold's Bequest Charity Board meeting had not been quorate and it was agreed this would now take place ahead of August's Full Council meeting. Councillors would be reminded they are all members of the corporate body of Trustees and should make the effort to attend.

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

### 81. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

81.1. Any matters, including those above as required:

70.1. A grant application from the Lowestoft North Cliff Community Garden CIO and The Conservation Volunteers for £15,000, including to consider options following the receipt of legal advice (some aspects may be confidential) – There was a discussion regarding the options. Cllr Brooks requested a recorded vote. Cllr Pearce made a detailed proposal, with conditions attached. Cllr Patience requested the addition of a further condition, which Cllr Pearce added to his proposal. Cllr Brooks made a proposal, which was not seconded.

Cllr Parker seconded Cllr Pearce's proposal. Cllrs Barker, Blowers, Parker, Patience, Pearce, Rappensberger and Webb voted in favour. Cllr Brooks voted against. Cllrs Begum, Breakspear and Youngman abstained from the vote.

73.2. The prospective sale of ancient woodland at Foxburrow Woods, including any options available to the Town Council Foxburrow Wood –

*Cllrs Parker and Patience left the meeting 19:55*

Cllr Brooks provided an update. Cllr Pearce made a proposal following this; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

*Cllr Brooks temporarily left the meeting 20:05*

75.2. Any matters relating to staff absence (confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk provided an update and advised this would mostly be covered during the forthcoming Personnel Committee meeting.

75.3. Staff terms and conditions for 2024/25 (confidential) – This would be considered at the next Personnel Committee meeting.

78.1. An update report on legal matters – The report had been made available ahead of the meeting. Good progress had been made and the decisions from the previous Full Council meeting had all been actioned and were now with the respective solicitors. The Acting Town Clerk advised on the latest position with regard to Unit 2.

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*Cllr Brooks returned 20:09*

The Acting Town Clerk advised on contact the Town Council's lawyer had received from the Marina Theatre's lawyer. The Town Council's lawyer had reiterated the current position.

The Acting Town Clerk had received proposals from a tenant for the Town Council's consideration.

78.2a. Land transfer matters relating to Whitton Green – It was noted that the paperwork was not ready for signing at this meeting.

The meeting was closed at 20:14.

Signed: .....

27 August 2024