

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

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Jen Jones, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger, Nick Webb (Deputy Chair, presiding over this meeting) and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk), Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk) and James Cox (Finance and Information Officer) (for part)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

28. Welcome

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

29. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs John Murray, Christian Newsome, Graham Parker and Keith Patience, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

30. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

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

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

31. The draft minutes and confidential notes of the meetings on 3 and 19 July 2024, and the confidential note of the meeting on 6 June 2024

The confidential notes were not yet ready and would be deferred to the next meeting. Cllr Brooks proposed to approve the minutes of the 3 and 19 July 2024; seconded by Cllr Pearce; seven Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote. It had been agreed at the meeting on 3 July that the Project and Committee Clerk could remain in the meeting during confidential sessions, unless the Acting Town Clerk considered it inappropriate for another member of staff to be in attendance.

32. Public forum

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

33. Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget

The Acting Town Clerk advised this would require confidential consideration and the Finance and Information Officer would join the meeting during the confidential session to explain this.

34. Any options for additional cover for the Town Council's personnel-related insurance (some aspects may be confidential)

The Acting Town Clerk advised she had explored options but had not yet found anything suitable. This item would be deferred to the next meeting.

35. An update on recovery of pension payment (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

36. Staffing structure (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

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37. The process for role alignment and reconciliation

The Acting Town Clerk requested this item be moved to the confidential session as some matters had arisen since the agenda had been published.

38. An update from the Acting Town Clerk (some aspects may be confidential), including the following:

38.1. Recruitment – The Sports Development Officer had started this week. The Facilities and Contracts Manager was due to start on Monday 19 August. Advertisements had been published for the Finance Assistant and Heritage Officer.

38.2. Staff terms and conditions and Christmas holiday working, including any recommendations for an additional day's leave (confidential) – In previous years, the Council had used its discretion to close the office on the last working day before Christmas. This was considered annually. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to close the office on Christmas Eve, or to grant any officer or member of the grounds maintenance team who must or chooses to work that day an additional floating day of leave, to be used before the end of January; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour. The office would be closed on 27, 30 and 31 December, which were statutory days of annual leave for officers. It was anticipated that staff would wish to book 23 December as leave. The Acting Town Clerk would decide how to handle this.

38.3. Training and development (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

38.4. Annual appraisals (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

38.5. Recognition of service and retirements – To be considered during the confidential session.

39. Matters relating to staff absence (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

40. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 5 September 2024 – 10:00. The Acting Town Clerk advised it was likely an Extraordinary Meeting would be called prior to this.

41. Items for the next agenda and close

Councillors were advised to send any requests to the office.

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

42. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

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

The Finance and Information Officer joined the meeting 10:15

35. An update on recovery of pension payment (confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk provided an update and would take all reasonable steps, as previously discussed.

33. Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget – The Finance and Information Officer displayed the budget monitoring spreadsheet. For several members of staff, the total salary cost would not be known until year end. The Local Government Pay Award was also not yet known. Cllr Pearce proposed for this Committee and the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee to keep a watching brief. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee should have a clearer idea of any overspend by the end of December, and Cllr Pearce proposed for this to be covered internally and any earmarked reserves recovery added to the 2025 – 2026 precept. Cllr Begum seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

The Finance and Information Officer left the meeting 10:25

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36. Staffing structure (confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk displayed the staffing structure, which showed who was currently employed and reporting to the Acting Town Clerk. An update on the current staffing position was provided.

Cllr Youngman temporarily left the meeting 10:35

There was a discussion regarding future and seasonal staffing requirements.

Cllr Youngman returned 10:39

With regard to the members of the Grounds Maintenance Team who are leaving and not immediately replaced, Cllr Pearce proposed to leave the posts in the staffing structure as vacant, so when they are filled it is for existing posts, not new ones, and would not therefore require a decision of Full Council; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

Regarding litter picking, the Acting Town Clerk suggested reviewing the requirement following the summer season. Cllr Pearce proposed for advertisements to go out for litter pickers if required, and to engage with any volunteers who may be able to supplement this. Cllr Rappensberger seconded the proposal and noted that the Friends of Fen Park and Kirkley People's Forum had been undertaking litter picking at Fen Park. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

37. The process for role alignment and reconciliation – It had been agreed that roles and salaries would be reviewed. This would be a more significant task than first anticipated. It was queried whether the Town Council's HR support provider could support this process, however this would likely not be within their scope of work, and they were not as familiar with the staff. Cllr Brooks proposed for the Acting Town Clerk to investigate the cost and feasibility of the HR support provider undertaking the updating of job descriptions, with the Acting Town Clerk to make the final decision on who should do this work; seconded by Cllr Begum; seven Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.
- 38.2. Staff terms and conditions – There was a discussion regarding the application of the Essential Car User Allowance for new members of staff. It was understood a delegation had been approved, upon adoption of the policy, for the Clerk to decide on whether the Allowance should apply to any new members of staff. Entitlement to the Allowance is reviewable annually. If the delegation is not already in place, Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate authority to the Acting Town Clerk to decide the eligibility for the Essential Car User Allowance for any new members of staff; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.
- 38.3. Training and development (confidential) – An update was given on training being undertaken by staff. Staff appraisals had been booked in. Further updates would be provided at future meetings. It had been requested previously that training had more of a focus on developing officers into future roles. There was a budget in place for Councillor training also but this was not currently well used. It was requested that an item be added to the next agenda to consider Councillor training.
- 38.4. Annual appraisals (confidential) – Cllrs Begum and Newsome (as Mayor and Chair of the Personnel Committee) had completed the Acting Town Clerk's appraisal. It had been rationalised that the Clerk's appraisal should take place after the Annual Meeting but before the end of October, and appraisals for all staff should take place before the end of November. Any Councillor or member of staff with the responsibility of appraising others is required to undertake training. The Acting Town Clerk was in the process of scheduling in appraisals for other staff and reports would be made to December's Personnel Committee meeting, in line with the policy. Job descriptions should be updated ahead of appraisals taking place, or they will be undertaken against what officer roles are known to be.

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38.5. Recognition of service and retirements – The Acting Town Clerk advised of two members of staff who would shortly be retiring. A budget for the events and gifts was discussed, and Cllr Brooks proposed a maximum budget of £750 from the staff contingency budget; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The Project and Committee Clerk left the meeting 11:09 for the remainder of the agenda items

Signed:

5 September 2024