

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
19:00 on 18 February 2025

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Christine Moore, John Murray, Andy Pearce, Deborah Ray and Elise Youngman (Chair)

In Attendance: Lauren Elliott (Senior Committee and Project Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant)

122. Welcome

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

123. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Neil Coleby, John Pitts and Bernadette Rappensberger with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of apologies received; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

124. Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

124.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Breakspear declared he was the Chair of Friends of Kensington Gardens. Cllrs Brooks and Ray declared they were members of Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

124.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

125. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 21 January 2025

A query was raised on the progress made per the decision of item 117 to investigate specifications for an active track in Normanston Park.

It was noted this item was to consider approval of the draft minutes and instead an update was requested for the next agenda on the active track and the project tracker.

Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the draft minutes; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; six votes in favour and one abstention as the member was absent at the previous meeting.

126. Public Forum

An opportunity for the public to make comments on any matters on this agenda, and to consider any advance comments from the public – No advance comments had been received and no members of the public were in attendance.

127. To monitor expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget

There was no update on the budget position.

128. To receive feedback from the stand-alone meeting concerning the Five-Year Plans

The feedback was received. A query was raised regarding the priority of Links Road car park as the meeting notes seemed to infer the entire car park would be re-tarmacked, when the original intention had been to only re-tarmac the section near the disabled access area to assist with access on the site. It was suggested this project be placed at a higher priority on the plans since the project had been approved.

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There was uncertainty on whether the Council had agreed to re-tarmac the surface at Links Road car park, and it was noted the Committee had not yet seen a specification for the works. It was requested the tarmac budget be checked to determine if a decision had been made.

The initial review of priorities had been completed at the meeting along with rating the items for progression in terms of what was the responsibility of Lowestoft Town Council and where further information was required (such as specification or costs). At the next meeting the projects would be put into an excel table to prioritise the projects from years one to five.

It was requested a colour key be added to the table.

129. To consider a budget for the trial coastal garden at The Ness

Cllr Brooks proposed approval.

Cllr Pearce requested an amendment to approve the maximum budget of £2,500 and ring-fence this in the budget, but to not approve the works until a specification has been provided. Cllr Brooks accepted the amendment and Cllr Pearce seconded the amended proposal. A vote was held with all in favour.

130. To consider designs and costs for signs to be installed in the wildflower areas

Cllr Brooks proposed approval. Officers confirmed the maximum budget covered signs for all wildflower areas. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal but requested an amendment to set a maximum budget of £700 and to delegate the design of the signs to officers. Cllr Brooks accepted the amendment. It was agreed to allocate the budget for the signs from the Bulbs and Planting budget line in the Horticulture budget. A vote was held with all in favour.

131. To consider winter planting for the Holocaust Memorial Bed in Kensington Gardens

This item had been requested as there were no flowering plants in the bed during Holocaust Memorial Day.

Cllr Pearce proposed this item be deferred to the next meeting to receive feedback on the item from Cllrs Brooks and Coleby.

Cllr Brooks proposed input from the Sub-Committee be sent to officers with a delegation to officers to choose the appropriate plants and undertake the winter planting in consultation with Friends of Kensington Gardens.

Cllr Pearce reiterated his proposal to defer the discussion to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee where the input of all members can be heard.

The Sub-Committee agreed to defer the item.

132. To note the previous resolution of this Sub-Committee to plant a Ginkgo Tree in the site formerly occupied by the Charter Tree in Sparrows Nest and discuss if alternative locations should be considered and if a replacement Charter Tree should be planted instead

It was explained that in 2018, as part of the Charter Tree initiative, an oak tree was planted in Sparrows Nest. Unfortunately, the oak did not thrive and had to be removed.

As the space was empty, the Grounds Maintenance Team had recommended to a previous meeting of this Sub-Committee to plant a ginkgo tree in the empty space. Whilst the Sub-Committee had agreed to this proposal, it has since been noted the ginkgo tree was not a charter tree. Therefore, the Sub-Committee were asked to decide if the space in Sparrows

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Nest should be reserved for charter tree, with costs for an approved charter tree to be sought, and the ginkgo tree could be planted elsewhere.

Cllr Pearce proposed to proceed with planting the ginkgo tree in Sparrows Nest as agreed if the Grounds Maintenance Team were confident the tree would thrive, since a new charter tree was not required to go in the same location, particularly when the previous charter tree failed in that location. The Grounds Maintenance Team were asked to provide recommendations on possible locations to plant a tree that was eligible to be considered a charter tree, with a decision to be made on the purchase of a new charter tree with an appropriate budget at the next meeting.

It was suggested a soil assessment be undertaken to ensure the ginkgo tree would thrive in the area. Cllr Pearce amended the proposal to include the caveat that a soil assessment be undertaken before the ginkgo tree is planted. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

133. Policies:

133.1. To review the Trees Policy and provide feedback to the Finance and Governance Committee – Cllr Pearce proposed this item be deferred to the March meeting, after the Tree Working Group have met on 5 March to review the policy against the tree survey and provide recommendations on how to incorporate the tree survey into the policy. In the interim, Cllrs Brooks and Ray would review the policy and provide notes for the Sub-Committee by 11 March. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

133.2. To consider how to implement of the Wild Flowers Policy – The Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee had requested this be addressed by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee. Cllr Pearce proposed this instead be discussed with the Grounds Maintenance Team as part of the general meeting on horticulture matters; seconded by Cllr Murray; all in favour.

134. To consider an assessment of the play equipment in Fen Park

As a budget of £22,000 to £23,000 had been made available to improve the Fen Park play area, officers were asked to assess the equipment and provide anticipated costs and timescales for replacement. A meeting paper was provided that detailed each piece of equipment and identified which pieces required replacement, if the work could be done in house and costs.

Cllr Brooks proposed to follow the advice received from officers regarding the replacement equipment as set out in the meeting paper.

The Grounds Maintenance Team would salvage equipment to reuse, such as old fencing, matting and pieces of equipment. It was requested information on the reuse by the Grounds Maintenance Team be compiled as a meeting paper and provided to this Sub-Committee and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee, as it was in line with the emerging Climate Action Plan.

Cllr Pearce proposed the report be accepted and where items have a cost for replacement, a delegation be made to officers to spend within the budget to do the recommended works; seconded by Cllr Brooks; six votes in favour and one abstention.

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Cllr Brooks proposed there be some recognition for the longevity seesaw which has been in the park for fifty-five years with a plaque installed on the seesaw; seconded by Cllr Youngman; five votes in favour and two abstentions.

135. To note previous discussions on fencing for play areas and consider whether to recommend the Town Council takes a policy position

Cllr Murray had requested this item and noted that whilst there was no national requirement to fence off play areas, there were guidelines and legal cases which indicated there was a duty of care the Town Council needed to consider.

Cllr Murray proposed Lowestoft Town Council considers establishing a policy with regard to the fencing children's play areas and following the resolution of existing land transfer matters, to engage with East Suffolk Council on future land transfers. Cllr Pearce seconded on the basis this would be a consideration and would be safety-driven, this would first be addressed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee in March for onward recommendation to Full Council; six votes in favour and one vote against.

136. Date of the next meeting

18 March 2025 19:00

137. Items for the next Agenda and Close

No items were requested for the next agenda.

138. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the Meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely any legal issues relating to the matters on this agenda

There were no resolutions.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:08

Signed:

18 March 2025