

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 14 November 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Neil Coley, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger and Elise Youngman. Non-Councillor members Helen Johnson and Benjamin Porter (East Suffolk Council Officers)

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk & Planning Assistant) and John Chamberlain (Town Hall Heritage Officer)

Also In Attendance: Sheila MossKing (Project Manager) and Jess Johnston (Heritage Manager)

76. Welcome

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

77. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

No apologies were received and all members were in attendance.

78. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

78.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from members on items on the agenda – There were no declarations.

78.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – No written requested for dispensations had been received.

79. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 15 October 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the draft minutes and requested the confidential note be discussed in confidential session; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

80. 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.

81. To make a recommendation to Full Council on the main build contractor and approving the issuing of a letter of intent/main build contract (JCT) (confidential)

This item had been resolved at an earlier Extraordinary Full Council meeting and the award letters would be issued today.

82. To receive an update report from the Project Manager, including the following:

82.1. Any updates from applications for uplifts in funding support – A Public Works Loan application has been submitted to uplift the loan amount from £4million to £5million, on the condition the cost of servicing the loan annually would not increase the precept.

82.2. Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – There were no planned actions to be authorised for progression at this meeting.

82.3. The risk register – Risk Two had not yet been reduced as whilst the main contract had been awarded, the works were not yet able to commence until confirmation had been received of the uplifted funding. Therefore, the risk probability would not be changed until the funding outcome was known.

Under Risk Three, the Public Works Loan item had been updated to note that interest rates were currently 5.85% and the loan would still be serviceable within the set

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constraints.

A risk item had been added concerning whether to provide a letter of intent to the main contractor in advance of securing the uplift of grant funding by allocating some funding to start the project, however this would be done at the council's risk. This would be discussed further with Lowestoft Town Council's solicitors to consider if this would represent a bigger risk in terms of claims of loss of profit by the main contractor. This would be monitored and discussed with the Design Team and Quantity Surveyor to agree what works were worthwhile being undertaken before the further grant funding is secured and then would be reviewed with Lowestoft Town Council's solicitors to ensure if the letter is issued it would be done with legal advice in place.

Confirmation of funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund was expected by 10 December 2024. The Public Works Loan application was under review and confirmation was expected within eight weeks.

- 82.4. Receive updates on any revisions to the Business Plan – The Business Plan had been updated and would be fully reviewed once the contract has commenced. The Project Manager would also provide an updated business case to the Committee.
- 82.5. An update on Registrars – It was confirmed the Registrars would occupy offices in the Town Hall with the service charges due to be agreed.

83. Finance, budget monitoring and payments (see report):

- 83.1. To note and consider income and expenditure, including:
 - 83.1a. To monitor the budget – The Project Manager was due to submit a reclaim to The National Lottery Heritage Fund once in receipt of all operational costs covered by the Council.
 - 83.1b. To consider any payments for approval – There were no payments to consider for approval.

84. To receive an update on the Activity Plan

The Heritage Officer provided an update to the Committee on events being planned for Spring 2025 and noted recent activities, such as the Town Hall talks. The Heritage Officer has been meeting with different museums, heritage-related organisations and other individuals in the town including Ivan Bunn, David Butcher, the Maritime Museum, the Independent Archive, Lowestoft Museum, the Most Easterly Community Group and the International Boatbuilding Training College. School workshops were due to be developed over the next year.

The Heritage Manager provided an overview of the spreadsheet being developed to monitor the activities undertaken as recommended by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Adjustments had been made to the volunteer documents and recruitment would take place in the new year.

85. To consider making a response to the Post Office North Lowestoft NR32 1JA – 460136 consultation

This consultation concerned the proposed relocation of the North Lowestoft Post Office in the High Street to Tennyson Road.

The Town Hall Heritage Officer temporarily left the chamber at 10:39

A Post Office had been in the High Street for approximately one hundred years, and the High Street was a conservation area and formerly a heritage action zone.

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The Town Hall Heritage Officer returned to the chamber at 10:41

The relocation of the Post Office presented a heritage deficit as well as a community deficit. The aim of this project was to promote regeneration by stimulating footfall and inward investment and this relocation would leave another empty unit in the high street. The Committee were asked to consider the impact of this relocation in line with the aims of this project and whether Lowestoft Town Council should consider making a representation within this consultation to ask that the decision to relocate be reconsidered due to the planning and investment in that area of the town to revitalise it economically, increase footfall and inward investment. Having a Post Office in the High Street would assist these goals and the increased footfall would in turn benefit the Post Office.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council to submit a consultee response, or make a separate representation, with regard to the Terms of Reference and aspirations of the Town Hall project.

Helen Johnson and Ben Porter declared they would not partake in the vote on this item as the consultation response should be led by Councillors and not officers.

Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal. Cllr Pearce amended the proposal to add that any members who had specific ideas to be covered in the response in relation to this Committee's Terms of Reference should submit those to the office with the Project Manager and Heritage Manager copied in. The Planning Committee were also due to provide their perspective and, if approved at Full Council, officers would formulate the full consultee response with the input from both Committees. A vote was held with seven votes in favour and two abstentions from the East Suffolk Council officers.

86. To consider any recommendations to Full Council

A recommendation had been made on the Post Office consultation.

87. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 12 December 2024 – 10:00

88. Items for the next agenda and close

No items had been requested.

89. 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:

89.1. To consider any legal issues, including those above as required – Cllr Pearce proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 10:52

The confidential note was discussed and Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the confidential note subject to a clarification requested in confidential session; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:04

Signed:
12 December 2024