

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 9 January 2025

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger and Elise Youngman. Non-Councillors member Helen Johnson (East Suffolk Council Officer)

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant)

Also In Attendance: Sheila MossKing (Project Manager)

As the Chair was not in attendance, the Committee would need to appoint a member to preside over the meeting. Cllr Brooks proposed herself; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce entered the chamber at 10:02

102. Welcome

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

103. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from non-Councillor member Benjamin Porter (East Suffolk Council Officer) with reasons provided. Cllr Youngman proposed approval of the apology received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

Cllrs Nasima Begum and Neil Coleby were absent with no apologies received.

104. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

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

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

105. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 12 December 2024

Cllr Barker proposed approval of the draft minutes and confidential note; seconded by Helen Johnson; four votes in favour and two abstentions.

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

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

107.1.Confirmation of awards of uplifts in funding support, and any other updates – The Project Manager confirmed the increased grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund had been confirmed and the uplift in the loan from the Public Works Loan Board had also been confirmed.

The Project Manager had further updates which would need to be provided in confidential session.

107.2.An update on contractual matters – Full Council had approved to issue a Letter of Intent to Barnes Construction, which would be cost-limited to £65,000 and cover the period up

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to the end of January 2025. The purpose of this period was to allow Barnes Construction to undertake preliminary work to mobilise for the commencement of the main building contract.

The Project Manager noted good progress has been made since the letter was issued (prior to Christmas 2024). The Project Manager had a meeting on contractual matters with the Quantity Surveyor, Contract Administrators and Barnes Construction. It was expected to have the final contract sum agreed by 23 January 2025, after which the contract could be signed. At the time of the meeting, the expected date to commence works onsite was 10 February.

A request was made for the Project Manager to clarify the progress made to date. It was explained the meetings to date have been to agree the responsibilities of all parties for each element of the project and whether to accept the alternative project approach provided by Barnes Construction. Barnes Construction have also booked in sub-contractors and arranged for required permits, such as for the installation of scaffolding.

An issue remained with the street lighting and the Project Manager was seeking clarification with Suffolk County Council on whether the lighting would be removed before the installation of scaffolding, or if the lighting would remain until after the scaffolding has been removed (and if that would that be deemed safe). Once the scaffolding has been installed, then the roof would be encapsulated.

There had also been discussions on social value outcomes (such as site visits for students) and the Town Hall Heritage Manager was due to meet with the Social Value Manager of Barnes Construction to discuss this further for the Activity Plan. Barnes Construction would maintain a list of all contractors in the Lowestoft constituency and would provide a value at the end of the project to demonstrate what percentage of the works had contributed to the local economy.

Insurance needed to be arranged before the contract was onsite. It has been agreed to use JTC Option C for insurance, this required the employer (LTC) to take out insurance jointly for themselves and Barnes Construction to cover the works and the building. The current insurers would need to consider this matter through their head office. Therefore, the Project Manager has met with two insurance brokers to canvas the market for interest in picking this up. Both brokers were aware the insurance needed to match the contract and were confident insurance would be in place when required. The Project Manager confirmed the acquirement of insurance has been added to the risk register and noted interim insurance could be put in place for emergency cover if needed (funded from the contingency budget). It was noted this would not require approval from the Finance and Governance Committee or Full Council as it was part of the pre-agreed scope of works, approval would only be needed should the contingency budget be exceeded.

It was noted the insurance cover would be paid upfront and last for the duration of the project.

The Project Manager updated the Committee on the progress of leases and land transfers.

The terms of the lease for the compound on the land adjacent to the Town Hall had been agreed with East Suffolk Council, only the duration was awaiting confirmation as it had been originally set for eighteen months and the Project Manager had requested twenty-four months instead as the former may be too risky. The land would be liable for

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business rates, however there was no current valuation on the land and no business rates were levied on the land.

The transfer of ownership of land for the UK Power Networks (UKPN) substation was agreed with East Suffolk Council and the lease with UKPN had been finalised. This transfer should be fine to proceed, provided East Suffolk Council approved 24 months instead of 18 months for the lease on the compound.

The transfer of land for the UKPN substation was on the condition that should East Suffolk Council want to develop the nearby land in the future, they would have access to the substation.

Lowestoft Town Council would own the land and lease it for ninety-nine years to UKPN, the equipment on the land remained the property of UKPN and any fault with the substation remained the responsibility of UKPN.

The Communications Policy had been discussed with Barnes Construction with a view on how to inform the public when they take over the Town Hall in February 2025. It was agreed the communications guidelines applied to the Marina Theatre project would be developed, including to follow the requirements of the funders. This would be cascaded to Barnes Construction's Sub-Contractors.

A time-lapse camera was due to be fitted on the clock tower to film the installation of the scaffolding and packaged for social media.

Press releases would need to be mindful of the size of the project and the number of funders with engaging and responsive communications.

Currently, the project timescale of seventy-three weeks took the practical completion to 6 July 2026. This would be followed by furnishings, fitout and interpretation works. The Project Manager advised September 2026 be maintained as the completion date of the project.

107.3. Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – There were no actions to be authorised.

107.4. The Risk Register – The updated risk register had been provided to the Committee. The increased funding was recorded, but the risk has not been removed.

The issuing of a restricted Letter of Intent to cover selected works had been recorded on the register.

A risk had been added relating to insurance to state insurance brokers had been contacted and it may take time to secure a good policy.

107.5. Updates on any revisions to the Business Plan – There were no updates on the Business Plan. Once insurance was obtained and the contractors were onsite, the Business Plan would be fully updated.

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

108.1. To note and consider income and expenditure, including:

108.1a. To monitor the budget – It was requested clarifications be provided at the next meeting on which consultants would be on a fixed fee, which would be paid for time, and where slippage in the timescale of the project could lead to an increase in professional fees.

108.1b. To consider any payments for approval – There were no payments for approval.

109. To consider the Town Hall café

The café would be covered in the Business Plan. Three possible models had been considered: in house, a commercial café and a community model, with no decision made to date.

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It was noted the inhouse model would mean Lowestoft Town Council would be employing the staff directly, and there may be issues with Local Government Pension Scheme membership, zero-hour contracts and the increase in employer National Insurance Contributions.

Cllr Brooks proposed to defer the discussion on the café to April 2025 and provide the Project Manager enough time to compile information on the matter; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

110. To receive any updates on the Activity Plan

The Committee noted the successful uptake in recent activities such as the film making workshops.

The Accessibility Report had been provided to the Committee.

111. To consider any recommendations to Full Council

There were no recommendations to Full Council.

112. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 13 February 2025 – 10:00

113. Items for the next agenda and close

None.

114. 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:

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

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:14

107.1. Confirmation of awards of uplifts in funding support, and any other updates – The Project Manager provided a confidential update on awards of uplifts in funding support.

Cllr Youngman left the chamber at 11:17

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:19

Signed:
13 February 2025