

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 11 July 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger and Elise Youngman. Non-Councillor member Ben Porter (East Suffolk Council Officer)

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk), Kate Reeder (Town Hall Heritage Manager) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Also in Attendance: Sheila Moss King (Project Manager)

Public: One member of the public (via zoom)

19. Welcome

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

20. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Barker and Begum and Helen Johnson with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour. Cllr Coleby was absent with no apologies received.

21. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

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

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

22. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 5 June 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed approval subject to the reason he voted against the price/quality ratio of 70/30 on item 8 (wanting to ensure Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) received the best quality bid rather than the best priced bid) being explained in the minutes; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

23. 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 advanced comments had been received.

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

24.1. The RIBA Stage 4 report – Feedback had been received and provided to the Architect Team to implement in the report and all issues raised had been accommodated as they often concerned the method of communication. The Project Manager suggested she advise the architects the report has been signed off as the report formed the foundation of their work. Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the suggestion and formally approve the report; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

24.2. The boundary agreement and process of registering with the Land Registry – There had been a revision to the proposed boundary between LTC and East Suffolk Council (ESC) after the site visit with UK Power Networks (UKPN) as more land was required to route the low voltage supply from the substation to the Town Hall. This would require approval but should not impact the land transfer which was being progressed at no cost.

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There was a complication with the substation because when LTC sub-leases the land to UKPN, it would be sub-letting a piece of land under LTC ownership and a piece of land leased from ESC. LTC would need to resolve this through the relevant paperwork which the Project Manager would progress.

- 24.3. The siting of a compound on East Suffolk owned land at the rear of the Town Hall – ESC have confirmed they would not charge any rental fee for a license to occupy the site. The compound would be used for site accommodation which includes welfare facilities, site meetings and a storage compound. LTC would need to ensure that the holdings around the site are maintained or repaired as necessary to ensure they are returned in the same condition.

Cllr Brooks entered the chamber at 10:17

The site needed to be cleared before use, which ESC would undertake at their cost. The Committee thanked the Project Team, ESC officers and all parties involved in reaching this decision.

- 24.4. The risk register – There were no updates. It was requested the register be reviewed after the main contract bids have closed to consider the timescale of the construction work and evaluate the risks of any slippage in the construction timescale and opening of the hall.

As the issue of siting a compound had been resolved per item 24.3, the relevant risk on the register would be downgraded.

- 24.5. Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – Dry rot remained an issue in some areas, such as the north-east corner where the pavement was above the air vents that provide air to the basement area, therefore the air vents needed to be opened to enable air circulation. The Project Manager suggested she contact Suffolk County Council to discuss these issues and query if they could undertake this work when they were in the area.

Some damp remained on the Compass Street side of the hall, and due to some repairs to gutters not being successful and resulting in water ingress, the facilities team were opening more windows to rectify the issue.

Hutton + Rostron had recommended some window frames with glazing be removed from the Compass Street side and stored offsite to dry out. The Project Manager suggested she obtain quotes for that work.

Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the request and the Project Manager obtain initial costs for consideration; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

The main contract tender was ongoing with active bidders and clarification requests. This would be discussed further in confidential. The Project Manager thanked the LTC officers for their assistance with the tender queries and running site visits.

It had previously been authorised to replace the street lighting with Suffolk County Council to undertake the work. This order had not been placed correctly and to book in and progress the work now would require an estimated lead time of four months. The Project Manager was attempting to ascertain what caused the failed order placement but did have preparations to ensure the critical work was done. The work ideally needed to be completed before the main contractor was in place with scaffolding installed on the building as they could charge LTC overheads as any streetlight works as they would need to facilitate the works in their programme.

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- 25. Finance, budget monitoring and payments (see report):**
25.1. To note and consider income and expenditure, including:
25.1a. To monitor the budget – The spend to date was £632,954.60.
25.1b. To consider any payments for approval – There were no payments for approval outside the Project Manager’s general remit.
- 26. To receive an update on the Heads of Terms for the Registrars, including consideration of the rent appraisal (some aspects may be confidential)**
This item would be discussed in confidential session.
- 27. To consider security of the Town Hall (confidential)**
This item would be discussed in confidential session.
- 28. To consider matters relating to employment and recruitment (confidential)**
This item would be discussed in confidential session.
- 29. To note correspondence from the Suffolk Archives regarding the closure of the Lowestoft branch**

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the chamber and returned at 10:32

The Committee noted the recent decision to close the Lowestoft branch of the Suffolk Archives and the lack of community engagement or involvement in making representation on this process. The lack of openness, engagement and accountability was against ethos of LTC and this project.

Cllr Pearce proposed any requests from Suffolk Archives to run activities or be in any way involved on the Town Hall Project should not be decided under delegation and instead go to Full Council for consideration; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

- 30. To consider any recommendations to Full Council**
There were no recommendations.
- 31. To note the date of the next NLHF review meeting as 29th July 2024**
This was noted.
- 32. Date of the next meeting**
Thursday 8th August 2024 – 10:00
- 33. Items for the next agenda and close**
No items were requested for the next agenda.
- 34. 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:**
34.1. To consider any legal issues, including those above as required – Cllr Pearce proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 10:37

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26. To receive an update on the Heads of Terms for the Registrars, including consideration of the rent appraisal (some aspects may be confidential)

A confidential update on the Heads of Terms for the Registrars was provided.

27. To consider security of the Town Hall (confidential)

The security for the Town Hall was discussed.

The Heritage Manager temporarily left the chamber at 10:43

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

The Heritage Manager returned to the chamber at 10:45

28. To consider matters relating to employment and recruitment (confidential)

A confidential discussion took place on matters relating to employment and recruitment.

Cllr Pearce proposed the summer activities be approved, except for the archives activity which is community led and out of the scope of this project and would be deferred.

More information was requested on the summer activities and the Project Manager confirmed this information would be incorporated in the monthly report provided to the Committee.

Cllr Rappensberger seconded Cllr Pearce's proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

Cllr Youngman left the chamber at 11:43

Cllr Pearce proposed Cllr Rappensberger preside over the remainder of the meeting; seconded by Ben Porter; all in favour.

24.5. Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – A confidential update was provided regarding the main contract tender.

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

The meeting was closed at 11:57

Signed:

8 August 2024