

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 12 December 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Andy Pearce and Bernadette Rappensberger. Non-Councillor member Helen Johnson (East Suffolk Council Officer)

In Attendance: Christopher Meek (Events and Office Manager) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant)

Also In Attendance: Sheila MossKing (Project Manager)

90. Welcome

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

91. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

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

92. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

92.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from members on items on the agenda – Cllr Barker declared she was a member and volunteer of Suffolk Wildlife Trust as she intended to raise a point in relation to the Activity Report.

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

93. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 14 November 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the draft minutes and confidential note; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

94. 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.

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

95.1. Confirmation of awards of uplifts in funding support, and any other updates – The Project Manager confirmed an increase in the grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund had been secured and the uplift in the Public Works Loan had been approved up to £5 million, with the constraint that the servicing of the loan would not raise the precept for residents of the parish of Lowestoft.

The potential uplift in funding from East Suffolk Council was due to be decided at its Cabinet meeting in January 2025.

95.2. An update on the main construction contract, including recommended actions to accelerate progress – The main contract had been awarded to Barnes Construction, an Ipswich-based organisation, after a successful bid in the tender process where they demonstrated a high level of local engagement that met the social value elements.

The Project Manager had an initial meeting with Barnes Construction, the Design Team, the Quantity Surveyor and the Facilities and Contracts Manager to agree the value

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engineering options and discuss the timescales of all parties for work to commence onsite. Most of the clarifications on the qualifications were provided, though some items need to be resolved, such as who would be responsible for designing the fire stopping. It had been agreed for the Design Team to draw up and design the fire stopping requirements, which would then be agreed with Barnes Construction on the cost to implement the strategy.

A Letter of Intent would not be issued for the entire contract at this time due to risks and time required to cover the contractual issues, which would delay matters.

The Project Manager expected to have the construction level drawings ready by the last week of January 2025 and the project should be ready to move to contract by mid-January 2025. Barnes Construction then had a seven-week lead in mobilisation period before they would be onsite (which was estimated to be mid-March 2025).

In order to be ready to move the project to contract in January 2025, a site visit was to be scheduled for Barnes Construction to consider the temporary works to be undertaken. In the interim, it has been agreed for Barnes Construction to produce a list of works they can begin now to speed up their mobilisation (such as the scaffolding plan, awarding sub-contractors or applying for licenses to erect scaffolding). This would be compiled in a plan that was due to be provided next week.

Agreement would then be required to proceed to issue a restricted Letter of Intent to agree the payment work to undertake those listed tasks.

Cllr Pearce requested a concern regarding this item and item 95.4 be addressed in confidential session.

- 95.3. Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – The issuing of a limited and costed Letter of Intent would be considered after the confidential discussion relating to item 95.2.
- 95.4. The Risk Register – There were no major updates to the risk register, changes would be made to reflect the appointment of a contractor and to confirm further funding had been secured.
- 95.5. Updates on any revisions to the Business Plan – There were no revisions at the time of the meeting, updates would be discussed at the next meeting.

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

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

96.1a. To monitor the budget – The Project Manager would update the budget to reflect the new budget headings to be used.

A claim had been submitted for the next payment from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. It was noted the amount received would be higher than expected as there was a slightly higher percentage intervention rate.

96.1b. To consider any payments for approval – There were no payments to consider for approval.

97. To receive any updates on the Activity Plan

The Town Hall Heritage Officer reported upcoming engagement events to the Committee, including a free film making workshop, and reflected on the success of recent activities, such as the John Ward Songwriting Workshop at the Seagull Theatre.

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Positive feedback had been received regarding the Town Hall project from several groups such as the parents at Roman Hill School. Cllr Pearce declared he was a School Governor of Roman Hill School.

Events and activities were being planned and scheduled for 2025.

Committee members reported positive feedback they had heard from recent events, though it was suggested alternative venues be considered for future events.

An issue was raised with accessibility to the recent webinars on the Town Hall, which the Project Manager would consider further.

Cllr Barker thanked the Town Hall Heritage Manager and Officer for their work on the Christmas Market and noted she had received permission from Suffolk Wildlife Trust to place the updated Town Hall leaflets on their stall.

Cllr Brooks requested aspects concerning the Activity Plan be discussed further in confidential session.

The Accessibility Consultant had reviewed the Interpretation Plan and made suggestions for improvements and highlighted areas for further consideration. The Project Manager proposed they continue to work with the Accessibility Consultant to review the Town Hall's colour schemes, contrasts, how to transition between rooms and the signage to ensure it is comprehensive.

98. To consider any recommendations to Full Council

It was noted some recommendations may be made to Full Council in the confidential session.

99. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 9 January 2025 – 10:00

100. Items for the next agenda and close

An item was requested to discuss the Town Hall café.

101. 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:

101.1. 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 10:38

95.2. An update on the main construction contract, including recommended actions to accelerate progress – There was a confidential discussion regarding an element of the Town Hall in relation to the main contractor and actions to be undertaken.

95.3. Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – There was a discussion on issuing a restricted Letter of Intent.

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal to grant permission to issue the restricted Letter of Intent, subject to caveats set out in confidential session, and noted that if the Letter of Intent

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required a Town Council signature it would be directed to Full Council, otherwise it would be covered under the Committee's delegation; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

97. To receive any updates on the Activity Plan

There was a confidential discussion regarding the Activity Plan.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:22

Signed:
9 January 2025