

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee
Via Video Meeting
18:00 on 2 November 2020

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sue Barnard, Bob Breakspear, Colin Butler, Neil Coleby (Chair), Alan Green, Jacqueline Hardie, Peter Knight, Keith Patience and Andy Pearce

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk), Sian Maguire (Events and Communications Officer) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

78. Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were reminded of the right to report and the application of the video meeting protocol and the meeting was welcomed.

79. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Amanda Frost, Paul Page, Graham Parker, John Pitts and Alice Taylor. Cllr Peter Collecott had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Knight; all in favour.

80. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllrs Barnard and Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 83.2c, specifically the Gainsborough Drive pond, if there is an update. Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to Kensington Gardens. Cllr Hardie declared a local non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to Fen Park.

81. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 5 October 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

There were no comments and the draft minutes were noted.

82. Advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda

A public comment in objection to the proposed bus shelter on Harris Avenue had been circulated to Councillor and was displayed at the meeting. The comment makes reference to the Save Our Records Office group and the Lowestoft Independent Archive. Cllr Pearce has a local non-pecuniary interest in both of these, but advised that neither of them is linked to the proposals for a bus shelter. It was clarified that the Council has made no decisions about whether to progress the bus shelter yet. At this stage information is being gathered for consideration.

During the course of the meeting a second comment about the proposed bus shelter was received and will be treated as a request under the Freedom of Information Act due to the nature of the enquiry.

83. Parks and open spaces:

- 83.1. Receipt of any comments and noting the draft minutes of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee meeting on 20 October 2020 – There were no comments and the draft minutes were noted.
- 83.2. The following recommendations from the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee:
- 83.2a. Asking the Finance and Governance Committee to consider an annual budget for the use of mulch in the Town Council's parks, in addition to the £500 budget already approved for this year, and to consider developing a policy for the use of mulch – The Climate Emergency Committee is considering water usage in parks. Mulching should help to retain water. It was suggested that, where appropriate, mulching areas could be

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established in the Town Council's parks. It was agreed that a small Mulching Policy should be inserted into the Open Spaces Strategy and other relevant policies, setting out the Council's commitment to mulching to save costs and complement the climate emergency declaration. The policy will also include the Council's aspiration to establish its own mulching areas, where appropriate, although these would need to be suitably screened to prevent fly-tipping. Some potentially suitable areas have been identified in Fen Park and it was agreed this could be used as trial site, which will also be included in the policy.

83.2b. Granting delegated authority to the Deputy Clerk, working with Cllrs Barnard and Coleby, to progress planting schemes for the autumn plant and bulb orders – In addition to the bulb order already approved by the Finance and Governance Committee, costs have now been received for Normanston Park, Daffodil Walk and Stoven Close, which will need to be considered by the Finance and Governance Committee. Cllr Pearce proposed granting delegated authority to the Deputy Clerk, working with Cllrs Barnard and Coleby, to progress planting schemes for the autumn plant and bulb orders, subject to the relevant costs being approved by the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Hardie; eight Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against. Cllr Pearce volunteered to assist with the planting.

83.2c. Proceeding with the planting of the Tree Council funded trees this year, subject to Full Council's approval of the watering budget – The watering budget has been approved by Full Council. This also ties in with the next item.

83.2d. Seeking advice from a consultant on how to manage water usage in the Town Council's parks – Advice may be sought from the water companies and environmental specialists and Councillors may also have other suggestions. Cllr Coleby has some details which he will send to the Clerk. The Council has a desire to water plants and trees to ensure they thrive and are beneficial to the environment, but equally there are environmental concerns regarding water provision and ensuring watering is only carried out as appropriate. The Council needs advice on how to safely store and use waste water, particularly regarding the management of Legionella risks. There is a natural water provision in Sparrows Nest which the Council may be able to use. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers, working with the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee to seek advice on water usage in the Town Council's parks; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

- 83.3. Noting there is no active water supply to the old toilet block in Belle Vue Park – Norse have no problems watering the park currently, but the planned pink and white flowerbeds could be too far from the existing water supply. Advice will be sought from Norse as to how this could be managed.
- 83.4. Progress with memorial lecterns for the Belle Vue Park Peace Garden and Kensington Gardens Holocaust Memorial Garden – Cllr Coleby is taking this forward. It was noted that Suffolk County Councillors Ardley and Patience have withdrawn their offer of locality funding to provide a bench for Belle Vue Park.
- 83.5. Complaints received following the installation of lockable bollards at Sparrows Nest – Some complaints have been received from members of the public about the bollards. The bollards were installed following consultation with tenants on the site and approval via the Committee process. Some park users are unhappy that they can no longer gain vehicular access up to Martello. Tenants previously permitted to park in Sparrows Nest will be given a key for the bollards. One of the tenants has now advised they no longer wish to be a key holder. It is understood signage for the restaurant may be covering a 'no parking' sign. If necessary, it may be possible to remove the signage, as it is unclear whether permission was given to put it up. The bollards were installed due to the significant health and safety concerns of unauthorised vehicles accessing the site, particularly so close to the children's play area. One of the bollards has been installed

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close to where vehicles turn in and has already been hit. This could be resolved, but more consideration needs to be given to the whole situation. It was suggested that the bollard at the gated entrance could be moved further into the park and the Council could consider permitting parking just inside that entrance. The bollards being unlocked and lowered at present may be causing confusion. Cllr Coleby proposed that the bollards be marked up to make them more visible and a trial is run until January of having the bollards raised and locked, with clear signage to confirm that unauthorised parking is prohibited. The tenant who has changed their mind about holding a key should be notified of this, and asked whether they have any alternative suggestions the Council could consider to address this serious health and safety concern. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Pearce and all Councillors voted in favour.

83.6. Any updates on improvement work to Whitton Green – The cost of the improvement work is likely to increase by at least £20,000. The Council has asked Cllrs Green, Lang and Parker to consider the plans, but has not granted delegated authority to make decisions about the project. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee will be asked to consider the cost increase. It is understood the external funding previously committed will still be received. The cost increase has likely been caused largely by the availability of materials and labour during the pandemic, which will need to be an ongoing consideration for the Council. If the project did not go ahead it is not yet clear whether funding would have to be returned, or if there could be an agreement to dedicate it to another project. The Finance and Governance Committee cannot make a decision about the project but could consider the funding available in the budget, should the Council wish to proceed.

83.7. The provision of adult gym equipment, if information has been received – Some information has been received about the type of equipment available. Cllrs Breakspear, Pearce and the Committee Clerk completed a site visit to Fen Park with one company, who suggested the Council may wish to consider having different types of equipment at different locations, such as assault course-style equipment for teenagers at Fen Park, and fitness equipment at Normanston Park. Full Council needs to give the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee a steer on whether it intends to proceed with this project, so that suitable budget provision can be considered. Cllrs Carlton and Coleby previously visited another area where similar equipment has been installed, and it was suggested an update could be sought, as conflicting information has been received about the success of such equipment, with some suggesting that, although initially well used, its popularity can sometimes wane.

Cllr Hardie left the meeting 19:04

The Council would need to look at the main user groups of each of its parks. It was suggested that a Working Group should be established to take this forward. Cllrs Barnard, Breakspear, Coleby and Pearce expressed an interest, and it was agreed that Cllr Carlton should be invited as well. It was requested that an informal survey be run to gauge public reaction initially, before any formal plans are developed. Cllr Coleby proposed that the Working Group draws up a proposal to be considered by this Committee, and the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, before being referred to Full Council. In the interim officers should arrange an informal public survey. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Pearce and all Councillors voted in favour. It was suggested that the opinions of the Friends Groups should also be sought.

84. How to progress the following actions towards implementation of the Town Council's Health Emergency Declaration:

84.1. Exploring opportunities to enhance and expand the Town Council's provision of allotments – Officers are making enquiries to determine the demand for allotments, and whether there is any suitable land available to increase the provision if required.

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Community gardens are becoming more popular, and the Town Council has a community orchard planned. As part of Neighbourhood Development Plan, the Deputy Clerk has been liaising with East Suffolk and Suffolk County Councils about land they own within the Town Council's parish boundaries.

The Deputy Clerk joined the meeting 19:13

Before considering this further, the Committee would like more information about the demand, whether there is any suitable land, and how this could be taken forward in terms of land management or ownership. A meeting of the Allotments Sub-Committee could be convened, with a representative from the Allotments Association invited to discuss the options. It was queried whether the plans for establishing vehicular access at the Normanston allotments are being progressed. Cllr Patience has been assisting in his capacity as a Suffolk County Councillor and is awaiting revised plans following an issue regarding the requirement for a dropped curb.

84.2. Progressing outdoor shopping and entertainment opportunities, including an outdoor market and cultural/event space in parks – The Triangle Market Working Group has met and discussed the challenges of running a market, particularly given the current Government policy on outdoor trading and public events. It is however hoped that plans can be made for the spring. The Town Council's Events and Communications Officer has started today and can help progress plans.

84.3. Exploring opportunities to enhance the community benefit of the Town Council's Community Halls and leisure facilities, including through related sports clubs – Although nothing can be progressed immediately, it was agreed that post-Covid-19 activities should be considered, and there may be grant funding available to support this. It was suggested that areas for learning to cycle could be considered within the Council's parks.

85. How to progress the installation of a bus shelter on Harris Avenue

Cllrs Butler and Youngman have provided a report following their latest site visit, where they met with a representative from Suffolk County Council. Suffolk County Council will provide plans and an indication of the cost. Suffolk County Council has advised that it will take responsibility for the ongoing maintenance.

Cllr Patience left the meeting 19:29

86. Noting that further land transfer requests from East Suffolk Council are currently on hold until further notice, including urban pockets of land to accommodate noticeboards and bottle banks, and to enhance existing Town Council assets

This was also noted by Full Council. It was requested that the Vermeer Close pond be added to the list of sites for consideration once further transfers can be considered again. A group of local residents are interested in maintaining the site.

87. The results of the environmental assessments of the Town Council's ponds, if received

The assessments have been completed, but despite much chasing the reports have still not been received. The Committee expressed its disappointment.

88. Progress with the development of the Community Engagement policy

The draft policy had been circulated to the Committee, who agreed it was a good working document, particularly the inclusion of hard to reach groups, as people access information in many different ways.

The Clerk left the meeting 19:33

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to adopt the Community Engagement Policy as a

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working document; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. The policy will be considered by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee before being referred to Full Council. Now that the Events and Communications Officer is in post, consideration can be given to increasing the social media platforms the Council uses.

89. Noting that there have been further incidents of anti-social behaviour at the Rotterdam Road public conveniences, and to consider any measures to help prevent further incidents

There has been another arson attack and it was queried whether anything can be done to address this. The public conveniences are now locked overnight. A meeting of the Toilet Strategy Working Group is being arranged, where this issue can be considered further.

90. Which assets the Town Council would wish to cover if it were to consider running a CCTV service

Following the discussions at item 89, the Council may wish to consider additional security measures at its public conveniences. There were also incidents of anti-social behaviour at The Ness, although there is currently no power supply there to support the provision of CCTV. East Suffolk Council has not yet confirmed what its CCTV provision will be. The Community Safety has also been considering this matter, and would like this Committee's ideas for assets it would like to see covered by CCTV, if this were to be progressed. It was agreed this item should be carried forward to the next meeting, and any suggestions should be emailed to officers. Kensington Gardens was suggested, although a single camera would not cover the entire park.

91. Noting that the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee is considering Committee and Sub-Committee structures and Terms of Reference, and consideration of whether to submit any comments

All Committees and Sub-Committees have been asked to consider this. The review will be taking place in January. It was requested that this item remain on the agenda for any comments to be received. Several Committees and Sub-Committees are required to consider the same items, and the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee will look to consider a better structure for this to happen.

92. Requests to hire the Kensington Gardens Ammunition Bunker (some aspects may be confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

93. A request to grant Freedom of the Town, and Freeman status (some aspects may be confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

94. Date of the next meeting

7 December 2020 18:00

95. Items for the next agenda and close

There were no requests for items to be added to the next agenda. Any requests should be emailed to officers at least a week in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Barnard proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream and the live stream was closed as the meeting went into confidential session. It was confirmed the

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meeting would end following the confidential session.

96. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

92 Requests to hire the Kensington Gardens Ammunition Bunker (some aspects may be confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding requests received to hire the Ammunition Bunker, and how the Council may wish to handle such requests going forward. This will be carried forward to the next meeting for further consideration.

93 Requests to grant Freedom of the Town, and Freeman status (some aspects may be confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding requests received to bestow Freedom of the Town, and how to apply the policy. This will be carried forward to the next meeting for further consideration.

The Chair closed the meeting 20:30.

Signed: 

17 May 2021