

**Lowestoft Town Council**  
**Meeting of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee**  
**Via Video Meeting**  
**10:00 on 12 October 2020**

**MINUTES**

**Video meeting participants:** Cllrs Sue Barnard, Alan Green (Chair), Graham Parker and Andy Pearce

**Also participating:** Shona Bendix (Clerk), James Cox (Finance and Administration Assistant) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

**14. Welcome**

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

**15. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies. Cllr Coleby had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Barnard was due to be joining the meeting but had advised she would be late.

**16. Declarations of Interests and dispensations**

There were none.

**17. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meetings on 24 August 2020 and 1 October 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting**

With regard to item 8 of the meeting on 24 August, it was noted that a defibrillator has been installed on the Hatfield Hotel. Although this is not owned by the Town Council, it was agreed that it would be useful to add this to the map of defibrillators in the town, particularly as the Council looks at appropriate locations to install defibrillators.

**18. Any advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda**

There were none.

**19. The 2020 – 2021 Lowestoft Town Council Budget, including the following:**

19.1 The decision of the Finance and Governance Committee regarding hampers to offer thanks to staff at Lowestoft care homes and staff at the James Paget Hospital's Intensive Care Unit, and any additional arrangements – The Finance and Governance Committee has agreed a budget to purchase the hampers. The Clerk has been researching options which align with the Council's policies and declarations, and the anticipated cost will be approximately £55 per hamper, plus delivery charges, as it would not be appropriate to hand-deliver the hampers during the pandemic.

*Cllr Barnard joined the meeting 10:11*

Cllr Pearce has found an option whereby the hamper contents can be customised to suit the Council's requirements, and will send the details to the Clerk. It was suggested that vouchers could be considered instead of hampers and could still convey the same message of thanks. The Clerk will compare the two options and prepare a recommendation for Full Council to consider. It was requested that Levington Court be added to the list of recipient care homes, as it had confirmed cases of Covid-19. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Clerk compare the option of hampers against the option of gift vouchers and provide a recommendation to Full Council, that officers work with the Mayor on an appropriate message of thanks, including a message for the Town Council's social media and that the list of recipient care homes, including Levington Court, is presented to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Barnard; all in favour. A letter of thanks to local supermarkets is being progressed.

**20. The 2021 – 2022 Lowestoft Town Council Budget, including the following:**

20.1 Any further advice regarding the Lowestoft Taxbase Forecast and its impact on the

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precept – This has also been discussed by the Finance and Governance Committee. It is likely that even a small increase to the precept would still result in a significant reduction in funds available for this Council. Some in depth confidential discussions need to take place. When looking at the precept, it was suggested this should start with items which are non-negotiable, such as legal or contractual obligations. After that, items which are important but not essential can be considered. Detailed discussions will be confidential, some of which will be taking place during this meeting.

- 20.2 A request from the First Light Festival for funding of £8,000 in principle, towards running the festival in 2021 – Grant funding of £5,000 had been awarded by the Town Council towards the running costs of the festival in 2020, which was subsequently returned when it was determined that the festival could not go ahead in 2020. It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting, for further clarification to be sought on what has caused the increase to the cost to run the festival in 2021.
- 20.3 The Finance and Governance Committee’s decision regarding amplification improvements to Hamilton House, and to consider any additional arrangements, including where within the budget the funding will come from – There is a budget for IT, although there will be requirements for new members of staff. Separately, there is a budget for furniture and equipment and also a budget which was set aside for electric vehicles and bicycles. It is unlikely this budget will be required forthwith, so it was suggested the £7,000 intended for that purpose could be diverted to the amplification improvement budget, along with £4,500 from the IT budget, and £4,500 from the furniture and equipment budget. It was agreed that the Climate Emergency Committee should be consulted on whether the funds should be diverted from the electric vehicles and bicycles budget. It was clarified that the transportation would be intended for officers – particularly the Community Wardens, once appointed - to use for site visits, etc, to avoid using cars where possible. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee that, subject to the approval of the relevant Committees, £7,000 is diverted from the electric vehicles and bicycles budget, £4,500 is taken from the IT budget and £4,500 is taken from the furniture and equipment budget to make up the £16,000 maximum budget for amplification improvement and recording and broadcasting options for Hamilton House; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.
- 20.4 An appropriate budget for the provision of Christmas lights on London Road South, the High Street and Bevan Street East – It has been confirmed that Christmas lights for London Road South cannot be progressed this year. The Town Council is in its final year of a contract for the High Street and Bevan Street East, so it was suggested that the Council could consider and amalgamated contract for all three areas from next year, which may reduce the cost. In line with its climate emergency declaration, the Council may wish to consider alternatives to Christmas lights, such as events to encourage visitors to those areas. Officers will seek quotations for different Christmas lights options alongside environmentally friendly options. The Climate Emergency Committee will also consider the options. Should the Council decide to proceed with Christmas lights on London Road South, the cost of the infrastructure requirements will also have to be considered.
- 20.5 An appropriate budget provision for the professional development of staff (some aspects may be confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.
- 20.6 Investment options, in line with the Town Council’s Investment Policy (some aspects may be confidential) – It is understood the Bank of England may be considering negative interest rates, which may impact the Council’s investment options. The Town Council’s Investment Policy will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee, followed by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee.
- 20.7 The future of the East Suffolk Norse contract, and cost (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

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**21. Date of the next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 14:00 on Monday 26 October 2020.

**22. Items for the next Agenda and Close**

It was queried whether consideration could be given to allocating an individual budget of £250 to each Councillor, to spend in certain areas in the community. It was confirmed that it would not be lawful for the Town Council to have individual Councillors holding budgets and making decisions on behalf of the Council. There is however consideration to be given to the Council can streamline its processes and delivering results in a more efficient way. The Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee will be reviewing the Committee, Sub-Committee and Working Group structures for this purpose. The grant awarding programme is important in assisting the community, and given the significant budget constraints, the Council will need to consider its priorities.

Cllr Pearce proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barnard; 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 meeting would end following the confidential session.

**23. Resolution to close the meeting to the public**

23.1 Any legal matters, including those above as required:

20.5 An appropriate budget provision for the professional development of staff (some aspects may be confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding the budget provision to support the professional development of new and existing staff. Cllr Barnard made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

20.7 The future of the East Suffolk Norse contract, and cost (confidential) – There was a confidential discussion regarding the Norse contract. The Norse Contract Working Group will be meeting on 21 October and a further meeting will be arranged with representatives from Norse to follow this.

The Chair closed the meeting 11:22.

Signed:  .....

26 October 2020