

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

Via Video Meeting
16:45 on 8 April 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Neil Coleby, Alan Green, Paul Page, Graham Parker and Andy Pearce (Chair)

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

154. 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.

155. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs John Pitts and David Youngman. Cllr Page had advised that he would need to leave the meeting at 18:45. Cllr Parker had advised that he would need to leave the meeting at 18:00. Cllr Coleby proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

156. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

157. Receipt of any comments and noting that the minutes of the meeting of 11 March 2021 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

A typographical error had been identified at item 150.6 which will be amended.

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

There were none.

159. Budget:

159.1. Monitoring the budget for 2020 – 2021 – Officers have done some work to identify the year-end reserves position. This will be discussed further at item 161.2.

159.2. Bank reconciliations – February's bank reconciliation is with the relevant Councillor for checking.

160. Payments:

160.1. The income and expenditure reports for March 2021 and April 2021 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – The income and expenditure reports were noted as follows:

Table 1 March Income

Date	Received From	Description	Amount
1 March 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
8 March 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
12 March 2021	East Suffolk Council	S106 for Stoven Close	£15,102.35
15 March 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
15 March 2021	Zurich Insurance	Insurance claim for a laptop	£642.50
17 March 2021	Suffolk County Council	Locality Funding for Fen Park	£6,058.31
19 March 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£1,562.50
19 March 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50

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Date	Received From	Description	Amount
22 March 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
22 March 2021	Suffolk County Council	Locality Funding St Margarets	£780
26 March 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50

Table 2 March Expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
4 March 2021	SCC Pension Fund	Pensions February 2021	£4,450.70
9 March 2021	Land Registry	Land Registry Search	£6
16 March 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£666.10
16 March 2021	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Charges	£190.29
16 March 2021	Land Registry	Land Registry Search	£3
16 March 2021	Rialtas Business Suite	Omega software and support 2021-2022	£959 + £191.80 VAT = £1,150.80
16 March 2021	BSA Security	Replaced LED light fitting and fire extinguisher	£117 + £23.40 VAT = £140.40
16 March 2021	BSA Security	Whitton Meeting Hall replacement 1ah batteries	£134 + £26.80 VAT = £160.80
16 March 2021	BSA Security	Whitton Meeting Hall replacement 2.1ah batteries	£75 + £15 VAT = £90
16 March 2021	GYH Plumbing	Gunton Meeting Hall Boiler Service	£62.50 + £12.50 VAT = £75
18 March 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£209.37
18 March 2021	Need2Store Ltd	Civic Artefact Storage	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
19 March 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£690.43
19 March 2021	HMRC	HMRC February 2021	£4,228.61
22 March 2021	NPower	Electricity Charges	£94.63
23 March 2021	Salaries	Salaries March 2021	£10,272.61
23 March 2021	SLCC	SLCC Regional Training Seminar x2	£45 + £9 VAT = £54
25 March 2021	Sword and Trowel Ltd	Payslips Q3 2020-21	£73.50 + £14.70 VAT = £88.20
25 March 2021	Railway Paths Ltd	Annual Rent 2021 – 22	£20.91 + £4.19 VAT = £25.10
25 March 2021	Railway Paths Ltd	Annual Rent 2021 – 22	£0.03
25 March 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Partnership Charge Feb 2021	£36,525 + £7,305 VAT = £43,830
29 March 2021	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall gas	£39.32 + £1.96 VAT = £41.28
31 March 2021	Suffolk Cloud	Website hosting 2021-22	£110
31 March 2021	Breckland Council	Council Tax leaflets	£1,200 + £240 VAT = £1,440
31 March 2021	Urban Vision	Neighbourhood Plan support	£3,150 + £630 VAT = £3,780

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Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
31 March 2021	Unity Trust Bank	Service charge	£39.80
31 March 2021	Unity Trust Bank	Service charge adjustment	-£0.50

Table 3 April Income

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
6 April 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
6 April 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£2,500
6 April 2021	Brome and Oakley Parish Council	Half of Deputy Clerk SLCC Membership Fees	£144.50
7 April 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£1,550

Table 4 April Expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
1 April 2021	East Suffolk Council	Kensington Gardens PC NNDR April 2021	£205.80
1 April 2021	East Suffolk Council	Pakefield Street PC NNDR April 2021	£124.55
1 April 2021	East Suffolk Council	Triangle Market NNDR April 2021	£119.65
1 April 2021	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls NNDR April 2021	£107.80
1 April 2021	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park NNDR April 2021	£188.25
1 April 2021	Lowestoft Vision	Lowestoft Vision BID	£1,185
1 April 2021	Suffolk Pensions	Pensions March 2021	£4,450.70
8 April 2021	Zurich Municipal	Insurance 2021-22	£16,675.69
8 April 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Partnership Charge April 2021	£37,450 + £7,490 VAT = £44,940

160.2. Any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were none.

160.3. Receipt of any applications made under the COVID-19 Grant Awarding Policy – A grant application from East Anglia Gymnastics for £1,500 had been received, and a grant application from Corton Playing Field for £1,146.36 had also been received. Although Corton Playing Field is not located within Lowestoft's parish boundaries the facility is available for use by Lowestoft residents. The applicant has been asked to promote the availability of its services to Lowestoft residents. East Anglia Gymnastics is a private company but a club also, and the grant is not for investment in the club's land or buildings, but will be used to purchase equipment, which demonstrates a community benefit. The club has agreed to provide a report in six months' time to describe how the grant has been used. Cllrs Green and Pearce have assessed and approved both applications under their delegated authority, but as this is shortly due to expire and the standard grant awarding policy come back into effect, Cllrs Green and Pearce would like this Committee to ratify their decision. Cllr Coleby proposed supporting Cllrs Green and Pearce's decision to approve the Covid-19 grant applications from Corton Playing Field and East Anglia Gymnastics; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour. Any unspent funds from the Covid-19 grant fund will be carried forward to the 2021 – 2022 grant fund and applications will now be considered quarterly by this Committee.

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160.4. Payments for Hamilton House National Non-Domestic Rates – A bill for the forthcoming year and a backdated bill have been received. The Valuation Agency has requested some supporting information, which the Clerk is providing. The bills were expected and the budget provision takes into account the backdated demand. The backdated bill totals £12,105.88 and for the forthcoming year is £20,084.75. These will be paid on 1 May and 14 May and should not affect the Council's cash flow.

161. Audit and year end

161.1. Progress with preparations for the External Audit – The Mayor and Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee have been signing relevant documents in preparation. Rialtas will be carrying out the year-end process next week, and the following week the Internal Audit will be carried out. Prior to this the Internal Controller will be carrying out the Internal Control checks. The Asset Register has been comprehensively reviewed and the Council is working towards submission of the AGAR.

161.2. The reserves position – Officers have been carrying out work to identify the year-end position. It has been suggested that where an earmarked budget exists, any underspend should be carried forward to that specific earmarked budget in 2021 – 2022, rather than being allocated to general reserves. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee will consider this in more detail. It is likely some new earmarked reserves will be established. The Council may wish to consider a provision in its legal budget for pursuing private prosecutions, or an amount ring-fenced within an existing earmarked reserve. It was suggested that an earmarked reserve for major events should be set up, if not already in existence. Budget provision of £18,000 had been set aside for major events, in anticipation of the Town Council receiving applications for funding. It was suggested that unspent funds should be allocated to an earmarked reserve and carried forward. Any amount which exceeds the maximum of any specific reserve can be allocated to general reserves. The Council can decide to transfer funds between reserves if required, although generally expenditure is met from the budget rather than the reserve.

162. Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee

162.1. The draft minutes from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee meeting of 17 March 2021 – The draft minutes were noted.

162.2. The following recommendations from the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee:

162.2a. Adoption of the following Town Council policies: - Cllr Green proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt those policies and procedures as listed in items 162.2ai – 162.2aix, excluding item 162.2aiv; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour. Regarding item 162.2aiv, it was noted that webinar-style meetings will be trialled by the Planning and Environment Committee and Full Council. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Public Participation Protocol (Video Meetings) be referred back to the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee to consider any feedback from the webinar meeting trials and any amendments which may be required once there is more clarity on the arrangements for holding meetings from 6 May; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

162.2ai Legionella Control and Water Hygiene Policy, as amended

162.2aii Lone Working Policy and Risk Assessment, as amended

162.2aiii Public Participation Protocol

162.2aiv Public Participation Protocol (Video Meetings), and to note further review may be required should the Council to decide to hold video meetings in a webinar format

162.2av Redundancy Policy

162.2avi Reserves Policy, as amended

162.2avii Reporting Procedure for Assets and Maintenance

162.2aviii Reporting at Meetings Protocol, as amended

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162.2aix Safeguarding Policy

- 162.2b. The cost of providing smartphones to all Town Council officers – East Point Business Services (EPBS) are due to be providing some suggestions regarding a suitable model and specification. This will be for existing staff only and can be extended to new staff once they are appointed. The position regarding any additional tax liability for personal use will be checked. The provision of smartphones to officers would make asset inspections more efficient and would be beneficial for safety. Some officers do already have a Council issued smartphone but two do not work currently and are with EPBS. Even when functional the current smartphones are not adequate for taking photographs and the necessary safety features, in line with the Council's Lone Working Policy.
- 162.3. Appropriate financial delegations to the Town Council's Committees and Sub-Committees – Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the financial delegations to the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees as set out in the meeting paper. Since this item was first considered by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee the horticultural budget has been delegated to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee and there has already been a decision by Full Council to update the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee's Terms of Reference to enable it to delegate budgets to its Sub-Committees as agreed. It has been agreed that the Events and Communications Sub-Committee will report to the AID Committee with effect from the next civic year. For those Committees and Sub-Committees with a delegated budget expenditure will still be monitored and scrutinised in the usual way, and a standing item can be added to the agendas to monitor the budget position. The Council would reserve the right to remove these delegations at any point and could override a decision made by a Committee or Sub-Committee. It was queried whether the Capital and Development budgets should remain with Full Council as strategic items. This would depend on how much responsibility the Council would like to delegate to its Committees. Cllr Parker seconded Cllr Coleby's earlier proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. Thanks were extended to the Clerk and Finance Assistant for their work in putting this information together.
- 162.4. Consideration of the Town Council's Standing Orders and the timing of adoption, to take account of any amendments proposed by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee – The Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee will be considering the Standing Orders at their meeting in April, but it is likely there will not be another meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee between that meeting at the Annual Meeting, when the Standing Orders will be adopted again. It was suggested that this Committee could delegate authority to the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee to take any recommendations regarding the Standing Orders to the Full Council meeting in April. There was a discussion as to whether the Council's decision for the Deputy Mayor to have ex-officio membership to all of the Committees and Sub-Committees without voting rights should be included in the Standing Orders. The Mayor has automatic membership to the Committees and Sub-Committees and this is in the Terms of References only and not the Standing Orders. There have been other decisions made which will be taking effect from the Annual Meeting, which the Council may wish to reflect in its Standing Orders. Cllr Pearce made a recommendation to Full Council to update the Standing Orders to reflect the Council's current practise to give the Mayor automatic membership to the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees as set out in the Terms of Reference, as well as the decision to give the Deputy Mayor ex-officio membership to the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees without voting rights. There are other amendments which need to be discussed and it was suggested it may be better to review the Standing Orders as a whole. Cllr Pearce withdrew his proposal. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Standing Orders in their current form at the Annual Meeting, with an acknowledgement that there will be a comprehensive review following the Annual Meeting; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. The Standing Orders will still be reviewed by the Sub-Committee in April.

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163. Other financial matters, including:

163.1. Recommending the purchase of laptops for all Councillors – Information has been obtained from the Town Council's current IT provider. The laptops would require a certain level of security and have to be of a specification which can be managed successfully. The option suggested would be a purchase price of £427 per laptop, plus an annual fee of £315.75 per laptop for a support package, including the required licences. The screen size of the laptops can be checked, but if there is a minimum requirement Councillors would like to see they were encouraged they were encouraged to inform the Clerk as this could affect the cost. Add-on screens can be purchased and text can be enlarged on the screen. The installation of Microsoft Office would cost an additional £280 per laptop but this should not be required. It is understood there is no discount for a bulk purchase. Laptops should be more reliable than the tablet previously purchased. This Committee would like the laptops to have a guaranteed lifespan of at least six years, so that the purchase of replacements could then be tied in with the election cycle. In doing so, budget provision can be considered in advance and built up over a four year period. There is £1,500 in the IT reserve for tablet replacements. There will be the initial upfront cost to purchase the laptops themselves, which could be covered by reserves if required, but the Council will need to budget for the ongoing support costs. It is understood that there is approximately £16,000 of unspent funds in the IT budget for 2020 – 2021, plus an additional £14,000 for 2021 – 2022. Should the Council agree to progress this the tablets will be repurposed. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council to proceed with the purchase of laptops for all Councillors and to delegate authority to the Clerk to agree the specification and complete the purchase, within a maximum budget of £20,000; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. If approved, the laptops will be purchased after the elections in May.

163.2. Insurance:

163.2a. Reviewing aspects of the 2021 – 2022 insurance (some aspects may be confidential) – A good deal has been secured for the Council's insurance cover. Some aspects still need to be checked, including arrangements with tenants. At worst cover is being duplicated. New lease arrangements are being worked through and there will be changes to the assets portfolio. The Council will be asked to make some policy decisions soon, particularly regarding items not covered currently. The Committee offered a vote of thanks to the Clerk and the Finance Assistant for their work in reviewing the insurance arrangements.

163.2b. Taking out Ill Health Liability Insurance – This is being covered by an arrangement with the Local Government Pension Scheme at no additional cost to the Council.

163.3. An update on the purchase of amplification and recording equipment for face-to-face meetings at Hamilton House, and security arrangements to support meetings outside of office hours – Some quotations had been sought previously. Going forward, it may be possible for the Council to hold hybrid meetings, in which case it will need to ensure that those present at the face-to-face meeting and those joining remotely can hear and participate. A potential solution has been offered by the Town Council's landlord at a reasonable cost. A laptop with the audio and camera functionality to stream the meeting and enable video meeting participants could be provided for just over £1,000. Additional speakers could be added for £146 each. This should provide the functionality that the Council is looking for and will allow meetings to continue to be made available via YouTube for the civic year, as per the Council's previous agreement. The cost is lower than the quotations previously received and it would be difficult for the Council to justify a large outlay on such arrangements for Hamilton House when it is intending to relocate to the Town Hall in due course. Additional Zoom-certified equipment can be purchased if necessary. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to proceed with the purchase of amplification and recording equipment for face-to-face meetings at Hamilton House, with delegated authority to the Clerk to progress and implement within a maximum budget of £7,000; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. It was suggested that any unused funds from

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- the budget set aside for this purpose could be used towards the purchase of the laptops for all Councillors.
- 163.4. A recommendation from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee for a maximum budget of £100 to purchase a replacement shrub and bulbs for Sparrows Nest – Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the maximum budget of £100 to purchase a replacement shrub and bulbs for Sparrows Nest; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.
- 163.5. The cost of benches, bins and bicycle racks to be purchased as part of the Council's five-year plans – Some preliminary information has been received, but the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee will need to provide a detailed proposal, specifications and a recommendation.
- 163.6. Measures to prevent unauthorised vehicular access to the Town Council's parks – This specifically relates to Fen Park and Britten Road. Incidents of anti-social behaviour have been reported to the Police but the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee and the Community Safety Committee will need to consider what measures the Council could take.
- 163.7. An update on the provision of drinking water fountains at Sparrows Nest and Kensington Gardens – The ongoing effects of the pandemic has delayed the process, but this will be very difficult to implement in a safe way, particularly managing the legionella risks. The Clerk has been looking into this and enquiries are ongoing.
- 163.8. Guardianship of historic features at the Lowestoft Hospital – There are some policies in the Neighbourhood Development Plan relevant to the former Lowestoft Hospital site, but this particular item relates to artefacts of potential historical interest which the Council understands are at the site which the current developer may wish to transfer to the Town Council's guardianship. The AID Committee will be asked to consider this. It was suggested that if any items should come into the Council's guardianship they should be on public display rather than stored. This Committee had no objection in principle to this item being considered further. The Council has a general policy that it would like to protect and preserve items of importance to Lowestoft, but no policy as to how to do that. Some matters would require external expertise.
- 163.9 The cost of purchasing braided LED lights for London Road South and agreeing a joint contract for the North and South sides of the town (some aspects may be confidential) – Two quotations have been received so far. The Working Group has met with one of the providers and decided that projectors would not be a viable option, so has instead recommended progressing braided lights. The Council has previously purchased braided lights for Bevan Street East and the High Street. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to purchase braided lights for London Road South for twenty six street lights and the necessary infrastructure to support the lights, and a joint three year contract for the North and South sides of the town, within the budget already agreed; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.
- 163.10 The cost of proposed improvements to the Denes Oval (some aspects may be confidential) – A further meeting with stakeholders will be arranged, and proposals will be considered by the AID Committee and Full Council. Quotations for short term improvement works have been received previously.
- 163.11 A new loan agreement for the Lowestoft Collection (confidential) – There have been difficulties in progressing a suitable new loan agreement. The Lowestoft Museum Trustees are aware of the Council's in principle agreement regarding the loan agreement. The Clerk has been liaising with the Council's solicitor and the Trustees to find a suitable template to move this forward. In the meantime, the Trustees are aware of the extension to the agreement for at least another year which will be replaced with a successor agreement as soon as it is agreed.
- 163.12 Any recommendations regarding the lease, insurance and building improvements relating to a tenancy at Normanston Park (confidential) – There were no updates for this Committee to consider. The Sub-Committee will be meeting again on 14 April.

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164 Date of the next meeting

13 May 2021 16:45 – It was noted that the meeting will be held on 20 May at 16:45 so that it is not within the period after the legislation enabling Councils to meet via video meeting ends but the lockdown restrictions do not allow face-to-face meetings to take place.

165 Items for the next agenda and close

There were no requests for items to be added to the next agenda.

The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream. There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting 18:41.

166 Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

20 May 2021