

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Full Council Meeting
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:30 on 16 January 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Colin Butler, Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Alan Green (Mayor), Peter Knight, David LeGrice, Christian Newsome, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, John Pitts and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Town Clerk), Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk), James Cox (Finance and Information Officer) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

128. Welcome

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

129. Approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Craig, Frost, Jones, Lang, Page and Patience with reasons provided.

Cllr Knight proposed approval of apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Cllr Taylor was absent with no apologies provided.

130. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

130.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the Agenda.

Cllr Brooks declared she was a representative on the Marina Theatre Quarterly Management Meetings.

130.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted.

None were received.

131. To consider the draft minutes and appended confidential notes of the meeting on 20 December 2022

Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

132. 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 comments were received.

133. To consider the future direction on the grounds maintenance contract and impact on the budget and precept (some aspects may be confidential)

It was noted there were two options for the grounds maintenance contract, either to continue with a fully outsourced model, which would require a full tender, or a hybrid system where services would be brought in-house and specialist or technical work would be outsourced. The Town Council could not be provided with the cost of full outsourcing until procurement, therefore costs would be based on the existing Norse cost, plus allowance for inflation. Services brought in-house could be run at less cost than the commercial model but there would be transitional capital costs with the purchase or lease of equipment.

It was confirmed the budget was prepared by the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee on the basis of bringing in as many services as possible in-house, with the transitional costs also budgeted, and outsourcing any specialist works. Based on that hybrid model the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee recommended a precept demand of £1,975,790 for 2023-2024, Band D Council Tax Equivalent £152.85 (equating to a 4.24% increase on the Band D Council Tax equivalent for

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2022-2023). Within this hybrid model essential parks and open spaces management would be brought in-house, transitional costs would be included and all works would be run at cost, whilst continuing to outsource specialist areas. It was noted that the hybrid model would allow the Town Council full control over the contracts for outsourced work and staff terms and conditions, ownership of the work and its prioritisation, and underspend from budgeted works would be reinvested in the Town Council's assets. It was noted that the Town Council had already set a good financial and service delivery precedent with recent recruitments and in-house work.

Cllr Breakspear proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

134. To consider the 2023 – 2024 budget and precept (some aspects may be confidential)

To be discussed in confidential session.

135. Date of next meeting

24 January 2023 at 18:30

136. Items for the next agenda and close

It was requested items for the next agenda be emailed to the office.

137. 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 and employment issues relating to the matters on this agenda, including the following:

137.1. Any matters, including those above as required

It was agreed that the meeting would return to public session to discuss and decide on the precept setting and budget.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 18:49

133. To consider the future direction on the grounds maintenance contract and impact on the budget and precept (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal on grounds maintenance provisions; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

It was noted that the national real living wage would be applied to all staff.

The Chair moved the meeting back into public session at 19:24

134. To consider the 2023 – 2024 budget and precept (some aspects may be confidential)

The Town Council confirmed all Councillors were in favour to take the grounds maintenance in-house with specialist works outsourced.

Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee recommendation to demand a precept of £1,975,790 for 2023-2024, Band D Council Tax Equivalent £152.85 (equating to a 4.24% increase on the Band D Council Tax equivalent for 2022-2023); seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

For the Council tax leaflet it was confirmed the agreed figures would be amended on the leaflet and re-circulated to Councillors for review. It was suggested the leaflet highlight public facing areas, such as the refurbishment of play areas and toilets and the free-to-access sports facilities.

The Chair closed the meeting at 19:29

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Signed:
24 January 2023