

# Lowestoft Town Council

## Full Council Meeting

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 25 June 2024

### MINUTES

**Present:** Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum (Mayor), Connor Blowers, Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Janet Craig, John Murray, Christian Newsome, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger, Deborah Ray, Nick Webb and Elise Youngman

**In attendance:** Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk)

**Also in attendance:** Sheila Moss King (Town Hall Project Manager) (via Zoom)

**Public:** There were two members of the public in attendance (in person)

#### 39. Welcome

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

#### 40. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jen Jones, Christine Moore, Christian Newsome, Keith Patience and John Pitts, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

#### 41. Declarations and dispensations

41.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr Blowers declared he is an employee of the Marina Theatre. Regarding item 47.3, Cllr Pearce declared he is Chair of Gunton Residents' Association, which has a concern for this item. Regarding item 51.1, Cllr Pearce declared he was the former secretary of the Save Our Records Office group and a former Committee member, and was still a member of the group and the Lowestoft Independent Archives Group. Cllr Rappensberger declared she was also a former Committee member of the Save Our Records Office group. Cllr Parker declared an interest in item 47.3, and he and Cllr Craig declared they are members of East Suffolk Council. Regarding item 51.1, Cllr Barker declared she had written a personal email objecting to the closure of the Lowestoft branch of the Suffolk Archives.

41.2. Written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – There were none.

#### 42. The draft minutes and confidential note of the Full Council meeting on 30 May and the confidential note of the Full Council meeting on 9 April 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the minutes and confidential notes as listed in the agenda item; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

#### 43. Public forum

A member of the public in attendance introduced himself as Mark Webster from The Conservation Volunteers and was speaking in support of item 44.2d. Mr Webster explained who The Conservation Volunteers are and the work they do, and requested the Town Council's support for the purchase of the land at Crown Score. The Conservation Volunteers seek projects which will improve biodiversity or public health and wellbeing, and considered this project would do both. With regard to funding, £15,000 match-funding was expected from Suffolk County Council, via East Suffolk Council (the Communities Team and Community Partnership). The Conservation Volunteers were expecting a further £15,000 from the same fund towards working with the local community on a project at the Gunton Community Park, and hoped to work across multiple sites in Lowestoft. £20,000 of funding had been secured for The Conservation Volunteers to work on another site in the area, and an application for £10,000 was being submitted to a renewable energy company to work with the community on sites in

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the area. An application was to be submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for £90,000, which would enable The Conservation Volunteers to hire a temporary Project Officer to bring together projects in the area, with a view to creating a green heritage corridor.

Cllr Brooks enquired as to the process for selecting sites to work on, and it was explained they are usually approached with projects, in this case via the Waveney Voluntary and Statutory Partnership. The Town Council was not represented on this body but was acquainted with them.

*One member of the public left the meeting 18:44*

*Cllr Breakspear temporarily left the meeting 18:44*

#### **44. Finance and Governance**

44.1. The draft minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 24 June 2024 –  
The draft minutes were not available for this meeting.

44.2. Any recommendations from the Finance and Governance Committee on the following:

44.2a. The Committee's meeting schedule – The Committee had made a recommendation to change its meeting schedule to the second Monday of the month at 18:00. Cllr Begum advised she would not be able to attend meetings on Mondays.

*Cllr Breakspear returned 18:46*

The Acting Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer advised she would also not be able to attend meetings at this time, and considered it important that the Responsible Financial Officer be in attendance if possible. The current situation with regard to the Responsible Financial Officer may change, which may make the proposed new meeting schedule suitable. Cllr Pearce proposed for July's meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee to take place as per its current schedule (second Tuesday of the month at 10:30) and reconsider the meeting schedule going forward, taking account of everyone's availability, including the Responsible Financial Officer, with a recommendation to be made to July's Full Council meeting; seconded by Cllr Brooks; twelve Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

44.2b. Terms of Reference, delegations and expenditure limits – Cllr Pearce proposed to adopt the Terms of Reference and approve the current delegations and expenditure limits, with the Terms of Reference to be monitored throughout the year; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

44.2c. Sponsorship opportunities with the International Boatbuilding Training College – Cllr Pearce reported that all members of the Finance and Governance Committee had been invited to meet with the International Boatbuilding Training College (IBTC), to discuss potential sponsorship of a bursary or similar programme. Cllrs Brooks, Pearce and the Committee Clerk had attended the meeting. The Finance and Governance Committee had subsequently made a recommendation to enter into a sponsorship arrangement with the IBTC, at £17,950 per annum over three years initially, with other comments as follows:

- The £17,950 per annum is based on the current cost of IBTC's 47 week boatbuilding course, which provides training and potential for entry-level employment in a maritime-related post.
- The IBTC does not usually offer 100% bursaries. The amount in question would fund bursary placements for two students a year over three years.
- The IBTC also offers other courses - City & Guilds Level 2 Bench Joinery (12-15 weeks, £6565) and City & Guilds Level 3 Bench Joinery (8 weeks, cost TBC but circa £5K) - which are also in high demand and produce transferrable skills.
- Whilst there is a heritage component to what IBTC does, the investment would be in a programme providing skills, training and work opportunities to young people.

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- IBTC has noted there are barriers other than fees to people from the local area, particularly if they are unemployed. A suggestion is for IBTC to look to engage with local organisations supporting those looking to return to work by offering retraining opportunities.
- IBTC is currently in the process of separating out its commercial and charitable arms, and it is their preference that if the Town Council approves the proposal that the sponsorship should be provided through its charitable arm.
- If approved, both parties would need to agree the content and timing of any publicity and promotion of the sponsorship arrangement, prior to joint release.

Taking the above points into account, Cllr Pearce made the following proposal:

- For the Town Council to approve a sponsorship arrangement with the IBTC at £17,950 per annum over 3 years initially.
- To allow the IBTC to make the decision each year on how that is allocated between students, and what percentage of fees for the student is sponsored in each case, but that the Town Council is informed each year how many students will be benefiting from that year's sponsorship, and in what proportions.
- Whilst not necessarily restricting uptake to students living in the parish of Lowestoft, the Town Council asks the IBTC to publicise and promote the training opportunities (including availability of bursaries) within the parish of Lowestoft, and do everything it can to encourage take-up from within the parish. If there are barriers to engagement, such as socio-economic challenges making it difficult for students from within the parish to cover the fees, even with the bursary, an immediate discussion is held, with a view to bringing in other stakeholders to help find a solution.
- To provide the sponsorship through the IBTC's charitable arm, with the Town Council providing the necessary written confirmation to support the IBTC's registration with the Charity Commission, and confirm that payment can be made upon receipt of confirmation of completion of the charity registration.
- To confirm the Town Council's in-principle agreement to joint publicity and promotion of the programme, subject to both parties agreeing the content and timing of such publicity and promotion before joint release.
- To delegate authority to the Finance and Governance Committee to determine the budget allocation of the Year 1 sponsorship at its next meeting, with the sponsorship for Years 2 and 3 to be specifically budgeted for.

*Cllr Newsome arrived 18:56*

Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and Cllr Barker expressed her support. Cllr Murray considered the bursaries should be focussed on supporting young people from the area, which had been included in the proposal. Cllr Begum had concerns regarding the amount of funding being requested, and the number of students this would benefit. The IBTC had confirmed it did not generally offer 100% bursaries. As part of the proposal, the Town Council would allow them to determine how the funding is allocated, but requested that training opportunities are promoted in the parish. The vote was taken at twelve Councillors voted in favour; two Councillors abstained from the vote.

44.2d. A grant application from the Lowestoft North Cliff Community Garden CIO and The Conservation Volunteers for £15,000 – It was agreed this item would be considered during the confidential session.

44.2e. A partnership arrangement with Ventura Cottage regarding a bid to the National Archives – Two meetings had been held, one with the group itself, who would be delivering the project, and one with a representative from the National Archives.

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Cllr Pearce had been unable to attend the second meeting, but had submitted questions to the National Archives representative, which had been discussed and answered during the meeting. There was no financial ask of the Town Council, and it was not being asked to deliver the project. The Town Council had been asked to claim the funding and be the accountable body for it. To make the distinction on the funding application, the National Archives representative had suggested that Lowestoft Town Council and the party delivering the project be described as partners. On this basis, Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the request and allow the funding application to go forward in the Town Council's name, with the Town Council described as partners with the body delivering the project. Cllr Pearce further proposed for the final draft of the application to be circulated amongst Councillors for comment before it is submitted; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

44.2f. A quotation for licences to install Microsoft Office on Councillor laptops – The Finance and Governance Committee had deferred this item to the Events and Communications Sub-Committee to consider other software packages which would negate the need for Microsoft Office.

44.3. Appointing substitute members to the Finance and Governance Committee – There had been issues with recent meetings being inquorate.

*Cllr Brooks temporarily left the meeting 19:09*

Councillors had not always provided apologies in advance of the meeting.

*Cllr Brooks returned 19:11*

Cllr Pearce proposed an amendment to the Finance and Governance Committee's Terms of Reference, to enable it to appoint substitutes, who would only be called upon if required for a meeting to be quorate; seconded by Cllr Blowers; thirteen Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against. Cllrs Blowers and Ray put their names forward as substitutes. Cllr Brooks considered the need for substitutes when Councillors would be welcome to join the Committee. Cllr Ray advised she did not wish to become a member of the Committee but was happy to attend if required. Cllr Newsome enquired as to the Committee's meeting schedule. This was currently under review and Cllr Newsome was advised to notify the office of his availability. Cllr Pearce proposed to appoint Cllrs Blowers and Ray as substitutes to the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

44.4. Receipt and consideration of the following:

44.4a. 2024 – 2025 budget and reserves – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the provided document as a true and accurate record of the current position; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

44.4b. Any bank reconciliations – It was noted there were bank reconciliations still outstanding, which would be chased.

44.4c. Payments and income for the month ending 31 May 2024 and June 2024 to date (see schedules) – The income and expenditure reports were received and noted.

44.4d. Payments for approval – There were none.

44.5. Any audit matters including the following:

44.5a. Receipt of the internal audit report – The internal audit report was received and noted, and thanks were offered to the Finance and Information Officer on his work for the audit.

44.5b. The internal control review completed on 28 May 2024 – It was noted that the internal control review had been completed by Cllr Youngman.

44.5c. The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2023 – 2024 and associated papers and processes for external audit, including:

44.5ci. Approving the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1 AGAR) – The Acting Town Clerk read out each of the statements and advised each statement should be answered as 'yes'. Should there be any statements where Council did not feel it could that, measures would need to be put into place. Cllr

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Pearce proposed to approve each of the statements as read out; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. The Annual Governance Statement was duly signed by Cllr Begum as Mayor.

44.5cii. Approving the Accounting Statement (Section 2 AGAR) and noting the associated papers, including statement of significant variances and bank reconciliation – This had been provided to members and examined by the Internal Auditor as well. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the Accounting Statement (Section 2 AGAR) and note the associated papers, including statement of significant variances and bank reconciliation; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

### 45. Town Hall Project

45.1. The draft minutes of the Town Hall Project Committee meeting on 5 June 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

*The Town Hall Project Manager joined the meeting via Zoom 19:20*

45.2. The delivery stage of the redevelopment of the Town Hall:

45.2a. A progress report from the Project Manager – The construction contract tender had been published the previous day and would be closing on 5 August. This marked a big achievement in the project and Cllr Brooks offered her thanks to the Project Manager and her team. Noting a point in the report about an issue with the curb heights on Compass Street and Mariners Street, Cllr Brooks suggested drainage holes in the curbs. The Project Manager explained the pavements had been built up, and the dry rot and design team specialists had recommended lowering of the pavements, which would be a complex process. Cllr Pearce understood East Suffolk Council's Chief Executive Officer was opposed to the idea of the Town Council being charged £16,000 plus VAT per year for use of its land as a compound during the substation works, and requested an item be added to the Quarterly Liaison Meeting agenda to discuss, with no acceptance of the fee to be communicated ahead of this. It was noted that whilst the situation with dry rot had improved, ventilation of other areas needed to be improved, without compromising security. The Project Manager would liaise with the Town Council's facilities staff.

45.2b. Proposed charges for siting of compound (confidential) – This was included with the discussion of the previous item.

*The Town Hall Project Manager left the meeting 19:28*

### 46. Marina Theatre

46.1. The Marina Theatre Redevelopment Project:

*Cllr Blowers temporarily left the meeting 19:28 for the consideration of this item*

46.1a. A progress report from the Project Manager – The Project Manager's report was received and noted.

46.1b. Approving the communications plan – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the communications plan; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour. The Acting Town Clerk had received the cost plan and this would be considered at the next Marina Theatre Project Committee meeting.

46.2. Costs for a temporary heating solution from October 2024 to April 2025 – The Acting Town Clerk advised there were issues with the gas boiler. Three options were available. The existing boiler could be converted to oil, which would require an oil tank. The overall cost would be approximately £18,000. A temporary oil-fuelled boiler with storage tanks could be supplied, at a cost of approximately £23,000, or the gas could be re-routed as part of the project, with the cost to be confirmed. The Finance and Governance Committee would consider the options.

46.3. Progress on procuring quotations for new heating system – Engineers had attended site

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that day, with the Town Council's Buildings Manager, to look at options. Work was underway to scope out and get costs, in conjunction with the Design Team working on the improvement project.

### 47. Assets, Inclusion and Development

47.1. The draft minutes of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee meeting on 3 June 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

*Cllr Blowers returned 19:33*

47.2. The following recommendations from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee:

47.2a. Adopting the Terms of Reference of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee – Cllr Pearce proposed to adopt the Terms of Reference; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

47.2b. For the meeting schedule, delegations and expenditure limit of the Committee to remain the same, following the Committee's review of its Terms of Reference – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this recommendation; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.

47.3. The prospective sale of ancient woodland at Foxburrow Woods, including any options available to the Town Council – The auction was being held the following day. Cllr Brooks had been contacted by residents, and had undertaken a site visit and spoken with a representative of Durrants. It was noted that the land was classed as an ancient woodland, with several Tree Protection Orders in place, which would make any development difficult. Residents wanted to see the land retained as public open space and were willing to contribute. Cllr Brooks had asked Durrants if the vendor would be prepared to meet with residents. Cllr Pearce had looked into the process for registering the land as an Asset of Community Value, but this would be lengthy. Any party wishing to bid for the land was required to deposit £5,000, which would be refunded if the bid was unsuccessful. The Gunton Residents' Association did not have the funds to participate in the auction. The Town Council could not take on the ongoing maintenance, risk management and liability of the woodland, and this would also be the case for community groups. Cllr Brooks noted the woodland was included in the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan, and suggested the Town Council may be able to assist in finding someone to take on and manage the land. Cllr Pearce proposed making a hypothetical approach to the Woodland Trust, to ask if it were necessary to purchase the land to save it from development or enclosure, the people who would potentially be willing to raise the funds to make the purchase do not have the expertise or risk profile to manage the land, therefore would the Woodland Trust consider, in-principle, a subsequent transfer of the land to their ownership. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

### 48. Planning

48.1. The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting on 13 June 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

48.2. The following recommendations from the Planning Committee:

48.2a. Adopting the Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee – Cllr Peare proposed to adopt the Terms of Reference; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

48.2b. For the meeting schedule and delegations of the Committee to remain the same, following the Committee's review of its Terms of Reference – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this recommendation; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

### 49. Personnel

49.1. The draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting on 6 June 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

49.2. The following recommendations from the Personnel Committee:

49.2a. Adopting the Terms of Reference of the Personnel Committee – Cllr Pearce

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proposed to adopt the Terms of Reference; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.

- 49.2b. For the meeting schedule, delegations and expenditure limit of the Committee to remain the same, following the Committee's review of its Terms of Reference – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this recommendation; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.
- 49.3. Any matters relating to staff absence (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.
- 49.4. Staff terms and conditions for 2024/25 (confidential) – It was noted there were no items requiring the consideration of Full Council. The Personnel Committee was due to meet the following week and any recommendations would be brought to July's Full Council meeting.

### 50. Climate and Ecological Emergency

50.1. The draft minutes of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee meeting on 17 June 2024 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

50.2. The following recommendations from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee:

50.2a. Adopting the Terms of Reference, with an amendment that there be no fixed number of non-Councillor members on the Committee, but the number of non-Councillor members in attendance at a meeting shall not exceed the number of Councillors – In response to a question from Cllr Begum regarding managing attendance of non-Councillor members, Cllr Pearce explained that the proposed amendment would become a quorum requirement, therefore if non-Councillor members outnumbered Councillor members, non-Councillor members would be asked to nominate amongst themselves the appropriate number of them to leave the meeting to fulfil this requirement. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this amendment to the Terms of Reference; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

50.2b. For the meeting schedule, delegations and expenditure limit of the Committee to remain the same, following the Committee's review of its Terms of Reference – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this recommendation; seconded by Cllr Ray; all in favour.

50.2c. Sending a strong response to Suffolk County and East Suffolk Councils regarding the widespread use of glyphosate –

*Cllrs Craig and Parker temporarily left the meeting 19:49 for the consideration of this item*

Cllr Newsome declared an interest in item 50.2d. Cllr Brooks clarified that East Suffolk Council does not use glyphosate. Suffolk Highways decided to reintroduce its use. Cllr Brooks considered the use of glyphosate detrimental to the environment and ineffective with the method being applied. Localised and targeted treatment could be effective, however widespread and indiscriminate use would be an issue. Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate authority to officers, in conjunction with any interested Councillors to formulate and send a response to Suffolk County Council, which could be copied to East Suffolk Council though would be aimed at them; seconded by Cllr Ray; all in favour.

*Cllrs Craig and Parker returned 19:53*

50.2d. Approving the statement and questions for a public transport survey –

*Cllr Newsome temporarily left the meeting 19:53 for the consideration of this item*

Cllrs Brooks, Parker and John Sillett (non-Councillor member of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee) had met as the Public Transport Working Group. There had been discussions with the bus operator and the East Suffolk Travel Association and it had been agreed to progress a public survey as the first step, accompanied by a short statement to advise the purpose of the survey was to seek opinions only, without the expectation that the Working Group can resolve the issues raised. At question two, Cllr Pearce requested the addition of 'other' as option F. The Acting Town Clerk considered the survey required some amendments to remove repeated questions and to rephrase some of them to ensure that

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analysis can be drawn from them. It had been suggested an approach could be made to the college for a student to analyse the results. Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate authority to officers to amend the survey and statement as necessary, to make it suitable for issue and analysis, with the addition to question two as requested; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. The Acting Town Clerk advised that the consultant working with the Town Council had worked with Transport East and could assist.

### 51. Outside bodies

51.1. Noting correspondence from the Suffolk Archives regarding the closure of the Lowestoft branch –

*Cllr Newsome returned 20:01*

It was noted that users of the archive materials had been excluded from attending recent meetings, with only depositors of materials represented. The meetings had been Chaired by a member of East Suffolk Council, but other local Councils had not been given the opportunity to attend. Cllr Pearce considered there to have been no meaningful engagement. Cllr Pearce requested the addition of an item on the Town Hall Project Committee's agenda in relation to the Town Council's engagement with Suffolk Archives on that particular project, and an item on the Events and Communications Sub-Committee agenda for non-project related event applications, particularly with heritage applications, as it may need to be considered whether their actions go against the ethos of the project and the aims the Town Council is trying to promote. Cllr Pearce proposed for the Town Hall Project Committee and Events and Communications Sub-Committee to consider the Town Council's engagement with Suffolk Archives on project and non-project related events, in light of this decision and the way it has been handled. It was noted there were plans to close The Hold for three months. It was considered that books in the Archives belonging to the Library should remain in the Library. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

51.2. The draft agenda for the East Suffolk Council Quarterly Liaison Meeting on 8 July 2024 and appointing Town Council representatives to attend – Cllr Pearce had requested an item earlier in the meeting.

*Cllr Barker temporarily left the meeting 20:08*

Cllrs Brooks, Pearce and Ray put their names forward to attend.

*Cllr Barker returned 20:09*

Cllr Pearce proposed to appoint Cllrs Brooks, Pearce and Ray to attend July's Quarterly Liaison Meeting; seconded by Cllr Blowers; all in favour.

### 52. Date of next meeting

Extraordinary Full Council meeting 2 July 2024 at 18:30

23 July 2024 at 18:30

### 53. Items for the next agenda and close

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

*The remaining member of the public left the meeting 20:10*

Cllr Pearce proposed to move the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.

### 54. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

54.1. Any matters, including those above as required:

*Cllr Breakspear temporarily left the meeting 20:11*

*Cllr Brooks temporarily left the meeting 20:12*

44.2d. A grant application from the Lowestoft North Cliff Community Garden CIO and The Conservation Volunteers for £15,000 –

*Cllr Breakspear returned 20:12*



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Cllr Pearce reported on a recent meeting he had attended.

*Cllr Brooks returned 20:17*

The Acting Town Clerk had submitted a legal enquiry and suggested an alternative option.

*Cllr Parker left the meeting 20:21*

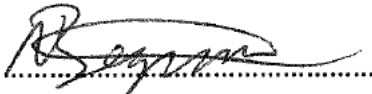
Cllr Pearce proposed to let the Lowestoft North Cliff Community Garden CIO and The Conservation Volunteers know that the application will be considered at July's Full Council meeting, along with the suggested alternative option, following receipt of legal advice. Cllr Barker seconded the proposal. Cllr Brooks was concerned regarding the difficulty in accessing the land, and any planned project would be obscured by industrial buildings which had since been constructed. The vote was taken an eleven Councillors voted in favour; two Councillors voted against.

49.3. Any matters relating to staff absence (confidential) – There were no matters for Full Council to consider.

The meeting was closed 20:26.

Signed: .....

2 July 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Barker', written over a dotted line.