

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
19:00 on 18 October 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, Janet Craig, Christian Newsome, Paul Page, Andy Pearce and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance (either in person or via Zoom webinar)

89. Welcome

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

90. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sonia Barker, Robert Breakspear and John Pitts, who had provided reasons. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

91. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

91.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Councillors were reminded they did not need to declare an interest in an item just for the reason of it being in their Ward.

91.2. Written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted – There were none.

92. The draft minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting on 4 October 2022

Cllr Newsome proposed approval of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Youngman; five Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

93. Public forum

No advance comments had been received and no members of the public were in attendance.

94. Monitoring expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget

The Sub-Committee noted there was £7,304.15 remaining in the horticulture budget, and expenditure had included purchases of bulbs, trees, tree guards, mulch, and the cost of watering. Cllr Pearce requested an item on the next agenda to consider planting at The Ness, including ideas for a coastal garden. Further to a request at the last meeting, an Arborist had assessed the trees at The Ness and advised that several of the trees are showing signs of decline and did not appear healthy even in the early stages. Flooding of the site would have also had a negative impact. It was agreed to add an item to the agenda to consider next steps.

95. Making recommendations to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee regarding the 2023 – 2024 horticultural, parks development and other relevant budgets

This year's horticulture budget did not include specific provision for tree watering. This budget would at least increase by RPI, and the current working figure for inflation is ten percent. Cllr Youngman proposed a recommendation to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee to increase the horticulture budget to £20,000 for 2023 – 2024; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The parks development budget includes benches, bins, bicycle racks and developing new

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flowerbeds. There has been a bulk purchase of benches, which are being installed, with some still pending delivery. The purchase of bicycle racks will need to be considered.

The Clerk temporarily left the meeting 19:17

Of the £35,000 parks development budget, £9,799 was remaining for the current year.

The Clerk returned 19:20

Expenditure included fencing at Britten Road, the Kensington Gardens Peter Pan sculpture, the initial design work for the Sparrows Nest Sensory Garden, gates at Fen Park, the Sparrows Nest beacon refurbishment and fencing at Gunton Community Park. Cllr Pearce proposed recommending to keep the parks development budget at £35,000 for 2023 – 2024, but to ask the Facilities Maintenance Officer for his advice on an appropriate figure for a separate fencing and tarmacking allowance, to be considered by this Sub-Committee at its next meeting, before a recommendation is made to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. It was suggested the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee should make a recommendation regarding the play areas budget at its next meeting.

96. Making a recommendation to Full Council on the appointment of a contractor to refurbish the Rosedale Park and Bentley Drive play areas (some aspects may be confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

97. Review and implementation of the five year plans, including planting plans, in line with budgeting, noting Councillors' comments regarding the following:

At the last meeting, the five year plans for the following sites had been assigned to individual Councillors to review and feed back to the Sub-Committee. This work was ongoing, but the following feedback was received:

96.1. Normanston Park

96.2. Rosedale Park

96.3. Kensington Gardens

96.4. Gunton Community Park – Cllr Youngman suggested removing the reference to installing a drinking water fountain and the suggestion to install public toilets and changing rooms. Cllr Pearce advised that the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee is liaising with the Town Council's health and safety consultant regarding the provision of water bottle refill stations, and will be considering potential locations. Cllr Pearce suggested engagement on the plans with the new management committee for the Gunton Residents' Meeting Hall, once it has been elected. A community garden had previously been suggested, which the management committee may be interested in taking forward. Cllr Pearce proposed progressing bicycle racks as a year one priority (2023 – 2024); seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Additional benches and bins have already been purchased for this site. Cllr Youngman considered that the access path to the rear of the Community Hall required levelling out and litter picking. The Clerk advised that the Town Council had secured right of access for the entrance to the park to the rear of the Hall, but did not own the land.

96.5. Great Eastern Linear Park – Cllr Brooks observed that litter clearance of the stream and re-wilding of the nature walk area had not been included. Cllr Brooks suggested removing the reference to installing play equipment, as this was not an appropriate site for it. Cllr Brooks would like to see the lines identifying the cycle and pedestrian paths repainted as a priority. The Clerk understood this had already been raised with the County Council. Suffolk Wildlife Trust had identified a potential wildflower area, which was currently subject to a grass cutting regime. Suffolk Wildlife Trust had recommended removal of the grass to promote the growth of wildflowers. Cllr Brooks suggested removal of the reference to installing bird hides, but would like to see signage progressed instead to identify what wildlife visitors could expect to see. Cllr Brooks

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would like the wildflower meadow to be progressed as a year one project. Cllr Pearce asked the Project and Committee Clerk to collate the planned projects in a spreadsheet.

96.6 Sparrows Nest – Cllr Brooks suggested removal of the reference to Sparrows Nest as the ‘cultural’ park, and could not see the benefit of labelling the parks in this way. The Sensory Garden section of the plan required updating. The Project and Committee Clerk was asked to review the format of the five year plans and to collate ideas and aspirations into a spreadsheet. Cllr Brooks would like to explore the idea of using natural springs as a form of irrigation. The AID and Climate Emergency and Ecological Committees have started to consider methods of water conservation. The Clerk is developing a Water Management Policy and can at least include reference to this. Mulching areas have been developed in Kensington Gardens and Fen Park, where there are active Friends Groups. Cllr Pearce advised the public interest in Arnold’s Bequest had been positive, and for economies of scale Arnold’s Bequest, Belle Vue Park and Sparrows Nest could be resourced together, with cross-charging to the Charity Board, should it agree. Cllr Brooks asked officers to check whether the dying privet hedge had been removed, as referenced in the five year plan. The section relating to the pond should be updated. Cllr Pearce requested an item on the next agenda to discuss plans for the winter garden. Cllr Brooks supported references in the plans for a hopscotch and outdoor chessboard. Cllr Youngman suggested the area in front of the bandstand could be painted, and this will be discussed further at the next meeting. The plans for improving the entrance could be expensive and Cllr Brooks did not consider this a priority. There have been discussions about other forms of signposting which are more cost effective. Aside from the winter garden and chessboard, which will be considered further at the next meeting, Cllr Pearce suggested all other ideas discussed today for Sparrows Nest should be progressed in year one. The Finance and Governance Committee is reviewing the lease for the Movie Makers Theatre and its conditions of use. It is hoped the building can be more widely used. Sub-Committee members volunteered to review the five year plans for other sites as follows:

- Fen Park – Cllr Newsome
- Belle Vue Park – Cllr Pearce
- Denes Oval – Cllr Pearce
- Cotman Close – Cllr Pearce
- Britten Road – Cllr Craig
- Clarkes Lane – Cllr Youngman

The Project and Committee Clerk will prepare a plan for the next meeting on how the five year plans for each site have been allocated so far, and will circulate current plans where they exist. Where plans do not exist, Sub-Committee members were asked to send any suggestions to the Project and Committee Clerk to collate. Cllr Pearce would like to discuss the Normanston Park Skate Park, if this is not included in Cllr Pitts’ feedback. Cllr Brooks requested the addition of an item on the next AID Committee agenda to receive an update from an interested party in one of the changing room areas in Normanston Park.

98. Making a recommendation on whether to submit an application for Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty grant funding, and the detail of any application

Cllr Pearce suggested this should be considered, should the Town Council own any land which would meet the criteria. Gunton Warren is now owned by East Suffolk Council and managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Cllr Brooks suggested the cliff area above the Links Road car park. The area is not currently managed but is understood to have had footpaths running through it previously.

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The Clerk temporarily left the meeting 20:13

Cllrs Brooks and Pearce are aware of two individuals the Council could work with regarding management of this area, and suggested this should be as part of the five year plans, rather than as a funded project.

The Clerk returned 20:15

Cllr Pearce proposed considering the eligibility of The Ness for grant funding; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Cllr Brooks proposed approaching two local experts for advice on management of the North Denes area; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllrs Brooks and Pearce will approach the two individuals prior to a formal approach from officers.

99. The cost and method of tree mapping

The Project and Committee Clerk advised that officers had approached an organisation which had recently carried out tree mapping for another Council. It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

100. How many parks to put forward for Green Flag status, taking account of officer time and the cost of each application

The Communications Officer had reviewed the criteria and prepared a summary document. The Project and Committee Clerk advised this would be aspirational, as the Town Council does not currently have sites meeting all the criteria, and would need to demonstrate that it has prepared management plans for its sites. It was agreed to review the criteria at the next meeting and look to tie this in with the five year plans.

101. A budget for plants for the planters in Normanston Park

The Project and Committee Clerk advised that two planters are due to be delivered to Normanston Park. Cllr Breakspear had offered to work with the tenant on a planting plan for them. Cllr Pearce proposed approving a maximum budget of £500 to purchase plants for the existing planters, and to purchase additional planters and/or hanging baskets, with delegated authority to officers, in conjunction with members of this Sub-Committee and the tenant; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

102. Implementation of the Mulch Policy

Mulching areas have been installed in Kensington Gardens and Fen Park, where there are Friends Groups to maintain them. Provision for a mulching area in the north of the town could be considered alongside grounds maintenance arrangements. In the interim, Cllr Pearce proposed asking the Facilities Maintenance Officer and Community Warden to provide feedback to the next meeting on feasibility of implementing the policy; seconded by Cllr Craig; all in favour.

103. Date of the next meeting

15 November 2022 19:00

104. Items for the next Agenda and Close

Sub-Committee members were asked to email any requests to officers.

Cllr Pearce proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.

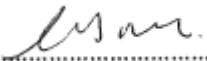
105. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

96. Making a recommendation to Full Council on the appointment of a contractor to refurbish the Rosedale Park and Bentley Drive play areas (some aspects may be confidential) – The quotations received were discussed. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to support this Sub-Committee's choice of contractor for each play area, with a delegation to the Finance and Governance Committee to

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consider the budget allocation, and a delegation to officers to obtain details of the costs of additional elements as discussed; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour. The Finance and Information Officer had recommended using CIL funding for the play area refurbishments.

The meeting was closed at 20:51.

Signed: 
15 November 2022