

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 19 November 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Christine Moore, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger (Deputy Chair) and Elise Youngman (Chair)

In Attendance: Lauren Elliott (Senior Committee and Project Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant)

Public: One member of the public (in person)

79. Welcome

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

80. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs John Murray and Deborah Ray with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of apologies; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

Cllr John Pitts was absent with no apologies received.

81. Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

81.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Breakspear declared he was the Chair of Friends of Kensington Gardens (FoKG).

81.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

82. To consider the draft minutes of the meetings on 15 October 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

83. 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 – The member of public spoke on item 87 in relation to the two trees in the Uplands area. The member of public felt the works carried out on the trees was not adequate and the trees required pollarding due to safety concerns. The member of public suggested the trees be reduced with the branches taken down by 50%.

Cllr Pearce stated it was not the resolution of Full Council for the works on the Uplands trees to be done as part of the tree audit works on Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) land and requested a meeting be arranged urgently to progress these works. The Senior Committee and Project Clerk informed the Committee that Full Council's resolution had been enacted and the work on the Uplands trees had been completed, separate to the tree audit works on LTC land, with professional advice received from three separate arborists and two separate surveys undertaken on the trees.

It was noted that both trees at Uplands had Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

Cllr Brooks proposed a zoom call be arranged with East Suffolk Council's Tree Officer, with the Parks and Ground Maintenance Manager and the concerned member of public also invited, to understand if further works were required on the trees and what constraints there were with the trees having TPOs; seconded by Cllr Pearce who requested an amendment to delegate to officers, in conjunction with the Councillors on the zoom call, to agree a way forward. Cllr Brooks accepted the amendment and a vote was held with all in favour.

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Cllr Breakspear temporarily left the chamber to escort the member of public out at 19:33

84. To monitor expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget

There was no updated budget position.

Cllr Breakspear returned to the chamber at 19:34

85. To receive feedback from the stand-alone meeting concerning the Five-Year Plans

Various community groups were due to be contacted about fencing for Cotman Close, including the Gunton Residents Association (GRA).

Cllr Pearce declared he was Chair of GRA and reported some of its members have approached him on the fence for Cotman Close and he directed them to contact the officer directly.

The zoom calls to discuss the Five-Year Plans would continue.

86. To consider budget requirements for the 2025-2026 financial year and make a recommendation to Budget and Loan Working Group for consideration

Cllr Pearce proposed to maintain the previous resolution of this Sub-Committee to not reduce the Parks Capital, Parks Repair & Maintenance or Horticultural budgets, and instead maintain these budgets in real terms, if not increased, and for the 2025/2026 priorities to be decided within those financial parameters; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

87. To receive an update on various tree works, including trees at Uplands

The Uplands trees had been addressed under Public Forum.

Three primary areas have been identified for tree works:

- Gunton Cliff - This area would require an extensive schedule of works and liaison with East Suffolk Council's Tree Officer as the trees fall within the conservation area. Work would commence in 2025 and avoid the nesting seasons.
- Town Green - Extensive works were required on the land behind the Town Green with several sycamores covered in ivy to be removed. A tree on the Town Green required work, which would be undertaken this year.
- Kensington Gardens – No urgent works were identified but the crown of the holm oaks needed to be lifted, which was scheduled for Autumn 2025 and would require the closure of part of the gardens.

The Committee requested officers provide a recommendation to this Sub-Committee for an annual maintenance regime for the sycamores on the embankment of the Great Eastern Linear Park.

A meeting of the Tree Working Group was requested in the next three months to consider the required works before the annual review of the Tree Policy.

The sycamores on North Denes had also been identified as requiring extensive works.

The Parks and Ground Maintenance Manager was due to produce a plan of works and would return to this Sub-Committee in December with a formal quotation.

88. To consider a maximum budget of £700 for the purchase of 35 fruit trees

Cllr Youngman proposed approval of the purchase within a maximum budget of £700; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

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- 89. To consider an approach from the Friends of Kensington Gardens to relocate currently struggling hydrangeas into a dedicated hydrangea bed that would be under the care of the Friends Group**

Cllr Brooks proposed approval for FoKG to undertake this work; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; a vote was held with six votes in favour and one abstention from Cllr Breakspear due to his declared interest as Chair of FoKG.

- 90. To receive information regarding the playing surface of the basketball area on Clarkes Lane**
Cllr Brooks proposed officers acquire estimate costs for resurfacing and provide the figures to the Sub-Committee. The Senior Committee and Project Clerk informed the Sub-Committee that other parks had playing surfaces, therefore an independent assessment would be required with all sites to be considered so any instruction of works would be more cost-effective.

Cllr Pearce suggested the officers obtain indicative costs for works done across several sites as a job lot and unit costs for individual sites so the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee can consider whether it would be more cost-effective to refurbish all playing surfaces together, alongside an indication of what materials would be needed.

Cllr Pearce requested an amendment to the proposal for officers to provide an assessment and recommendation of the works with details of the required materials and indicative costs for the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee meeting in December.

The Senior Committee and Project Clerk notified the Sub-Committee that the playing courts are included in the regular play area inspections and no hazards had been identified in these inspections.

Cllr Pearce added to his requested amendment to the proposal for a summary of the most recent assessment to be provided to the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee in December and the view on officers of whether immediate replacement was required. Cllr Brooks accepted the amendment. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

- 91. Date of the next meeting**

10 December 2024 19:00

- 92. Items for the next Agenda and Close**

An item was requested to receive an update on lighting for the Normanston Skate Park. The Senior Committee and Project Clerk notified the fuseboard would need to be replaced and the electricity supply would need to be upgraded. Officers were currently reviewing the feasibility of this.

- 93. 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 issues relating to the matters on this agenda**

There were no resolutions.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:01

Signed: 

10 December 2024