

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 5 September 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Connor Blowers, Wendy Brooks, Jen Jones, Christian Newsome (Chair), Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger, Nick Webb and Elise Youngman

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

Also in attendance: Karen Chapman (OPR Consulting)(for part)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

55. Welcome

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

The Acting Town Clerk temporarily left the meeting 10:01

56. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, John Murray, Graham Parker and Keith Patience, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

57. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

57.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – There were none.

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

58. The draft minutes and confidential note of the Extraordinary Meeting on 21 August 2024, and the confidential notes of the meetings on 6 June, 3 and 19 July and 1 August 2024

The Acting Town Clerk returned 10:03

Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the minutes of the meeting on 21 August 2024. The confidential notes as listed in the agenda item were not available for this meeting. Cllr Rappensberger seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

59. Public forum

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

60. Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget

There was no update available for this meeting.

61. How the Personnel Committee is implementing and addressing the Councillor Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Cllr Brooks observed that the policy referred to the Personnel Committee receiving reports on Councillor wellbeing, which so far it had not. Cllr Brooks considered Councillor attendance should be addressed, and whether Councillors felt able to participate in meetings, and proposed an anonymised questionnaire for Councillors to complete in confidence, to be reviewed externally and a report compiled for the Personnel Committee to review and action key areas for improvement. There was a discussion regarding participation in the questionnaire, and whilst Councillors could not be compelled to participate, it was suggested that participation should be encouraged. Cllr Newsome supported the suggestion and noted his workplace undertook a similar process. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal, on the basis

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 5 September 2024

that the process would be independent and objective. It may be possible to undertake this process via the Town Council's existing HR support package. It was suggested this should take place in November. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

62. Matters relating to data protection and use of Town Council email addresses and devices (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Newsome requested to move this item to confidential session.

63. Training

63.1. Councillor training opportunities – The Project and Committee Clerk explained an item had been requested at the last meeting to discuss the underuse of the Councillor training budget. Members of the Planning Committee were required to undertake planning training, and the Mayor, the Chair of the Personnel Committee and their respective Deputies were required to undertake appraisals training. There is range of training Councillors can access via the Suffolk Association of Local Councils, and some training can be delivered 'in-house'. Not all Councillors engage with non-essential training, and it was noted that some Councillors had not completed the governance and risk management training as referenced at agenda item 63.2, which was a risk for the Council. The scheduling of training would need to be considered to enable maximum attendance. Cllr Brooks proposed for officers to explore options for climate emergency training for Councillors, and how it affects the Town Council's decision making; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed to look at structuring a training programme, including regulatory training, so that it can be delivered to enable participation from all Councillors, including those who may struggle to attend sessions during the day; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.

63.2. Noting staff have completed governance and risk management training – Cllr Pearce proposed that risk management and data protection training should be mandatory, with officers required to complete it within two months of their employment with the Town Council, and Councillors required to complete it within two months of taking office, with annual refresher training to be rolled out within two months of the Annual Meeting.

The Acting Town Clerk temporarily left the meeting 10:22 and returned 10:22

In discussing whether it would be possible to compel Councillors to attend such training, it was suggested their access to confidential data could be restricted until the training has been completed. Cllr Jones seconded the proposal; seven Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

63.3. Noting all officers have completed a data protection awareness course and consider delivery to councillors – This item was combined with the previous item.

64. Matters relating to staff absence (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

65. Job evaluation report and how recommendations, including terms and conditions, can be implemented into the three tier staffing structure (confidential)

The external consultant who had been working with the Town Council would join the meeting for this item, which would be considered during the confidential session.

66. An update on recruitment matters (some aspects may be confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

67. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 3 October 2024 – 10:00.

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 5 September 2024

68. Items for the next agenda and close

Councillors were asked to send any requests to the office.

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

69. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

69.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required:

62. Matters relating to data protection and use of Town Council email addresses and devices (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllr Newsome expressed his disappointment over a recent incident, and a discussion followed regarding potential next steps.

Cllr Pearce made a proposal following this; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.
Cllr Pearce made a further proposal; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

64. Matters relating to staff absence (confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk provided an update on matters relating to staff absence.

66. An update on recruitment matters (some aspects may be confidential) – The Acting Town Clerk provided an update on the recruitment of the Heritage Officer role. The Facilities and Contracts Manager had settled into the role well, had identified a cost saving on an item relating to the Marina Theatre, and had been in liaison with the Project Manager regarding the Town Hall. The Project and Committee Clerk was arranging an assets tour for Councillors, with the Facilities and Contracts Manager and Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager. The Finance Assistant had commenced her employment with the Town Council earlier that week and would be working on payroll operations and providing agendas and notes for the Budget and Loan Working Group. Cllr Pearce made a proposal relating to six month reviews of new staff; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

A comfort break was taken 11:13 and the meeting resumed 11:22

65. Job evaluation report and how recommendations, including terms and conditions, can be implemented into the three tier staffing structure (confidential) –

Karen Chapman from OPR Consulting joined the meeting 11:22

Ms Chapman had provided a confidential report to the Committee. The report was reviewed in detail, which included the staffing structure, responsibilities and the outcome of a review of officers' job descriptions.

At 12:01, Cllr Brooks proposed to suspend Standing Order 3y for thirty minutes, to allow the meeting to continue; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.

Future roles and duties were discussed and it was noted that the report was flexible and could be amended.

The Project and Committee Clerk and Karen Chapman left the meeting 12:20 for the consideration of the remainder of the agenda items

Signed: 

3 October 2024