

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 16 January 2025

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Jen Jones, John Murray, Christian Newsome (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger and Elise Youngman

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

108. Welcome

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

109. Approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Connor Blowers, Keith Patience and Nick Webb, with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

110. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

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

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

111. The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 5 December 2024

Cllr proposed approval of the minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 5 December 2024; seconded by Cllr; all in favour. Cllr Barker had identified typographical errors in the confidential notes, which she would detail during the confidential session. Cllr Begum proposed approval of the minutes and confidential note. During the consideration of item 104 at the previous meeting, Cllr Pearce had noted that training would only be beneficial if the outcomes were implemented, and had suggested that Clerks receive training on assisting Chairs during meeting. Cllr Pearce requested an amendment to the minutes to include these comments. Cllr Begum proposed approval of the minutes and confidential note with the requested amendments; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.

112. Public forum

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

113. Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget

All budget headings were reviewed by the Budget and Loan Working Group and indirectly by the Finance and Governance Committee when making recommendations to Full Council, and it was confirmed that the anticipated year-end position was known.

114. Consideration of the following regarding Councillors:

114.1. Completion of data protection training – Thanks were offered to the Communications Officer for organising and delivering the training. Six Councillors had not yet completed the course. Full Council had resolved for the training to be undertaken within a set timescale and annually thereafter. The Council could consider limiting access to confidential data for any Councillor who does not complete the training. Cllr Youngman advised she had completed the training but had not yet informed the office. Cllr Murray

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proposed to consider how various training measures are implemented and effectively enforced. The Council had already begun to implement measures it was able to enforce, such as compulsory appraisals training for the Mayor, Chair of the Personnel Committee and their respective Deputies, and compulsory training for members of the Planning Committee, to be undertaken within three months of the Annual Meeting. There was no mechanism to disqualify Councillors for failing to complete training, however it had been considered that access to confidential data could be restricted for any Councillor who did not complete the data protection training. This would be considered in more detail at item 114.3. Cllr Begum considered the data protection training beneficial, particularly having attended the in-person session, rather than completing the course online. It would be difficult to determine whether web-based training had been completed satisfactorily or not. Cllr Coleby requested to record a vote of thanks to the Communications Officer for delivering the training. Refresher training would be considered at item 114.3, and it was agreed to move Cllr Murray's earlier proposal to that item.

114.2. An update on a proposal to assist with the implementation of the Councillor Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy (some aspects may be confidential) – The proposal had been uploaded to the members' area. The Acting Town Clerk had some commentary to provide in the confidential session. The link to review the questions had been removed from the document at this stage.

114.3. An update on the development of a programme of Councillor training, and building this into the Council's Training and Development Policy – A process of review would be required to ensure training outcomes are implemented. It had previously been established that certain training courses must be repeated annually. There had been a decision at the previous Personnel Committee meeting for all Committee members to receive training to carry out their role on the Committee. Safeguarding training had been delivered to Councillors and officers in 2022, and it was suggested this should be reviewed and offered on a regular basis. Feedback from attendees on training courses would be helpful to build and refine a training programme. Councillor induction training had been delivered previously, and an invitation extended to neighbouring parishes. The importance of an induction for new Councillors was discussed, and new Councillors were directed to the Suffolk Association of Local Councils' induction training, with an intention for all new Councillors to receive training delivered by Lowestoft Town Council every four years. It had previously been discussed that all Councillors should also be offered Chairperson training. The Acting Town Clerk had made revisions to the Training and Development Policy, and was seeking a policy position on the agreed training, frequency, compulsory training for specific Committees, etc, to enable officers to consider delivery and feedback, in order to create a tailored training plan with dates. It was considered the policy should essentially be that a programme of training to help Councillors be more effective in their roles would be developed, and would be a continuing process. It was considered an appendix could accompany the policy, detailing the training agreed at any given time, the frequency of the training and whether there would be conditions attached or consequences for not completing the training. Regarding Cllr Murray's proposal at item 114.1, Cllr Pearce suggested the addition of a statement to the policy that the ongoing effectiveness of training would be monitored through a combination of Councillor feedback and annual refresher training, and would be refined accordingly. Any measures imposed for Councillors who do not complete required training would not be intended as a punishment, but to protect the Council's interest and avoid creating liabilities. Cllr Murray agreed to amend his proposal to this effect. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal; ten Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

115. Staffing:

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- 115.1. An update on the grounds maintenance staffing structure (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.
- 115.2. Staff terms and conditions (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

116. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 6 February 2025 – 10:00.

117. 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 Rappensberger; all in favour.

118. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

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

- 111. The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 5 December 2024 – Amendments to the confidential note would be discussed after the Senior Committee and Project Clerk had left the meeting.

Cllr Youngman temporarily left the meeting 10:44

- 114.2. An update on a proposal to assist with the implementation of the Councillor Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy (some aspects may be confidential) – A confidential document had been uploaded to the members' area.

Cllr Youngman returned 10:46

Cllr Brooks proposed to accept the proposal presented; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger. Details of the proposal were repeated for Cllr Youngman's benefit. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

- 115.1. An update on the grounds maintenance staffing structure (confidential) – An update was not available for this meeting. Meetings with the Facilities and Contracts Manager and Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager were required.

115.2. Staff terms and conditions (confidential) -

The Senior Committee and Project Clerk left the meeting 10:50 for the consideration of this item

Signed:

6 February 2025