

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 6 March 2025

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Jen Jones, John Murray, Graham Parker, Keith Patience, Bernadette Rappensberger, Nick Webb (Deputy Chair) 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

132. Welcome

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

133. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Connor Blowers and Christian Newsome, with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. Cllr Pearce was not in attendance. Cllr Webb advised he would need to leave at 11:30, after which another member would need to be appointed to preside over the meeting. Cllr Begum proposed to appoint Cllr Jones to preside over the meeting after Cllr Webb had left. As the meeting may end before 11:30, it was agreed for this vote to be taken later in the meeting, if required.

134. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

134.1. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests from Councillors on items on the agenda – There were none.

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

135. The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 6 February 2025

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes and confidential note; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

136. Public forum

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

137. Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget

There was nothing to report at this meeting for this agenda item.

138. Forming a Working Group (three members, including the Chair of the Personnel Committee) to objectively collate and review evidence of contravention of Standing Orders and/or agreed behaviours at meetings

This item would be deferred to April's meeting. Full Council had appointed representatives to attend the East Suffolk Council Town Councils' Forum, and notes from that event would be provided.

139. Recruitment:

139.1. The recruitment of a Town Hall Heritage Apprentice – A meeting paper had been supplied, and there were matters to be considered during the confidential session. The timeline for recruitment was provided in the meeting paper, and subsequent rules around apprenticeships would need to be followed. It was clarified the apprentice

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would be required to complete a course in London, as part of the college sponsorship, but costs would be recoverable. The length of the apprenticeship would be eighteen months.

139.2. An update on grounds maintenance recruitment (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

140. Staffing:

140.1. The resourcing of developing and maintaining a project tracker – The Shire digital platform would log all the Town Council's assets and would be used by the Grounds Maintenance Team to monitor the assets and plan works, service and maintenance. Automatic alerts would be generated when works were required, and job numbers would enable tracking of works and projects. The system required significant preparatory work, but it was anticipated reports could be generated from it to provide updates to Committees. The new Decisions software for preparing agendas and minutes should also enable the monitoring of new projects. Officers and Councillors would be receiving training on this. Updates were currently being provided via the weekly Councillor Update, though this was read by less than fifty percent of members. Cllr Coleby proposed to delay any further decision on a project tracker until the new programmes are rolled out, to see if they satisfied Councillors' requirements. It was suggested standing items could be added to the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee and Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee agendas for updates to be received. Cllr Coleby was not prepared to add this to his proposal, as there may not be updates to give every month and these items may then be used for other matters to be raised. Cllr Begum seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

140.2. The publication of anonymised staff salaries – A meeting paper had been provided. The Acting Town Clerk had received the definitive answer on what information had to be published at Local Council level, and this had been circulated to members. Given the Town Council's increased staff base, Cllr Patience requested the publication of details of positions and salary scales. There was no statutory requirement for the Town Council to publish this information, this would be for the Council to debate and decide. Following repeated references to the Green Book, Cllr Patience was reminded this did not apply to the Town Council. In publishing the job titles and salaries of senior members of staff, the issue would remain at Town Council level that individual officers would be immediately identifiable. To protect the rights of individuals, Cllr Coleby proposed for salary bands and ranges to be published instead, with the number of staff on each band. There was a discussion about publishing the salaries of the most senior Town Council officers. The Acting Town Clerk's meeting paper had set out Section 40 of the Localism Act, which stipulated which authorities had to publish salary details of its officers. The Acting Town Clerk enquired what right of challenge officers would have of the Town Council for making an unlawful decision about publication of salaries. Cllr Coleby's proposal to publish the salary scale bands would represent best practice for transparency. Cllr Murray seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

140.3. Staff terms and conditions (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

140.4. Costs for staffing of seasonal work (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

141. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 3 April 2025 – 10:00.

142. Items for the next agenda and close

Cllr Patience had a request for the next agenda, but would provide the details during the confidential session.

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

143. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

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

139.1. The recruitment of a Town Hall Heritage Apprentice – The reporting structure for the apprentice, and the timescale for recruitment, were discussed. Cllr Coleby proposed for the Personnel Committee to have the final say on who the apprentice would report to; seconded by Cllr Begum; all in favour.

139.2. An update on grounds maintenance recruitment (confidential) – The advertisement had been published the previous day, and enquiries had already been received.

140.4. Costs for staffing of seasonal work (confidential) – An update on the arrangements for seasonal cover of Kensington Gardens was given.

140.3. Staff terms and conditions (confidential)

The Senior Committee and Project Clerk left the meeting 10:58 for the consideration of this item

Signed:
3 April 2025

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'L' shape followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.