

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
15:00 on 14 April 2025

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby (Deputy Chair), Paul Page, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce (Chair) and Bernadette Rappensberger

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant)

144. Welcome

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

145. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Connor Blowers with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

146. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

146.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Brooks declared she had supported the fundraiser by Iain Pannell and she had no financial interest in that item nor in relation to item 152.2d.

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

147. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 10 March 2025

Cllr Rappensberger proposed approval of the draft minutes and confidential note, subject to amendments to items 131 and 137.1a; seconded by Cllr Pearce; five votes in favour and one abstention.

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

149. Budget and Loan

149.1. To monitor the budget for 2025-2026, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – The next update would be received at Full Council or the next meeting of this Committee.

149.2. To note any bank reconciliations – February was in progress and March was underway.

150. Payments and Receipts:

150.1. To note the income and expenditure reports for March 2025 and April 2025 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – The expenditure report had last been reported in full at the March Full Council meeting. As the Finance Manager was currently out of office, the reports would be provided to April Full Council or the May meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee (F&G).

150.2. To consider any payments for approval (see schedule), including the following:

150.2a. 1000L Ex Display Bowser for £3,250 + VAT – A query was raised on whether this was a late notice purchase as it had not been reported to the Budget and Loan Working Group as part of the budget work in 2024.

The Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager entered the chamber at 15:13

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The Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager explained the bowser had been submitted as part of the budget work in November 2024 and would be used for the majority of parks. The bowser was a safer and quicker option for time management. Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the purchase; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

The Parks and Grounds Maintenance Manager left the chamber at 15:15

151. Grants and Sponsorships

151.1. To note receipt of the following grant applications and discuss if any require urgent consideration:

151.1a. Loyal Friends Projects CIC - £750 – Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the grant application; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

151.1b. First Light Festival CIC - £4,625 – Cllr Parker declared he was an East Suffolk Councillor and would abstain from voting on this item as East Suffolk Council were a major funder of the event. Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the grant application. Cllr Pearce requested an amendment for the budget allocation to split between the Grants budget and Community Engagement budget. Cllr Coleby accepted the amendment and Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal. A vote was held with four votes in favour, one vote against and one abstention.

151.1c. Fun. Football. Fitness Ltd - £2,000 – Cllr Brooks proposed refusal of the grant application as the organisation had not identified their company type, when it appeared to be a private company, and no clear details had been provided on what exactly the grant would be used for; seconded by Cllr Coleby; three votes in favour, one vote against and two abstentions. The proposal was carried.

151.1d. Lydia Eva and Mincarlo Charitable Trust – Funding up to £2,000 – Cllr Rappensberger proposed to defer the application to the next meeting as supporting documents had yet to be provided; seconded by Cllr Pearce who noted a statement in lieu could be provided; all in favour.

151.1e. Pakefield Community Group - £1,200 – Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the grant application; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

151.2. To consider making a donation to the fundraiser by Iain Pannell for The Royal British Legion Industries' The Great Tommy Sleep Out – Cllr Pearce declared he had attended the welcome to Iain Pannell held at Ness Point and Iain Pannell was a neighbour of his, but he had no connection to the event. Cllr Parker declared he was Vice-Chair of the Gunton Residents Association as the group had made a donation to the fundraiser. Cllr Pearce declared he was Chair of the Gunton Residents Association.

Cllr Brooks proposed £250 be donated to the fundraiser.

Cllr Pearce proposed £1,500 be donated from the Community Engagement budget; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

152. Other financial and governance matters, including:

152.1. Financial:

152.1a. To consider a delegation to officers to purchase the grounds maintenance equipment submitted for the 2025/2026 budget – It was noted this delegation would only be for the capital purchase of equipment approved in the budget work for 2025/2026 where the funds have already been delegated within the budget. Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

152.1b. To note arrangements for insurance cover for the year commencing 1 April 2025, including sums insured and policy premium – The review of the asset register has been completed for the Town Hall and the premium price has been provided along with confirmation of the insurance. This was the final year of the

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current contract and a full procurement would be undertaken for the year 2026.

- 152.1c. To consider maximum payment limits with the bank and how payment beyond this limit can be facilitated – There was currently a daily limit on bank payments, therefore, on the rare occasion a single, high-value payment is required, it must be paid over two days to get payment through, or alternative payments methods may be needed.

Cllr Pearce proposed a delegation be made to officers so that when large payments are required that exceed the daily limit on bank payments, officers can decide whether to use the Clearing House Automated Payment System (CHAPS) as an alternative method for payment. Cllr Coleby requested an amendment that F&G be notified at the next available meeting when such payments have been made so the number of high value payments each year can be noted. Cllr Pearce accepted the amendment and Cllr Coleby seconded the amended proposal. A vote was held with all in favour.

152.2. Governance:

- 152.2a. To consider the annual review of officer delegations and make recommendations ahead of the May 2025 AGM – The internal officer review was in progress and recommendations would be made to the next meeting of F&G for onward recommendations to the Annual General Meeting. It was requested a copy of the currently approved delegations be provided at the next meeting.

- 152.2b. To note a data breach involving disclosure of confidential Town Council minutes and consider the ICO recommendation (confidential) – To be discussed in confidential session.

- 152.2c. To consider making a recommendation to Full Council on the continued live-streaming and recording of Town Council meetings during the civic year 2025/2026 – There was no legal obligation to live-stream and record meetings, Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) chose to livestream its meetings to facilitate openness, transparency and accountability.

Support was expressed by some members for the continuation of livestreaming meetings in order to be open and transparent.

A concern was expressed that the livestreamed meetings were used to make accusations or factually inaccurate statements and it was queried if LTC should be facilitating this by continuing to livestream its meetings.

Cllr Pearce clarified there was no intent to suppress opinions, this item was concerned with the propagation of disruption and false statements that affects LTC. Cllr Pearce suggested the livestreaming of meetings be stopped temporarily until controls and measures to ensure meetings can be carried out and Section Two of the Standing Orders can be upheld are in place, then the livestreams would resume.

Some members felt it would be wrong for the public to be unable to access the recordings of meetings and questions may be raised by the public as to the intention of the Council.

Cllr Parker proposed this item be referred to Full Council with no recommendation; seconded by Cllr Pearce; five votes in favour and one vote against.

- 152.2d. To consider making a recommendation to Full Council on a public statement setting out the Town Council's position on the Tingdene Heras fencing, and the legal advice on which that position is based (some aspects may be confidential) – Due to external and internal comments made on the matter of Heras fencing at Tingdene, it was felt as statement of clarification on LTC's position was required. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council for a public statement to be made on LTC's position, with the wording to be agreed

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with LTC's lawyers; seconded by Cllr Parker.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the chamber at 16:04

The Acting Town Clerk confirmed the legal opinion on Heras fencing had been provided to Full Council several months ago.

Cllr Brooks returned to the chamber at 16:06

A vote was held with five votes in favour and one abstention.

152.2e. To receive an update from the Youth Forum Working Group on its Terms of Reference – The Youth Forum Working Group had requested this item be deferred to the next meeting.

153. To consider the following relating to Town Council policies:

153.1. Review the Infrastructure Investment Plan – Officers were finalising their amendments and it was agreed to defer the policy to the next meeting.

153.2. Review the Reserves – A Budget and Loan Working Group meeting had been called to review the Reserves policy. It was agreed to defer consideration of the policy to the next meeting.

153.3. Review the Complaints Procedure – Cllr Brooks felt Councillors needed to have a system of representation in the complaints procedure, be that an independent external body or legal representative who could be called in for advice or support. It was requested the policy allow for Councillors to engage an independent body for objective advice and support when a complaint is made by a Councillor against a member of staff. It was clarified that complaints against LTC were triaged and reviewed to determine how the complaint should be handled, at times that would require a panel to be convened and that panel would be able to call in legal advice for assistance if it was needed.

Cllr Coleby temporarily left the chamber at 16:18

Cllr Pearce proposed that as the Complaints Procedure was currently under review, these comments be fed into that review and the policy be brought back for consideration at the next meeting to make a recommendation on to the Annual General Meeting; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

153.4. Review the new model financial regulations – The first set of new financial regulations had been received May 2024, these were adopted subject to new public procurement legislation being passed.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the chamber at 16:27

This latest model draft has included the new procurement regulations. Officers have prepared a comparison document and reviewed it against the previous model to ensure no bespoke adjustments were lost.

Cllr Brooks returned to the chamber at 16:28

It was agreed to defer consideration of this policy to the next meeting when a recommendation would be made directly to the Annual General Meeting.

153.5. Legal and governance implications and options associated with implementation of the Town Council's social media and e-mail procedures – Cllr Pearce proposed officers consider and discuss this with the lawyers with regards to the potential legal obligations to LTC in a situation where LTC has limited or no jurisdiction but comments are being

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attributed to LTC, and bring advice to the next meeting on the options available;
seconded by Cllr Page; four votes in favour and one abstention.

154. To receive recommendations from the Standing Orders and Policies Working Group on the following policies:

- 154.1.Co-option
- 154.2.Data Protection
- 154.3.Data Retention
- 154.4.Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and availability schedule
- 154.5.IT
- 154.6.Public Participation Protocol
- 154.7.Representation on Outside Bodies
- 154.8.Tree
- 154.9.To archive the Reporting Procedure for Assets and Maintenance

Further consideration was needed for items 154.7 and 154.8.

Cllr Coleby returned to the chamber at 16:34

Cllr Rappensberger proposed the following policies be accepted per the recommended amendments from Standing Orders and Policies and recommended on to Full Council for adoption: Co-option, Data Protection, Data Retention, Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, IT, Public Participation Protocol and the archiving of Reporting Procedure for Assets and Maintenance; seconded by Cllr Brooks; five votes in favour and one abstention as the member was not in the chamber for the majority of discussion.

154.7. Representation on Outside Bodies – It was suggested the policy be further refined regarding the basis on which representatives were appointed to outside bodies and the Councillor's role on that body.

This policy had been considered by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee and their feedback was noted.

The Acting Town Clerk suggested the relevant National Association of Local Council legal topic paper be reviewed for potential adjustments in the policy in relation to the role of a Councillor who sits on a charity. This information would be provided to the Annual General Meeting when appointments are due to be made to outside bodies, as well as the frequency of meetings convened by the outside body which the Council representative was invited to.

Cllr Pearce proposed the Committee recommend adoption of the policy with the suggested amendments, subject to officers further reviewing the policy against relevant legislation; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; five votes in favour and one abstention.

154.8. Tree – The Committee accepted the amendments made by Cllr Brooks. Officers noted they had been unable to convene a meeting of the Tree Working Group to review the tree audit and policy with input to be received from officers on the practicability of the policy.

Cllr Pearce proposed the amendments made to date are accepted and the Tree Working Group endeavour to meet before the next F&G meeting so that input can be received from the Grounds Maintenance Team for onward recommendation to the Annual General Meeting; seconded by Cllr Brooks; five votes in favour and one abstention.

155. Date of the next meeting

12 May 2025 - 15:00

Cllr Parker gave his apologies for the next meeting.

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156. Items for the next agenda and close

An item was requested to discuss provision of corporate credit cards.

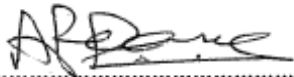
157. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely any employment matters and legal issues relating to the matters on this agenda, including the following:

157.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required – Cllr Coleby proposed the meeting be moved to confidential session; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public at 16:51

152.2b. To note a data breach involving disclosure of confidential Town Council minutes and consider the ICO recommendation (confidential) – It was confirmed the data breach was being investigated by the ICO and an update would be provided in due course.

The Chair closed the meeting at 16:52



Signed:

12 May 2025