Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 8 May 2025

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum (Chair), Wendy Brooks and Neil Coleby. Non-Councillor member Ben Porter (East Suffolk Council Officer)

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

Also In Attendance: Sheila MossKing (Project Manager)

155. Welcome

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

156. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bernadette Rappensberger and Elise Youngman and non-Councillor member Helen Johnson with reasons provided. Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

157. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

157.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from members on items on the agenda – There were no declarations.

157.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

158. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 10 April 2025

Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the draft minutes and confidential note; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

159. 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.

160. To consider the Terms of Reference of this Committee

Cllr Brooks proposed an amendment to the Terms of Reference so the Mayor would not be automatically appointed the Chair of this Committee and instead the Chair would be elected at the Annual General Meeting, as is the case with all other Standing Committees. There was no seconder for the proposal and no changes were made to the Terms of Reference.

161. To receive an update report from the Project Manager, including the following:

161.1. An update on contractual matters – Auditel was appointed to deliver the AV solution for the Town Hall project, which would cover the Council Chamber and any other audio or visual requirements for the meeting rooms, co-working spaces and the café area.

The Project Manager suggested a trip to Leeds City Council be considered to review the Auditel AV system for their Town Hall, which could help inform the Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) on how best to specify the requirements for the Council Chamber with Auditel.

Cllrs Coleby and Barker were interested in attending and suggested the Communications and IT Officer and Acting Town Clerk also attend. The Project Manager

would organise the trip and attendees with the Acting Town Clerk.

Further on contractual matters, more asbestos had been found in the roof of the New Market Inn, which would be removed by the demolition contractor with no need for a notification period. The Project Manager confirmed this work was covered in the budget and would not require a draw on contingency.

The roof plate along Compass Street was found to be in a worse condition than anticipated and would need a significant amount replaced.
Hutton + Rostron were due to visit for a building-wide study wherein they would set up a range of dry rot samples to explain remediations and actions to be undertaken depending on what dry rot may be uncovered in the future in the building.

Data had been received regarding the social value achievements of the main contract: £1.1million worth of contracts had been placed within the Lowestoft constituency boundary, the roofing contract had been awarded to Alpha Roofing, who were a local company, and £2.3million worth of contracts had been placed in Norwich and Ipswich.

161.2. Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – Ben Porter informed the Committee Historic England had announced funding would be available for cultural heritage projects, with this first round of funding available this financial year for heritage buildings. The criteria required the buildings to be listed and located in a deprived area. A short POI had been submitted and confirmation should be received this month on whether the submission was successful, in which case a full application would be submitted by the end of the month.

The Project Manager has looked into another Conservation Trust that could support up to £100,000 of the restoration work. There was also a green fund application due to be submitted in June which, if successful, could help fund the solar panels.

161.3. The Risk Register – There were no updates to report. A meeting had been held with the contractors, Quantity Surveyor and Design Team on how to minimise, offset and pre-empt risks in certain elements of the project. A report from this meeting would be circulated to all members.

161.4. Updated Business Plan – The Project Manager was updating the Business Plan's café data and modelling has been done on staffing costs, which would be discussed further with the Acting Town Clerk.
A revised design was due to be submitted to the Registrars and a meeting was due to be scheduled.

162. Finance, budget monitoring and payments (see report):

162.1. To note and consider income and expenditure, including:

162.1a. Monitoring the budget – The updated budget and cashflow was due to be submitted to the Committee.

£1.319million had been spent to date and £1.58million was in contingency.

According to the cashflow forecast, the first drawn down on the PWLB loan was due in June 2025. This was dependent on how quickly the spend from Barnes Construction increased and whether the Town Council's Finance Manager would prefer to draw in June or use other budgets and postpone the drawdown. Ideally, the tranches would be smaller and spread further apparat, as this would help minimise the amount that needs to be paid to service the loan whilst the Town Council was occupying Hamilton House, as the savings

from not occupying Hamilton House would assist in servicing the loan. The Project Manager would discuss this further with officers.

Ben Porter notified the Committee they were due a drawdown on the Towns Fund and would arrange this with the office.

162.1b. Any payments for approval – The were no payments to be approved.

163. To receive any updates on the Activity Plan

The exhibition Stories from the Sea was due to open in a week, this would be the last exhibition in the pop-up shop before it is vacated.
The Interpretation Team have finished the first draft of the scripts to be displayed in the heritage gallery. The Project Manager would circulate the scripts for comments.
Changes were made in the colour palettes in the Heritage Gallery on the advice of the Accessibility Consultant.
The Design Team were also considering a redesign of the underfloor piping so there would be areas where exhibits could be bolted into the ground.

164. To consider staffing requirements and preparations for the budget (some aspects may be confidential)

This item would be discussed in confidential session.

165. To discuss bus routes and access to the Town Hall

Cllr Begum declared she had a business on the High Street.

A bus service currently stopped on the main road and the Committee felt it would be beneficial to have a service that stopped closer to the Town Hall.
It was suggested the bus companies be approached to query if they had plans to deal with the potential of increased footfall in the area as a result of this project.
It was suggested the Suffolk Passenger Transport Group also be engaged with.

Cllr Brooks proposed this Committee supports improving the bus routes in town, particularly in terms of bus services to the Town Hall; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

166. To consider any recommendations to Full Council

None.

167. Date of the next meeting

To be confirmed at the Annual General Meeting of the Town Council. A meeting date is provisionally scheduled for Thursday 12 June 10:00 per the current schedule of this Committee.

168. Items for the next agenda and close

An item was requested to receive an update on bus routes to the Town Hall.

169. 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:

169.1. To consider any legal issues, including those above as required – Cllr Coleby proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 8 May 2025

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 11:09

165. To consider staffing requirements and preparations for the budget (some aspects may be confidential)

There was a confidential discussion regarding staffing requirements and preparations for the budget.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:18

Signed: .....
12 June 2025