

Lowestoft Town Council
Personnel Committee
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE
Thursday 7 August 2025 at 10:00

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Jen Jones, Christian Newsome (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce and Bernie Rappensberger

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

27 Welcome

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

28 Apologies for absence

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

29 Declarations of interests and dispensations:

29.1 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests, and of bias and pre-determination from Councillors – There were none.

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

30 The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 3 July 2025

Cllr Pearce had provided his confidential note for the section of the meeting where no officers were in attendance. The confidential note from 3 July as prepared by officers would be deferred. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the minutes of the meeting on 3 July 2025 and the confidential note which had been provided; seconded by Cllr Begum; one Councillor abstained; one Councillor voted against.

31 Public forum

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

32 Finance:

32.1 Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget – The budget monitoring document had been provided. Currently, it was anticipated the year-end position would be an £8,800 surplus. Cllr Brooks had a matter relating to the staffing contingency budget to raise during the confidential session.

32.2 The local government pay award agreement – This had been settled at 3.2%, which was slightly below inflation. Unless there were any objections, this would be applied to all staff and backdated to 1 April.

32.3 Budget for extension of temporary contracts (some aspects may be confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

33 Staffing (confidential):

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33.1 Review of the Committee Clerks' job descriptions in light of staffing structure changes –

To be considered during the confidential session.

33.2 Line management and governance arrangements for accountability of the Town Clerk –

To be considered during the confidential session.

33.3 Staff terms and conditions (confidential): - To be considered during the confidential session.

- a. Application of the Local Government Pay Award for the 25/26 financial year
- b. Updates on model contract of employment
- c. Updates on the employee handbook
- d. Variations to the application of Flexible Working and Family Related Leave (Chapter 4 Employee Handbook)
- e. Variation of temporary contract of employment to permanent
- f. Variation of contract of employment from part-time to full-time
- g. Agreeing working arrangements for Christmas and New Year period

33.4 An update on any matters relating to recruitment – The Town Hall Heritage Apprentice had been appointed and would be starting on 8 September. The advertisement for the Town Hall Manager was due to be published in September. The advertisement had been provided to the Town Hall Project Committee. At its meeting in July, the Finance and Governance Committee had made a recommendation regarding the salary banding. The contingency budget allowed for six months' salary pro-rata, at the top end of the salary banding that the position will be advertised at.

34 Organisational resilience and contingency/succession planning – This had been considered by the Personnel Working Group and Personnel Committee, who had made a recommendation for the external consultant to take this forward as part of the staffing and organisational structure elements of business plan. Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse this as a recommendation to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Barker. Cllr Pearce had circulated the confidential notes of the Personnel Working Group meeting to Councillors via email, and they had also been provided as a confidential document with the agenda. Seven Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

35 Review and formalisation of recruitment processes

The Working Group had considered this item at its meeting on 25 June. No particular issues had been raised and a standardised recruitment process had already been adopted by the Council, however it was noted that there had been deviations from this process, particularly for the Town Hall and some Grounds Maintenance Team positions. Where a delegation had been agreed with regard to the recruitment process, this would need to be made clear, if not the agreed process should be adhered to.

36 Date of next meeting

Thursday 4 September 2025 at 10:00.

37 Items for the next agenda and close

There were no requests.

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

38 Admission to meetings

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32.1 Monitoring expenditure from the staffing contingency budget – An independent HR consultancy had been commissioned to undertake salary benchmarking for senior posts in recent months. An external consultant would also be reviewing this as part of the business plan.

32.3 Budget for extension of temporary contracts (some aspects may be confidential) – This would be covered under item 33.3f.

33.1 Review of the Committee Clerks' job descriptions in light of staffing structure changes – These had been reviewed by the Personnel Working Group. The job descriptions for both Committee Clerks required amending to remove outdated references and typographical errors. Cllr Brooks proposed to approve an addition to the Senior Committee and Project Clerk's job description; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Depth of cover for when the Town Clerk is on leave or absent was considered. Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse a recommendation of the Personnel Working Group to Full Council regarding this; seconded by Cllr Barker; seven Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor voted against. It was considered this would form part of the Council's resilience and risk management, and Cllr Begum therefore proposed for the external consultant to also consider this as part of her work on the business plan; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

IT resilience was also considered. The Town Council had moved over to a new provider.

33.2 Line management and governance arrangements for accountability of the Town Clerk – The Personnel Working Group had considered this item but had made no recommendations and had asked the Personnel Committee to consider it. It was agreed to move this item to the end of the meeting.

33.3a Application of the Local Government Pay Award for the 25/26 financial year – It was noted the 3.2 % increase would be applied to all staff in August's pay, backdated to 1 April 2025. This had been budgeted for, up to 5%.

33.3b (Updates on model contract of employment), 33.3c (Updates on the employee handbook) and 33.3d (Variations to the application of Flexible Working and Family Related Leave - Chapter 4 Employee Handbook) – The Senior Committee and Project Clerk gave an update to the Committee on her personal circumstances.

Regarding items 33.3b and 33.3c, an external HR provider had been asked to review the model contract of employment, and had also applied updates to the employee handbook, reflecting new legislation. It was suggested the Working Group could meet to review the changes.

Cllr Pearce proposed for the Personnel Working Group to review the model contract of employment and updates to the employee handbook and make recommendations back to the Personnel Committee at its September meeting; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

It was agreed to move item 33.3d to the end of the meeting.

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33.3e Variation of temporary contract of employment to permanent - Cllr Brooks made a recommendation to Full Council to approve the variation of a temporary contract of employment to permanent; seconded by Cllr Pearce. It was requested the Finance Manager budget for this on a pro-rata basis. All Councillors voted in favour.

33.3f Variation of contract of employment from part-time to full-time – Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation to Full Council to approve the variation of a contract of employment from part-time to full-time; seconded by Cllr Pearce. It was again requested the Finance Manager budget for this on a pro-rata basis. All Councillors voted in favour. It was requested for the Grounds Maintenance Team’s requirements and justifications for equipment to be provided no later than September.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to delegate authority to the Clerk to authorise a contractual change for an officer’s hours to be increased, in consultation with the Finance Assistant and Town Hall Project Manager to agree the appropriate time to do this. Cllr Begum seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

33.3g Agreeing working arrangements for Christmas and New Year period – Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to close the office on Christmas Eve this year. For any staff required to work that day, they would instead be permitted to take an alternative day, before the end of January 2026, by arrangement with their Line Manager. Cllr Begum seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

In appreciation of officers, Cllr Pearce proposed to set aside funds from the staff contingency fund for a staff Christmas wellbeing event; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour. In previous years, this included a round-up of work completed and achievements that year, and planning for the year ahead.

The Senior Committee and Project Clerk left the meeting 11:21 for consideration of the remaining items

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

Signed:

08 September 2025