

Lowestoft Town Council
Town Hall Project Committee
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE
Thursday 11 September 2025 10:00

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Andy Pearce and Bernie Rappensberger. Non-Councillor members Helen Johnson and Ben Porter (East Suffolk Council Officers)

In attendance: Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant)

Also in attendance: Sheila Moss King (Project Manager)

Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Barker to preside over the meeting in the absence of the Chair; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

40 Welcome

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

41 To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nasima Begum, Neil Coleby and Nick Webb with reasons provided. Cllr Rappensberger proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Wendy Brooks was absent with no apologies received.

42 Declarations of interests and dispensations

42.1 To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from Councillors on items on the agenda – There were no declarations.

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

43 To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 14 August 2025

Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Helen Johnson; all in favour.

44 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.

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

Cllr Pearce raised a comment on the digitisation of Lowestoft Collection and highlighted that the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee would be the responsible body for considering any disposal of items in the collection. The Project Manager noted there had been confusion due to recent miscommunication when the Heritage Officer was progressing the digitisation of the collection and confirmed all members of the team were aware they had no power to make decisions on disposal of items and understood such a decision could only be exercised by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee.

45.1 An update on contractual matters – The Project Manager reported the roof repairs were ongoing and the foundations were being poured for the new events hall were being progressed.

The first phase of installation for the substation had been completed, with more work to proceed later this month, and the substation was projected to be energised by April 2026.

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The Project Team was working with Historic England to implement procedures for the awarded grant, this included the recent site visit with a photographer and Conservation Architect. The Project Manager would provide further detail in confidential session.

Regarding secondary glazing for the Council Chamber, a recommendation had been received from Barnes Construction to not opt with the manufacturer originally specified in the tender due to concerns with credit checks, and as their request for up to 90% of the contract to be an upfront payment could be a significant risk. The Project Manager suggested to instead spend an extra £4,500 on secondary glazing (making the total cost £88,200) rather than proceed with the original manufacturer, due to the risk posed to Lowestoft Town Council. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve this recommendation; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

An update was provided on the Activity Plan and the following was highlighted:

- The new Heritage Apprentice has started
- The two Town Hall tours for Heritage Open Days have been fully booked
- The second Town Hall drop-in session was due to be hosted by Barnes Construction on 17 September at the Compass Street Pocket Park.

It was requested the financials and contingency spend be discussed in confidential session due to the contractual matters to be discussed.

Cllr Pearce requested there be a discussion in confidential session regarding the communications between the Town Hall Project Manager and OPR Consulting to synchronise the Town Council Business Plan and the Town Hall Project Business Plan.

- 45.2 Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – Actions to be progressed had been covered under item 45.1.
- 45.3 The risk register – The risk register had been updated to record the potential delays to the project and the increasing rates for the Public Works Loan. Whilst the loan remained affordable, a query was raised on whether to draw down and crystallise the rate before further increases. It was noted that repayments of the loan had been budgeted for the financial year of 2025-2026. The Project Manager would review the rates further and report back to the Committee.
- 45.4 Updated Business Plan – With the transition to the Town Hall, there needed to be guidance from the Business Plan on what to cost for the café model and other Town Hall staff.

46 Finance, budget monitoring and payments (see report):

To note and consider income and expenditure

- 46.1 Monitoring the budget – £2.278 million has been spent to date and £10.28 million remained in the balance of the overall budget. Due to recent expenditure, the contingency budget had reduced from £1.5 million to £1.28 million. The details of the expenditure would be discussed in confidential session.

A grant application had been submitted to cover the cost of energy efficient elements of the project, which would have covered the PVP Panels, but it was not successful. Lowestoft Town Council had previously resolved to directly fund the energy efficient aspects of the project and the Project Manager confirmed the cashflow to cover this was sufficient with the full £90,000 in the funding plan. An item was requested for the Full Council agenda to ensure the PVP panels were added to the agreed scope of works and budget with appropriate delegations set to cover the work regardless of how it would be funded.

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Whilst there was currently no contractor for interior furnishings provision had been made outside the main contract for interior furnishings, though this budget would be under pressure as it also covered the audio and visual requirements for the Town Hall. The Project Manager reminded the Committee there would also need to consideration of the existing Town Council furniture and its future in the Town Hall.

The audio and visual logistics for the Town Hall would be discussed further with regards to staffing as Town Hall team members would be responsible for its set up in meetings and for third parties.

46.2 Any payments for approval – There were no payments to be approved.

47 To receive an update on recruitment

The interviews for the Town Hall Manager were scheduled for 10 October and the panel would consist of three Councillors and the Town Clerk, with the Project Manager to attend in an advisory capacity.

48 Date of next meeting

Thursday 9 October 10:00

49 Items for the next agenda and close

No items were requested for the next agenda.

50 Admission to Meetings

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 – Cllr Rappensberger proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 10:59

45.1 An update on contractual matters – The Project Manager informed the Committee on further requirements of the Historic England grant and how this would be managed.

46.1 Monitoring the budget – There was a confidential discussion on the budget.

45.4 Updated Business Plan – There was a discussion on the Business Plan and how this would be coordinated with the Town Council Business Plan.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:37

Signed: 
9 October 2025