

Lowestoft Town Council
Full Council Meeting
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:30 on 27 May 2025

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum (Mayor), Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Janet Craig, Jen Jones, John Murray, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, John Pitts, Bernadette Rappensberger, Deborah Ray and Nick Webb

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

Also in attendance: Sheila Moss King (Town Hall Project Manager)(remotely via Zoom) and Jade Tinney (Nicholsons Law) (remotely via Zoom)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

23. Welcome

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

24. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Christine Moore, Christian Newsome, Paul Page and Elise Youngman, with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed to approve the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

25. Declarations and dispensations

- 25.1. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests and declarations of bias and pre-determination from Councillors on items on the agenda – Cllrs Barker, Brooks, Ray and Webb declared they are members of Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Cllr Breakspear declared he is Chair of the Friends of Kensington Gardens.
- 25.2. Written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – There were none.

26. The draft minutes of the Annual Meeting on 20 May 2025

The draft minutes were not available for this meeting.

27. Public forum

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

28. Finance and Governance

28.1. Receipt and consideration of the following:

- 28.1a. 2025 – 2026 budget and reserves – The year-end process had been completed successfully. There was no update to report on the budget and reserves position.
- 28.1b. Any bank reconciliations – March's had been completed and April's would be underway. It was noted the internal audit would be taking place the following month.
- 28.1c. Payments and income for the month ending 30 April 2025 and May 2025 to date (see schedules) – It was noted that the reports provided only seemed to list individual items of £2,500 or greater. As per the previous Council resolution, it was requested that the Lowestoft Town Tennis Club's financial contribution toward the Denes Oval floodlighting be credited to the Denes Oval capital budget. It was noted that the figure for HAT of £180897 appeared to be incorrect. Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the income and expenditure reports as a true and accurate record, subject to the amendments identified; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Lowestoft Town Council

Full Council Meeting

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 27 May 2025

- 28.1d. Payments for approval – There were none.
- 28.2. The draft minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 12 May 2025 – The draft minutes were not yet available.
- 28.3. The draft Terms of Reference for the Youth Forum – Cllr Barker gave an overview of the draft Terms of Reference and accompanying meeting paper provided on behalf of the Working Group. At the next meeting, the Town Council may wish to consider having a Steering Committee to take this forward. Budget allocation, the amount of funding required, officer resourcing and whether it would be feasible for Youth Forum members to attend Council meetings would need to be considered also. Cllr Brooks proposed an initial budget of £500. It was queried whether a twenty five year old without special educational needs would be able to join the Youth Forum, as they would be able to stand for election to the Town Council, and whether the body could still therefore be referred to as a Youth Forum. The Working Group considered they should be able to join the Youth Forum, so as not to discriminate, and this may also encourage more people to then stand for election to the Town Council. The sixteen to twenty five age group was not one which the Town Council had regularly engaged with. Cllr Pearce seconded Cllr Brooks' earlier proposal, but requested an amendment to delegate authority to the Finance and Governance Committee to determine the budget, with input from officers. Cllr Brooks accepted the amendment and all Councillors voted in favour.

29. Town Hall Project

- 29.1. The draft minutes of the Town Hall Project Committee meeting on 8 May 2025 –
The Town Hall Project Manager joined the meeting 18:51

Following a report circulated by the Project Manager, it was noted there was no defibrillator in the vicinity of the Town Hall, and it was suggested this should be considered for the Town Hall or High Street area.

- 29.2. The delivery stage of the redevelopment of the Town Hall:

29.2a. A progress report from the Project Manager (some aspects may be confidential) – It had been stipulated in the tender process that the successful bidder must be a member of the Considerate Constructors Scheme. An inspection had taken place the previous week, which had resulted in an overall excellent rating. The inspector had been very enthusiastic about the short film which had been produced as a way of informing the public about the project. Part of the roof structure along Compass Street was in a worse condition than anticipated. The dry rot specialist would be recommending replacement in oak, which would call on the contingency, but was considered a reasonable call on that budget. The new roof on the clocktower had been completed. The weathervane was being restored, and should be returned next month. Various partitions had been removed to create the café space. The Heritage Apprenticeship opportunity was being advertised and would start in September for eighteen months, culminating in a cultural learning and participation qualification. The Stories from the Sea exhibition had been well received and would be continuing until the end of the week in the High Street 'pop-up' shop. The spend to date would be approximately £1.6million by the end of the week. The Project Manager would be liaising with the Acting Town Clerk and the Finance Manager with regard to drawing down some of the Public Works Loan. It was confirmed local schools and the Job Centre had been made aware of the Apprenticeship opportunity. There were no confidential matters for consideration under this item.

The Town Hall Project Manager left the meeting 18:59

- 29.3. A request from Cllr Brooks to join the Town Hall Project Committee – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pitts; all in favour.

30. Marina Theatre

Lowestoft Town Council

Full Council Meeting

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 27 May 2025

- 30.1. The draft minutes of the Marina Theatre Project Committee meeting on 8 May 2025 – There were no comments.
- 30.2. The Marina Theatre Redevelopment Project:
 - 30.2a. A progress report from the Project Manager – The Project Manager was not in attendance, but had supplied a written report.
- 30.3. An update on the new lease (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.
- 30.4. A recommendation from the Marina Theatre Project Committee regarding out of project scope work to make improvements to the first-floor auditorium seating (some aspects may be confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.
- 30.5. A request from Cllr Brooks to join the Marina Theatre Project Committee – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pitts; all in favour.

31. Assets, Inclusion and Development

- 31.1. The draft minutes of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee meeting on 12 May 2025 – The draft minutes were not yet available.
- 31.2. Quotations for the replacement footbridge in Kensington Gardens – Cllr Brooks proposed to approve the quotation as recommended by officers. Options for more decorative structures were considered, but feasibility and cost were prohibitive. Repair of the existing structure was also not possible as deterioration was more extensive than first thought. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal; twelve Councillors voted in favour; two Councillors voted against.

32. Personnel

- 32.1. The draft minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting on 1 May 2025 – There were no comments.
- 32.2. Recommendations from the Personnel Committee:
 - 32.2a. Staff terms and conditions (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.
 - 32.2b. For Full Council to agree on the formal definition of a complaint and build that definition into the Complaints Procedure – Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate the decision to the Finance and Governance Committee as a governance issue. If using the Law Society definition, any expression of dissatisfaction received verbally, in writing or in any other format would have to be logged and that would need to be resourced. It was considered that accidents taking place on Town Council property should automatically be treated as complaints and the definition should encompass this. Cllr Jones seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.
- 32.3. A report on matters relating to legal advice (confidential) – To be considered during the confidential session.

33. Climate and Ecological Emergency

- 33.1. Recommendations from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee:
 - 33.1a. Supporting Suffolk County Council's opposition to the proposal by National Grid to build pylons through Waveney Valley, rather than underground cables – Information provided by Cllr Brooks had been circulated to Councillors. Cllr Parker was not aware of East Suffolk Council having taken a position on this issue. Cllr Pearce proposed to support Suffolk County Council's opposition. Cllr Brooks requested an addition to offshore and underground cabling. Cllr Pearce accepted the amendment. Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.
- 33.2. Appropriate activity to raise the profile of the flood risk to Lowestoft, including direct engagement with the MP and relevant authorities – The ending of the flood defences

Lowestoft Town Council

Full Council Meeting

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 27 May 2025

project in Lowestoft had left large sections of town at risk of flooding, and this was a matter of concern for the public at the recent Annual Assembly. Whilst the Town Council is not a campaigning organisation, it was suggested that it could still proactively engage with relevant authorities, on behalf of the town, to advocate for having the final part of flood defences seen through to completion. The Waveney Local Plan was premised on the fact there would be flood protection. Cllr Pearce proposed to set out a programme of engagement with the MP and other local stakeholders. It was suggested an item could be added to the next Quarterly Liaison Meeting agenda with East Suffolk Council.

Cllr Jones temporarily left the meeting 19:23

Cllr Ray declared she is a member of the campaign group Use Your Voice, who are campaigning for the completion of the flood defences, and were in liaison with East Suffolk Council and the MP. Cllr Murray seconded the proposal and requested this also accommodates the types of groups Cllr Ray had mentioned, and DEFRA. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

33.3. A request from Cllr Parker to join the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee – Cllr Parker proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Ray; all in favour.

34. Legal and governance matters (confidential):

All items under this heading to be considered during the confidential session.

34.1. The May 2025 legal update report

34.2. Any land transfers or lease arrangements

34.3. Further consideration of a statement regarding the Town Council's position relating to the Tingdene Heras fencing

Cllr Jones returned 19:25

34.4. A complaint has been received, a panel has considered the complaint and a working group has been formed to take forward actions

35. Date of next meeting

24 June 2025 at 18:30. All Councillors had been sent an invitation to training sessions on the new style agendas. Only eleven responses had been received so far.

36. Items for the next agenda and close

Cllr Barker had requested an item on setting up a Steering Committee for the Youth Forum.

The Town Council's solicitor joined the meeting 19:27

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

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the meeting 19:27

37. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

37.1. Any matters, including those above as required:

30.3. An update on the new Marina Theatre lease (confidential) – The new draft lease had been received from the Marina Theatre Trust's lawyer and provided to the Acting Town Clerk, with comments from the Town Council's lawyer.

Cllr Brooks returned 19:29

The Trust's lawyer had put forward a substantial amount of amendments, several of which required Council consideration. The Town Council's lawyer went through the main points which required a decision from Council, and the recommendations of the Town Council's lawyer were endorsed for each point.

Given the volume of proposed amendments to work through, the Acting Town Clerk suggested to finish this with Councillor members of the Marina Theatre Project Committee at a separate meeting. The Town Council's lawyer welcomed the opportunity to discuss these points in more detail. Cllr Coleby proposed to delegate authority to officers and Town Council members of the Marina Theatre Project

Lowestoft Town Council

Full Council Meeting

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 27 May 2025

Committee to work through and make decisions on the remaining points, with a minimum of four Town Councillors to be in attendance; seconded by Cllr Pitts; all in favour.

At 20:30, Cllr Begum proposed to suspend Standing Order 3y for one hour, to enable the meeting to continue; seconded by Cllr Barker; thirteen Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

Cllr Pearce made a proposal regarding the lease; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

The Town Council's lawyer left the meeting 20:34

Cllr Barker had a leaflet from the Marina Theatre which made reference to the improvements to the auditorium seating, which had not yet been agreed by the Town Council. It was requested this be added to the agenda for the Project Committee to raise with the Trust.

30.4. A recommendation from the Marina Theatre Project Committee regarding out of project scope work to make improvements to the first-floor auditorium seating (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllr Pearce made a proposal regarding this. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal.

Cllr Craig temporarily left the meeting 20:38 and returned 20:39

The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

A comfort break was taken 20:41

The Senior Committee and Project Clerk left the meeting 20:41

The Acting Town Clerk temporarily left the meeting 20:41

Signed:

24 June 2025

