

Lowestoft Town Council
Finance and Governance Committee Meeting
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
Wednesday 08 October 2025 AT 10:00

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Connor Blowers, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Jen Jones, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, and Deborah Ray

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Town Clerk), James Cox (Finance Manager) and Jill Hook (Finance Assistant)

60 Welcome

To explain the fire evacuation procedure, welcome the meeting, and remind councillors and members of the public of the right to report.

61 To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nasima Begum, Paul Page and Bernie Rappensberger with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Cllr Keith Patience was absent with no apologies received.

62 Declarations of Interests and dispensations

62.1 To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr Pearce declared he had advance notice of items 67.5 and 67.7 and had advised the organisations on the application process. Cllr Pearce also declared he is involved with a local primary school that may use the services of the organisation in 67.3 but not been involved in the applications and had no pre-determination.

Cllr Blowers declared he is a member of the Management Committee of the Kirkley Peoples Forum and would leave the room for consideration of item 67.6.

Cllr Parker declared he had already contributed towards Nature Play as an East Suffolk Councillor, so would leave the room for consideration of item 67.7.

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

63 To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 10 September 2025

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes and confidential note subject to amendment of item 51.1 to state a grant applicant must provide reasons for why their grant application required consideration before the specified quarterly dates; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

64 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.

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65 Budget and Loan

- 65.1 To monitor the budget for 2025-2026, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – There were no matters to discuss.
- 65.2 To note any bank reconciliations - August 2025 was to go to Councillors for approval and September 2025 was in progress.
- 65.3 To receive any report and recommendations from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee – A concern was raised that the Budget and Loan meetings were not well attended, and a request was made for more Councillors to attend. Cllr Ray offered to attend but was not able to commit on a weekly basis. An item was requested for the next agenda to recruit additional Councillors for the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee.
- The Finance Manager proposed to recommend bringing the current accounting software in line with budget proposals for the 2026/27 budget by moving existing budgets to their new headings and a virement of £5,000 from the 'Community Engagement' Budget to a new line for 'Communications'. This would enable promotional work to be carried out for the Neighbourhood Plan and Business Plan. Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the recommendations from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee and recommend approval to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

66 Payments and Receipts:

- 66.1 To note the income and expenditure reports for September and October 2025 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – Cllr Pearce proposed to accept the September payments; seconded by Cllr Ray; six in favour, one abstention.
- 66.2 To consider any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were no matters to discuss.

67 Grants and Sponsorships

To note the following grant applications have been received and discuss if any require urgent consideration

- 67.1 Kirkley Pocket Parks Group - £731.28
'The group only have £50 left in their account and will need to buy Autumn/Winter bedding plants and bulbs in November'.
Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the grant. The Committee considered that the organisation had not looked for funding from other sources. The Grants budget of £50,000 had £8,860 remaining with approximately £30,000 in the Earmarked Reserve.
The proposal was seconded by Cllr Ray; six votes in favour; one vote against. The Committee requested officers ask the organisation to recognise the Town Council on their social media accounts when notifying them of the approval.

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- 67.2 Lowestoft Town Football Club - £4,800.00 – The Committee considered the possibility of providing sponsorship in future years as this appeared to be an annual event. It was confirmed the grant application had been incomplete when it was originally submitted, therefore it was being considered at a late stage.

Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the application, requested officers to question whether the organisation would require an annual sponsorship in future (for the Budget and Loan Sub Committee to consider) and whether a girls' team would be attending in future; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

- 67.3 MN Well Child Support CIC - £5,100.00

'The period from October to December is amongst our busiest period. All of our current 1:1 provision is fully booked which means we are currently unable to accept any new referrals. That said we are trying to squeeze in those that we continue to receive - but if our funding could be considered and approved earlier than December it will give us confidence in commissioning more staff time. Equally if the result is negative, it would give us a steer as to when to stop accepting any referrals'.

The Committee supported the work, but noted the main costs included within the application appeared to be for staffing costs, which the Town Council does not provide funding for. Cllr Brooks proposed to recommend deferral of the application because the Town Council's criteria had not been satisfied, for officers to seek clarification of the qualifications and employment status of the personnel, further details on the organisation, how the funding would be used and whether other funding sources had been approached; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

- 67.4 Kirkley Pantry - £2,000.00 – Cllr Brooks proposed to approve from the Food and Social relief budget; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

- 67.5 The Excelsior Trust - £10,000.00

'You may be aware that the vessel suffered some damage during its last voyage particularly Topmast failure, bowsprit breakage and some rigging damage all of which is considered wear and tear and unfortunately not covered by our marine insurance.

We are making an urgent request for financial support to allow us to begin work on repairs sooner rather than later.

We would be most grateful if you would consider our application which will support our overall winter refit budget which is higher than expected due to the damage sustained.'

The organisation had not approached other organisations for additional funding.

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Cllr Jones temporarily left the chamber at 10:51.

The repairs would need to be completed over the winter ahead of the next sailing season. Cllr Brooks proposed to offer £5,000 from Grants, with the option to reapply for funding from April 2026 for the remaining £5,000 and suggested funding was sought from other organisations.

Cllr Jones returned to the chamber at 10:54

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Ray; three in favour; two against; two abstentions.

Cllr Blowers temporarily left the chamber at 10:57

- 67.6 Kirkley Peoples Forum - £660.00 - Cllr Brooks proposed to approve; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. An item was requested for the next agenda to consider the sponsorship increase detailed on the application.

Cllr Blowers returned to the chamber at 10:59

- 67.7 Nature Play – The item was deferred as an application had not been submitted.

68 Other financial and governance matters, including:

- 68.1 To receive the report on asset revaluations and consider the tender process for insurance renewal – The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the data produced by the Chartered Surveyors, commissioned following the approval by the Finance and Governance Committee. All reinstatement values had been included along with site plans, measurements, descriptions and insurance values with corresponding photographs for each asset/location. The current insurance contract expires on 1st April and the Town Council now has the required information to put together a tender. The report did not cover the Marina Theatre or the Town Hall as works are still ongoing. A new fleet policy was required for the Town Council's vehicles. The Marina Theatre would be operational before 1st April so the current policy would incorporate it. The Town Hall would become operational after 1st April 2026. The insurers would need to be made aware at the time of tender to ensure the policy can be amended to incorporate the Town Hall. The Committee considered the implications for insurance purposes of having AV charging points installed on site when the Town Hall was operational due to the proximity to the building. Officers were aware of the problem this may cause for insurance purposes. The insurance policy also covered long term sickness. Cllr Pearce proposed to keep the insurance policy as an active item on each agenda; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.
- 68.2 To consider the Budget & Loan Sub-Committee Terms of Reference amendment (6.1.1) – Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the amendment from 'decisions' to 'recommendations'; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.

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- 68.3 To note the interim internal audit report for period 1st April 2025 to 30th September 2025 – One action from the report would be provided to the Standing Orders Sub-Committee to consider an amendment to the Financial Regulations. Cllr Pearce proposed to note the report and outcome, and to record a note of thanks to the Town Clerk, Finance Manager and RFO and all members of staff involved; seconded by Cllr Jones; all in favour.
- 68.4 To consider the lease of two new vehicles within the current financial year – The Committee considered the increase in staff that has led to a requirement for additional Grounds Maintenance vehicles. Cllr Brooks proposed to recommend to Full Council to approve the 3 year lease costing £6,275 within the current year and £13,516 for a full year, be taken from Repairs and Maintenance; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 68.5 To note the conclusion of the trial period of the dissatisfaction log and to consider its implementation as an official process – The initial trial was for a 2 month period and was reviewed during the Finance and Governance meeting on 10th September 2025. A decision was not made on whether to continue the log and the matters it would include. The Committee considered the need to log the number of calls that related to other Councils.

Cllr Jones temporarily left the chamber at 11:29

Cllr Jones returned to the chamber at 11:32

Cllr Pearce proposed to continue the complaints log in its current format using the definition of a complaint as the basis and for the Finance and Governance Committee to receive a quarterly report, with the requirement of the log being reviewed annually commencing May 2026; seconded by Cllr Parker; six in favour, one against.

69 Date of next meeting

Wednesday 12 November 10:00

70 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 -There were no resolutions.

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The meeting was closed at 11:35



Signed:
12 November 2025