

Lowestoft Town Council
Town Hall Project Committee
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE
Thursday 09 October 2025 at 10:00

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks (Chair), Neil Coleby, Andy Pearce, Bernie Rappensberger and Nick Webb, plus non-Councillor members Helen Johnson and Ben Porter (East Suffolk Council)

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Town Clerk), James Cox (Finance Manager), John Chamberlain (Town Hall Heritage Officer), Holly Bryant (Town Hall Heritage Apprentice) and Lauren Elliott (Senior Committee and Project Clerk)

Also in attendance: Sheila Moss King (Town Hall Project Manager) and Dr Harriet Foster (Evaluation Consultant)(remotely via Teams)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

50 Welcome

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

51 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sonia Barker and Nasima Begum, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.

52 Declarations of interests and dispensations:

52.1 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests from Councillors on items on the agenda – There were none.

52.2 Written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests and note dispensations granted – There were none.

53 The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 11 September 2025

Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 11 September 2025; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

54 Public forum

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

55 An update report from the Project Manager, including the following (some aspects may be confidential):

55.1 An update on contractual matters – Two consultants from Free Range Collective had been appointed to look after the Pop Culture activity stream, following a procurement process. The consultants would be delivering a range of activities, starting in the spring, then co-curating the inaugural exhibition within the Town Hall.

55.2 Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – The roof was structurally sound, and the Compass Street elevation had been completed. The UKPN substation enclosure had been completed and the transformer delivered. Progress through the project had been slower than anticipated, and this would be discussed with the contractors. The issues discovered with the roof structure had caused a twelve-week delay. Barnes Construction had appointed a second site manager, and the Project Manager would establish the

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reasoning behind this. It had been discovered there was a mix of materials on the Council Chambers walls, and it would be a major piece of work to establish what to retain and what to remove, and how best to do this without causing damage. A false wall was also being removed from the Council Chamber. The Project Manager had an item to raise regarding the AV design in confidential session.

55.3 The Risk Register – The Risk Register, quality and extension of time application would be discussed during the confidential session. The Project Manager would provide an answer on the rationale for a second site manager ahead of the next Project Committee meeting.

55.4 Updated Business Plan, including budgetary requirements for the town council for the 2026-2027 financial year – To be considered during the confidential session.

55.5 An update on the Activity Plan –

The Evaluation Consultant joined the meeting 10:16

The Evaluation Consultant delivered a presentation on the review of evaluating the Activity Plan. The public engagement which has taken place over the last year was detailed, via surveys, engaging with visitors to the High Street and at Town Hall events. The positive aspects of the project were discussed. Members of the public had been relieved and excited to see work begin on the Town Hall, and the improvements being made to the building in the plans. Members of the public had also been interested to learn more about the building's history as the project progresses. Engagement with the Heritage Focus Group and local businesses had been positive. Requirements of the Lottery funding were visibly being delivered. The challenges of the project were discussed. There was no direct bus route to the High Street and the lack of car parking facilities had also been raised as a concern. Members of the public had also expressed disappointment over the appearance of the High Street. The Town Hall tours had been well received and there was further demand for them. A dedicated blog to provide project updates had been requested. The Evaluation Consultant would continue to monitor and evaluate the Activity Plan. Details of forthcoming activities were given. Helen Johnson would feed back the comments on the visual appearance of the High Street internally to East Suffolk Council. Though not part of its statutory duties, the Town Council did have a Public Transport Working Group and was engaging with other stakeholders to try to make improvements to the public transport network in Lowestoft. Part of the frustration for residents was not knowing which authority to contact in order to effect change. Positive feedback had been received from members of the public regarding officers and their engagement with the public.

The Evaluation Consultant left the meeting 10:50

The Heritage Officer provided an update on the Activity Plan. Multimedia and Employability Workshops were scheduled. The Heritage Focus Group was holding an open day early in 2026 and was seeking volunteer support for the museums. The Town Hall talks would be resuming and speakers were being sought. Planning for the 2026 Heritage Skills Market was in the early stages.

55.6 An update on the registrars' lease and charges – To be considered during the confidential session

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

56.1 Monitoring the budget - £2.533million had been spent on the project so far, and £323,000 of the contingency funding had been spent, which was well within the budget for contingency expenditure.

56.2 Any payments for approval – There were none.

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57 An update on baseline evaluation of the High Street context

This had been covered during the presentation delivered at item 55.5.

58 An update on the Towns Fund from East Suffolk Council

East Suffolk Council had been advised the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund would be under one single fund, called the Local Regeneration Fund. Ben Porter would check the grant agreements in place to see if they needed to be varied. There was no longer a requirement to undertake any change requests and decision making had been devolved to the local level. There was also no longer a requirement to submit multiple monitoring returns. The deadline for expenditure had been extended to March 2028.

59 The future use of the land behind the Town Hall (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

60 Date of next meeting

Thursday 13 November 2025 at 10:00.

61 Items for the next agenda and close

Members were advised to send any requests to the office.

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

62 Admission to meetings

55.3 Risk Register – The Project Manager explained a new risk which had been added.
The extension of time request and its implications were discussed.

The review of the AV design was discussed. Cllr Brooks proposed to approve the use of contingency funding for the purchase of additional equipment; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

The Town Hall Heritage Officer temporarily left the meeting 11:24

55.4 Updated Business Plan, including budgetary requirements for the Town Council for the 2026-2027 financial year – The Town Council was asked to consider draw down options for the Public Works Loan.

The Town Hall Heritage Officer returned 11:26

At 11:57, Cllr Coleby proposed to suspend Standing Order 3y for thirty minutes, to enable the meeting to continue; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council regarding the drawing down of the Public Works Loan; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

55.6 An update on the Registrars' lease and charges – The Registrars' had submitted their IT requirements and the implications were being worked through.

59 The future use of the land behind the Town Hall (confidential) – Helen Johnson had been asked to write an outline business case to identify options. Cllr Pearce proposed for Helen Johnson, the Project Manager, and a Town Council officer to meet ahead of the next meeting to consider the requirements and feed back to the Committee; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

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The meeting was closed at 12:12

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Barber', written over a dotted line.

Signed:

13 November 2025