

Lowestoft Town Council

Full Council

Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE

Tuesday 27 January 2026 18:30

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Nasima Begum, Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Neil Coleby, Christine Moore, John Murray, Christian Newsome, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Deborah Ray, Nick Webb and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Town Clerk), James Cox (Finance Manager and Responsible Finance Officer, via Teams) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant)

Also in attendance: Sheila Moss King (Town Hall Project Manager via Teams)

Public: One member of the public was in attendance (in person)

193 Welcome

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

194 To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence from any Councillors not in attendance

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jen Jones, Paul Page, John Pitts and Bernie Rappensberger with reasons provided. Cllr Coleby proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour. Cllrs Janet Craig and Keith Patience were absent with no apologies received.

195 Declarations and dispensations

195.1 To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests, and of bias and pre-determination on items on the agenda – Cllr Newsome declared an interest in item 204 as he worked in public transport. Cllr Moore declared she was an employee of East Suffolk Council.

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

196 To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the Full Council meeting on 16 December 2025

Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the draft minutes and confidential note, subject to an amendment made to a typographical mistake in the confidential note; seconded by Cllr Murray; eleven votes in favour and one abstention.

197 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 in attendance wished to speak.

198 Finance and Governance

198.1 To receive and consider the following:

1. 2025 - 2026 budget and reserves – Cllr Coleby proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
2. Any bank reconciliations – November 2025 was with a Councillor for reconciliation and December 2025 was due to be completed by officers.
3. Payments and income for the month ending December 2025 and January 2026 to date (see schedules) – Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the reports as a true and accurate record of the stated period; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.
4. Payments for approval – There were no payments to be approved.

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5. Options for short-term investment – It was noted the first repayment of the loan was due by the end of May 2026, therefore option two, which required a six-month deposit, may not be ideal, though it was acknowledged that the initial repayment of the loan would be funded from General Reserves, which would then replenished with funds from the investment at the end of July 2025.

Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) had budgeted for the repayments on the Public Works loan separately and all options presented were of low volatility.

The Responsible Financial Officer had recommended the majority of the loan be invested into option three and the remainder be invested into option two.

Cllr Coleby proposed the loan be invested into options two and three with a delegation to the Responsible Financial Officer and the Town Clerk to decide on the split of the loan between the two options; seconded by Cllr Pearce; ten votes in favour and two abstentions.

- 198.2 To approve the 2026-2027 budget and precept – The recommendation was for a precept increase of 9.9% equating to a total precept of £2,664,909. This was based on operational need, statutory obligations and LTC's discretionary commitments. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the recommendation and submit this as LTC's budget and precept demand; seconded by Cllr Coleby who thanked the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee members, the Responsible Financial Officer and the Finance Assistant for their work on the budget; a vote was held with all in favour.
- 198.3 To note the cost of producing a leaflet to accompany the 2026-2027 Council Tax Bill, and approve the draft – Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the draft leaflet and cost; seconded by Cllr Pearce. It was requested the leaflet be amended to include the free sports facilities within the Mayor's opening section to highlight their importance. Officers were thanked for their work on the leaflet. A vote was held with all in favour.
- 198.4 To consider a recommendation from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee to transfer £40,000 from the Sparrows Nest EMR to the Belle Vue EMR – This will contribute towards the refurbishment of public conveniences. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the transfer; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.
- 198.5 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting on 10 December 2025 – The draft minutes were received and noted.
- 198.6 To consider the following matters from the Finance and Governance Committee:
 1. If Lowestoft Town Council should commit to an annual payment for the maintenance of the Lowestoft Collection – Officers confirmed an invoice had only been received for the 2024-2025 financial year and were awaiting an invoice for the 2025-2026 financial year.

Cllr Pearce proposed Lowestoft Town Council agree to make an annual contribution equal to 20% of the running costs to the Lowestoft Museum, subject to the museum and Nicholas Everitt Park Trust cooperating with the Facilities and Contracts Manager on methods to reduce the running costs, this proposal included the capacity for a review of how the money was being spent; seconded by Cllr Murray; all in favour.

The Finance Manager left the meeting at 19:01

2. A recommendation to renew the IT Support Services contract for three years – Cllr Coleby proposed approval to renew the contract; seconded by Cllr Webb; all in favour.

The Town Clerk temporarily left the chamber at 19:03

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3. A recommendation to amend the General Reserves target in the Reserves Policy to the equivalent of four months of revenue expenditure – The previous position of six months had been reviewed by an external party and considered excessive for a Town Council of this size, it had been advised to instead maintain a figure equivalent to three to four months of expenditure rather than precept. Cllr Pearce proposed approval to amend the General Reserves target to be the equivalent of four months of revenue expenditure; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

The Town Clerk returned to the chamber at 19:04

4. Adoption of the following policies:

- a. Co-option
- b. Complaints Procedure
- c. Data Protection
- d. Data Retention
- e. Freedom of Information, Publication Scheme and availability schedule
- f. Public Participation Protocol
- g. Representation on Outside Bodies
- h. Protocol for Reporting at meetings of the Council
- i. Safeguarding
- j. Video Meeting Protocol

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of a recommended policies, but to additionally amend section 3.2 of the Complaints Procedure so that ‘an appropriate person’ would oversee the appeal procedure. This was to avoid a potential situation where the Town Clerk may be involved in the appeal process related to a complaint that had been made against them.

Cllr Murray requested it be recorded in the minutes that he found the complaints process to be an ineffective process for LTC as it had no meaningful sanctions and there should be a scale of action LTC can take in its complaints process.

Cllr Coleby seconded the proposal and a vote was held with eleven votes in favour and one abstention.

5. Adoption of the amended Meeting Announcement document – Queries were raised by some members on the inclusion of the three-minutes speaking rule, as well as the rule only allowing members to speak once on an agenda item, as it was not enforced in meetings. It was noted the rule was embodied in Standing Orders and the process to be exempted from the rule in a meeting would be to make a formal request to the Chair of the meeting.

Cllr Begum proposed to adopt the meeting announcement as amended; seconded by Cllr Pearce on the basis the application of the rule would be trialled for six months.

Cllr Brooks proposed to remove the rule of Councillors only being able to speak once on an agenda item from the meeting announcement as it was not enforced.

A vote was held on Cllr Begum’s proposal with seven votes in favour, two votes against and three abstentions.

199 Town Hall Project

199.1 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Town Hall Project committee meeting on 8 January 2026 – The draft minutes were received and noted.

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- 199.2 To receive and note a progress report from the Project Manager (some aspects may be confidential) - The Project Manager reported work had resumed onsite and no incidents had been reported during the closure period. Further roof coverings have been removed as roof repairs have been completed.

The clock dials have been reinstalled on the clock tower and the team were trialling different methods to illuminate the clock dials.

The Project Manager was waiting to hear from Barnes Construction on whether they would progress with the programme mitigation to reduce the overall timescale of the project to bring the delivery of the project to December 2026. This would be achieved by beginning work on the new build Events Hall, which had been initially scheduled to begin at the end of the restoration works.

£3.73 million has been spent to date and there has been significant work to allocate contingency expenditure on a provisional basis to cover the professional fees should the Extension of Time request be approved. This would be discussed further with the Town Hall Project Committee.

The film on the restoration of the stained-glass windows has been released. The next Town Hall Drop-In session was scheduled for 3 February at the library from 10:00-12:00.

200 Marina Theatre

- 200.1 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Marina Theatre Project Committee meeting on 11 December 2025 – The draft minutes were received and noted.
- 200.2 To receive and note a progress report from the Project Manager (some aspects may be confidential) – The progress report was received and noted. No queries were raised.

201 Marina Theatre Options Appraisal (confidential)

- 201.1 To receive of the notes of the Town Council and Marina Theatre Trust meeting on 16 January 2026
- 201.2 To receive and consider supporting information provided by Marina Theatre Trust
- 201.3 To review legal and professional advice in relation to the options appraisal and agree future model
- These items would be discussed in confidential session.

202 Planning

- 202.1 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Planning Committee meetings on 8 January and 22 January 2026 – The draft minutes from 8 January were received and noted. The meeting on 22 January did not take place due to inquorate numbers.
- 202.2 To approve a change to the Planning Committee's Terms of Reference – The Planning Committee had proposed their Terms of Reference be amended to include responsibilities for reviewing and approving applications for Street Trading Licenses. Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the amendment; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

203 Personnel

- 203.1 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Extraordinary Personnel Committee meeting on 7 January 2026 – The draft minutes were received and noted.
- 203.2 To consider a recommendation from the Personnel Committee to amend the mandatory training document and proposed restrictions – A concern was raised over the allowance of

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three months for Councillors to complete their training as it was felt training should ideally be completed before the member joins a Committee. It was also suggested the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be required to complete planning training as they may need to attend ex-officio. It was clarified all members should endeavour to complete their mandatory training as soon as possible and the three-month rule was to accommodate the time needed to arrange training sessions with external providers.

Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the recommendation and emphasise the three-month ruling was not expected to be the standard time to complete training, it was to accommodate the availability of an external provider; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

This document would be circulated ahead of the 2026 Annual General Meeting and a Councillor who wished to be the Chair of a Committee or Sub-Committee should have completed the required training and committed to complete the training within the set time period for the new civic year.

- 203.3 To consider options for alternative pension provision (confidential) – This item would be discussed in confidential session.

204 Climate and Ecological Emergency

- 204.1 To receive and note the draft minutes of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee meeting on 15 December 2025 – The draft minutes were received and noted.
- 204.2 To consider a recommendation from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee to invite the Suffolk County Council Integrated Transport and Enhanced Partnership Manager to arrange a meeting in Lowestoft with all relevant groups and stakeholders to discuss transport.

Cllr Newsome temporarily left the chamber at 19:44 due to his declared interests

Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

Cllrs Newsome returned to the chamber at 19:45

205 To consider the following legal matters (confidential):

An update report on legal matters – This item would be discussed in confidential session.

206 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 24 February 18:30

207 Items for the next agenda and close

An item was requested for the February or March agenda for a review to be received from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee and Finance and Governance Committee on targets for the earmarked reserves.

An item was requested to review the effectiveness of the project tracker, it was noted this review should be undertaken by all Committees.

208 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 legal and employment issues relating to the matters on this agenda, including the following:

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Any matters, including those above as required – Cllr Coleby proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 19:50

A five-minute comfort break was taken at 19:50

The meeting was resumed at 19:55

201 Marina Theatre Options Appraisal (confidential)

201.1 To receive of the notes of the Town Council and Marina Theatre Trust meeting on 16 January 2026 – An amendment was requested for the notes of the meeting to clarify a point made.

201.2 To receive and consider supporting information provided by Marina Theatre Trust – The information provided by the Marina Theatre Trust was received and noted.

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

201.3 To review legal and professional advice in relation to the options appraisal and agree future model – The options were reviewed.

At 20:29 Cllr Begum proposed Standing Order 3y be suspended for thirty minutes; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Ray; eleven votes in favour and one vote against.

203.3 To consider options for alternative pension provision (confidential) – Cllr Brooks proposed the decision be delegated to officers; seconded by Cllr Begum.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the chamber at 20:54

Cllr Brooks returned to the chamber at 20:55

Cllr Parker left the chamber at 20:57

An amendment to the proposal was agreed.

Cllr Christine Moore left the chamber at 20:58

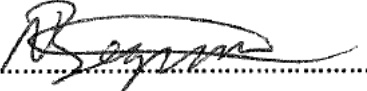
A vote was held with all in favour.

At 21:00 Cllr Begum proposed to suspend Standing Order 3y for ten minutes: seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

205 To consider the following legal matters (confidential):

Cllr Coleby proposed to agree and sign the Deed of Easement for Kensington Gardens with East Suffolk Council; seconded by Cllr Youngman; eleven votes in favour and one vote against.

The Chair closed the meeting at 21:02

Signed: 

24 February 2026