

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Town Hall Project Committee
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE
Thursday 16 July 2026 11:00

MINUTES

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

In attendance: Francis Guildea (Town Hall Manager), Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk and Planning Assistant) and Holly Bryant (Heritage Apprentice)

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

As the Chair was not in attendance, a Councillor would need to be nominated to preside over the meeting. Cllr Foster nominated Cllr Pearce; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; seven votes in favour and one abstention.

17 Welcome

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

18 To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nasima Begum and Neil Coleby with reasons provided. Cllr Rappensberger proposed approval of apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

19 Declarations of interests and dispensations

- 19.1 To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from Councillors on items on the agenda – There were no declarations.
- 19.2 To consider written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

20 To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 11 June 2026

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the draft minutes and confidential note; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

21 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 the public were in attendance.

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

- 22.1 An update on contractual matters – The Project Manager reported good progress had been made on site with the lime plastering finished in the Council Chamber. It was suggested the Committee schedule a visit to the building to see how the construction phase has progressed.

Barnes Construction were working with the Design Team to save on costs where possible and the Project Manager was due to meet a Barnes Construction Director to review the programme, the financial position and their ability to achieve practical completion date.

Helen Johnson requested two queries be discussed under this item in confidential session.

- 22.2 Any planned actions to be authorised for progression – There were no planned actions to be authorised for progression.
- 22.3 The Risk Register – The updated register was received and noted.

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Town Hall Project Committee
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE
Thursday 16 July 2026 11:00

In relation to risk 21 (quality of work) there has been an increased focus from Barnes Construction and HAT for more samples to be used as benchmarks rather than relying only on specifications.

A previous risk recorded on the register was the shortfall in funding from Historic England due to the tight timescale to expend their funds on the specified works. The Project Manager confirmed the timeline had been achieved and the entire grant had been received.

Risk 1 (delivery of the project overruns the timetable) has solidified as a reality. The financial spreadsheet has been updated to record all known costs and contingency was being held within and outside the construction budget.

A query was raised concerning the Quantity Surveyor's report as it provided a projected completion date of 10 March 2027. The Project Manager was uncertain on their reasoning for this date and noted at a recent meeting with Barnes Construction it had been confirmed they would be able to pull back on the recent two weeks delay.

22.4 An update on the Business Plan, including:

1. Catering Operator – Of the Expressions of Interest received, five organisations had been selected for the next phase of in-person interviews and two organisations had confirmed they would like to proceed. The interviews were scheduled for 10 August 2026 and the Town Hall Manager would like two Councillors to join this meeting. It was emphasised this would not be an intense, formal interview, but rather a meeting with a potential business partner to establish their viability, sustainability and solvency, and the organisation in turn had the right to query and interview the Town Council.

Cllrs Brooks, Foster, Pearce and Rappensberger expressed an interest in joining the meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed a delegation be made to officers to arrange for the two Councillors be chosen at random, with substitutes to be drawn if needed; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

2. Registrars' Lease – A meeting had been arranged with the Registrars and Town Hall Manager to discuss the moving in process. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

3. Co-working space – The Project Manager and Town Hall Manager met with the furniture designers to consider the layout of the room and furnishing options. The focus would be to ensure the space offers a functional and appealing design delivered within the budget that would be attractive to potential users.

If there was no uptake in its use as a co-working space, there were alternative uses for the rooms (such as extended Council offices or lettable as an office space to a third party) which would reduce the footfall.

22.5 An update on the Activity Plan – Recent town-wide events, such as First Light and Pride, had presented an opportunity to provide updates on the project and engage with a variety of audiences.

The volunteering opportunities have been advertised at Job Centre, resulting in new contacts from members of the public interested in volunteering.

A songwriting workshop at East Coast College was due to be held as part of the When Lowestoft Rocked project.

A photo competition focussed on the Scores was due to be held in advance of the Scores Race to encourage footfall on the High Street and exploration of the area.

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Town Hall Project Committee
Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DE
Thursday 16 July 2026 11:00

23 To agree attendees to visit the civic storage unit on Tuesday 28 July 14:00

Councillors were invited to attend a visit to the civic storage unit with the Heritage Officer, Heritage Apprentice and volunteers to observe the process for categorising items.
Cllrs Barker, Brooks, Foster and Rappensberger would attend.

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

To note and consider income and expenditure

24.1 Monitoring the budget – To date project expenditure was £6.496 million and £6.065 million remained in the budget.

24.2 Any payments for approval – There were no payments to approve.

24.3 An update on contingency expenditure (confidential) – This item would be discussed in confidential session.

24.4 To consider any recommendations to Full Council regarding items of expenditure in excess of the pre-agreed Town Hall project budget (confidential) – There were no discussions under this item as it had been resolved at the extraordinary Full Council meeting.

25 Date of next meeting

Thursday 13 August 10:00

26 Items for the next agenda and close

A breakdown of key milestones from the project plan was requested and the Project Manager noted this could be provided after discussions with the Town Hall Manager.

Information was requested for October and early November to understand the process of transition to the Town Hall, including serving notice on the current premises, and budgeting for the next financial year, including the final staffing structure, advertisement of posts and their salary bands.

27 Admission to Meetings

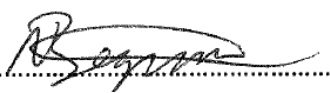
To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely any employment matters and legal issues relating to the matters on this agenda – Cllr Rappensberger proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 12:17

22.1 An update on contractual matters – Two queries were raised in confidential session regarding contractual matters and were clarified by the Project Manager.

24.3 An update on contingency expenditure (confidential) – A confidential update was provided on contingency expenditure.

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:41

Signed: 
13 August 2026