

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
14:30 on 16 June 2020

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sue Barnard, Bob Breakspear, Neil Coleby, Alan Green, Jacqueline Hardie, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce and Alice Taylor

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

1. Election of the Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

Cllr Coleby proposed Cllr Barnard as Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Parker. Cllr Hardie proposed Cllr Breakspear as Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Taylor. The vote for Cllr Barnard was taken first, as this proposal was made first. Four Councillors voted in favour of Cllr Barnard. The vote for Cllr Breakspear was taken and three Councillors voted in favour. Cllr Barnard received an absolute majority of the votes and was duly appointed Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee.

2. Welcome

The right to report and the application of the video meeting protocol were explained and noted, and the meeting was welcomed.

3. Apologies for absence

It was requested that officers check with Cllr Pitts whether he would like to join this Sub-Committee, as he has previously been a member. Cllr Lang had given his apologies for this meeting. Cllr Carlton was not present at the meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of Cllr Lang's apologies, and acceptance of assumed apologies from Cllrs Carlton and Pitts; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

4. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllrs Barnard, Parker and Pearce declared a standing local non-pecuniary interest in all matters relating to the Gainsborough Drive pond. Cllrs Breakspear and Taylor declared a standing local non-pecuniary interest in all matters relating to Kensington Gardens. Cllr Coleby declared a standing local non-pecuniary interest in all matters related to Lowestoft in Bloom.

5. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 18 February 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

There were no comments and the draft minutes were noted.

6. Any advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda

Two comments had been received in advance of the meeting, which were displayed and read out by the Chair. The first comment requested that the Sub-Committee conduct a public survey regarding demand for adult gym equipment before this is pursued. The second comment suggested that, in addition to memorial benches, the Town Council considers memorial statues, small sculptures and sundials as well, particularly where there is already a good existing provision of benches.

7. Review and adoption of Sub-Committee arrangements

7.1 Membership of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee – The membership of this Sub-Committee was confirmed as Cllrs Barnard, Breakspear, Carlton, Coleby, Hardie, Lang, Parker, Pearce and Taylor.

7.2 Appointment of the Deputy Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee – Cllr Taylor proposed Cllr Breakspear for the position of Deputy Chair; seconded by Cllr

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Hardie. Cllr Pearce proposed Cllr Coleby for the position of Deputy Chair; seconded by Cllr Parker. As the proposal for Cllr Breakspear was made first this vote was taken first. Three Councillors voted in favour for Cllr Breakspear as Deputy Chair. Four Councillors voted in favour for Cllr Coleby as Deputy Chair and Cllr Coleby was duly appointed. Cllr Taylor expressed disappointment that the same two Councillors are Chair and Deputy Chair of the AID Committee and this Sub-Committee, which reports to the AID Committee.

- 7.3 Review and adoption of the Terms of Reference of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee (as amended and approved by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee) – Point four of the Terms of Reference refers to ‘the Chair of the Council’, whereas other Terms of Reference refer to the Mayor. It was agreed that whichever is used, it should be consistent across the Terms of Reference for all of the Committees and Sub-Committees. Cllr Taylor proposed adoption of the Terms of Reference; seconded by Cllr Hardie; all in favour.

8. Development of a proposal for the provision of adult gym equipment in Normanston Park

There had been a request from an individual Councillor for this to be added back onto the agenda, who was due to be gathering some more information and starting some public engagement. Inconsistent advice has been received regarding the success of adult gym equipment in other areas. Advice received suggests it may be difficult to secure external funding for this. It was suggested that three or four companies should be invited to complete a site visit and produce a proposal and quotation. Normanston Park is being considered as a destination sports park, but it was suggested that other sites should be considered as well. To fulfil public engagement, it was suggested that a survey could be produced for each site being considered, to get a clearer view as to what is important to park users, such as lighting, paths, wildlife areas, equipment etc, which the Events and Communications Sub-Committee can consider. Cllrs Barnard and Coleby offered to assist with drafting the survey. Over time, all of the parks should be assessed to ensure they are attractive to visitors, which is why this Sub-Committee has started looking at five year plans for them. Any plans will need to be mindful of the Town Council’s climate emergency declaration. Cllr Coleby proposed that three to four companies be invited to visit three of the Town Council’s sites to look at the viability of adult outdoor gym equipment and produce a proposal and quotation. Alongside this, information should be put together about the current provision of lighting, paths, wildlife areas, etc, for a public survey to be compiled. It was further proposed that the three sites should be Normanston Park, Fen Park and Denes Oval. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Pearce and all Councillors voted in favour.

9. How improvements could be made to the Normanston Park changing rooms to best support the playing of sports in the park

Draft plans were looked at at the last meeting. Cllrs Barnard and Coleby were looking at putting a proposal forward and any other members of the Sub-Committee who would like to be involved were welcomed to. Cllr Barnard proposed that a Working Group be set up to put forward a proposal, in line with the Town Council’s climate emergency declaration and advice regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, and with external consultation if necessary and consultation with park users. This was seconded by Cllr Coleby; seven Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote. Cllrs Barnard, Coleby, Green, Parker and Pearce expressed an interest in joining the Working Group. Cllr Hardie will be involved subject to availability. It was requested that Cllr Butler be asked if he would be interested. The Working Group will meet to look at the plans first, before seeking public opinion. It was requested that a site visit be arranged also.

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10. The provision of benches, bins and bicycle racks in the Town Council's parks, including to consider requests for memorial benches in Kensington Gardens and Fen Park

Councillors and officers have been compiling inventories of the parks. It was suggested that the provision of bicycle racks could be included in the public surveys discussed at item 8. Once there is a clear picture of what each park has, this Sub-Committee can start to look at what each park requires. A coherent plan regarding bicycle racks is required. Suffolk County Council should be producing a new cycle plan, which could inform this Sub-Committee's considerations. Officers will liaise with other organisations about the provision of existing bicycle racks. Regarding the member of the public's suggestion for memorial structures or sundials, if this were to be progressed, maintenance arrangements and a repair and replacement policy would need to be considered. It was suggested that a memorial wall or small monument on which individual plaques could be secured could be looked at, rather than several individual monuments, which would allow more requests for memorials to be accommodated. Officers will explore how memorial plaques could be incorporated within parks.

11. What COVID-19 recovery measures can be taken at the Town Council's parks and open spaces

Any buildings or entrances and exits which involve visitors being funnelled through a smaller space will need to be considered. A further discussion around responses from the Town Council's tenants will take place during the confidential session.

12. What measures can be taken at the Town Council's parks and open spaces to improve biodiversity, including advice from East Suffolk Norse's Countryside Officer, following site visits to Gainsborough Drive pond, Fen Park, Daffodil Walk and The Parklands play area

The advice of the Countryside Officer was relayed to the Sub-Committee. A wildflower area could be trialled at Daffodil Walk and the Parklands play area. A community orchard could be accommodated at the Parklands play area, or replacement play equipment. Replacement tree planting at the Gainsborough Drive pond should not exacerbate any flooding issues. Some control of the water speedwell in the pond was recommended. There was a Councillor suggestion for a butterfly and wildlife garden in Fen Park and a wildlife walk through the woodland. A member of the public has offered to assist with the Cotmer Road pond, but there may be insurance implications with this. Both Fen Park and the Cotmer Road pond could be considered as areas to improve biodiversity. A natural play area for the Gunton Community Park was suggested, with a wildflower area, with large mounds which could be planted with trees. Quotes are being sought for an environmental survey of the Town Council's ponds. Differing public views have been expressed about areas of long grass. Each proposed long grass area will need to be considered based on what is appropriate for that particular area, and the Council's intentions clearly communicated to the public.

Cllr Hardie left the meeting 15:58

Sections of Clarkes Lane are being considered as a community orchard and wildflower area. It was suggested that site visits to other areas should continue and public engagement should take place. The Climate Emergency Committee will consider wildflower areas and ways to improve biodiversity as well. The Tree Council is offering grant funding for tree planting projects. Cllrs Barnard and Coleby offered to work on the application form with officers.

13. Periodically inviting the Town Council's Friends Groups, Lowestoft in Bloom and other appropriate outside bodies to meetings of this Sub-Committee

Representatives from East Suffolk Norse have previously attended meetings and their input would be welcomed again by the Sub-Committee. It was suggested that a meeting could be

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arranged with representatives from other organisations every six months, and this may be more effective as a standalone meeting than as part of a meeting of this Sub-Committee. The Friends, Stakeholders and Assets Policy has set out a structure for stakeholders to feed back to the Council but this has not yet been formally implemented. It was agreed provision for a review of the policy should be included on the next agendas for this Sub-Committee and the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee.

14. Date of the next meeting

14 July 2020 14:30

15. Items for the next Agenda and Close

It was requested that consideration be given to visiting any other sites which have not recently been visited, to consider any measures to improve biodiversity. It was requested that cherry tree planting be discussed at the next meeting, including to progress purchase of the tree which it was previously agreed would be planted in August, and the relevant permissions to plant the others.

The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream and the live stream was closed as the meeting went into confidential session. It was confirmed the meeting would end following the confidential session.

Cllr Coleby proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

16. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

11. What COVID-19 recovery measures can be taken at the Town Council's parks and open spaces – Some of the Town Council's tenants had communicated their plans to reopen. These plans were considered and improved in principle, subject to ratification by the appropriate Committees. Requested improvement works will be considered further by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee and the Finance and Governance Committee. Members of the public have returned to play bowls at Kensington Gardens. East Suffolk Norse are currently maintaining the greens so that they can be returned to club standard within seven days notice if required. There have been no issues reported so far with the current standard they are being maintained to.

There have been reports about vandalism and anti-social behaviour at The Ness. A meeting of the Community Safety Committee is being arranged to discuss this, particularly with the opening of the park approaching. The Committee will also be looking at the CCTV provision at other sites owned by the Town Council.

Cllr Parker left the meeting 16:37

Grounds maintenance COVID-19 recovery work will be considered further at the appropriate meetings and discussions will be held with East Suffolk Norse. Addressing public concerns regarding litter are not within the Town Council's remit outside of its assets, but it could look at the wider issue with other organisations.

The Chair closed the meeting 16:57.

Signed:

14 July 2020