

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee
Via Video Meeting
15:30 on 1 September 2020

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sue Barnard, Peter Lang, Paul Page, Andy Pearce and David Youngman (Chair)

Also participating: Sarah Foote (Deputy Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

40. Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were reminded of the right to report and noting the application of the video meeting protocol, and the meeting was welcomed.

41. Apologies for absence and noting the resignation of non-Councillor member Ashley Ford-McAllister from the Climate Emergency Committee

Apologies were received from Cllr Parker. Cllrs Green and Hardie had not provided apologies. It was noted that non-Councillor Emma Bateman had also resigned from the Committee. Cllr Barnard proposed acceptance of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

42. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

43. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 4 August 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

Cllr Barnard reported that two thirds of the pond weed has now been removed from the Gainsborough Drive pond, in line with the advice received from East Suffolk Norse's Countryside Officer.

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

A comment had been received requesting that the Town Council highlights the benefits of cycling in the local press as was previously agreed. Additionally, if a non-Councillor member is appointed to the Committee that their role is made clear, including the relationship to any support groups. The promotion of cycling has been in the community pages of the Lowestoft Journal for two weeks running, but no feedback has been received yet. This will also form part of the public survey and can be promoted on Facebook too.

45. Whether to appoint additional non-Councillor members to the Climate Emergency Committee, or whether to defer this to when face-to-face meetings resume

It was suggested that this should be deferred until face-to-face meetings resume. Part of reason for one of the non-Councillor members resigning was technical difficulties they were experiencing, and it may be that they wish to be considered to re-join the Committee once face-to-face meetings resume. Once the vacancies can be advertised it was agreed there should be more clarity about what the Council can do within its remit and how it can support the community. It is not known whether the Climate Action Group still exists. Cllr Lang proposed deferring the appointment of non-Councillor members to the Climate Emergency Committee until face-to-face meetings resume; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

46. The current provision, environmental impact and costs of bottle banks for glass recycling in Lowestoft and whether this should be increased to appropriate Lowestoft Town Council sites

Indigo Waste has advised that the collection charge would be £15 per ton. For a site to accommodate bottle banks it must meet certain criteria, such as being able to accommodate a

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lorry to empty the banks, with sufficient clearance to allow them to be lifted. Indigo do not have data on the environmental benefit of bottle banks, versus the environmental impact of the process to manufacture the banks themselves. It does not appear that any sites owned by the Town Council would be suitable. It was suggested that there may be some areas of open land owned by East Suffolk Council, which do not have another purpose, which could be used to accommodate bottle banks and clothing banks. It was suggested that Full Council could consider this, and all Councillors could be asked to identify potential sites within their wards. Cllr Lang proposed that Full Council considers making enquiries with East Suffolk Council to acquire areas of land which would be suitable to accommodate bottle banks; seconded by Cllr Barnard; all in favour. The Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee are considering a similar item, but not specifically relating to bottle banks. It was requested that officers make enquiries with Suffolk County Council to see if the Town Council would be eligible for recycling credits.

47. How to implement the Sustainability Strategy, following its adoption by Full Council, including through:

- 47.1. Encouraging reduction in single use and unnecessary plastic and other packaging – Cllrs Page and Youngman have been researching ideas and suggested that the Town Council could champion independent businesses and ensure businesses, and stallholders at the Triangle Market are not using plastic bags and cutlery. Shops pay business rates to East Suffolk Council so this may be more of an action for them, but the Town Council could approach its tenants to understand how they protect the environment, to what extent they use single use and plastic packaging, whether they could transition and the financial impact of doing so. If this would be a small one-off cost, the Town Council may be able to assist with a small grant scheme. Advice is available online to help businesses and individuals reduce the amount of single use and unnecessary plastic packaging they are using, and it was suggested that the Town Council could promote this on its website and Facebook page. Once the schools have settled back in it was suggested that the Town Council could approach them and encourage them to use the Town Council's open spaces for environmental and climate-based projects. A group of students were due to complete a litter pick of an area of the Great Eastern Linear Park (GELP), which was cancelled due to the pandemic. There are only two bins at the GELP between Yarmouth Road and the sports centre, but the Council is considering a wider strategy on whether to provide more bins, or encourage people to take their litter home and recycle where possible. Vehicular access to empty the bins also needs to be considered.
- 47.2. Implementing the Health and Wellbeing Emergency Declaration as a working document, subject to its adoption by Full Council – Full Council has adopted this as a working document. It is wide ranging and would be difficult to implement all at once, but individual Committees will be asked to consider different aspects of it. The document contains and in principle commitment to plant one orchard tree for every other tree planted. Ongoing maintenance of any trees planted needs to be considered. Work should be done to encourage cycling and taking regular exercise, including lobbying to improve the provisions in the town, such as cycling networks. It was agreed that this item should be carried forward to the next meeting, now that the document has been adopted, to allow the Committee to consider its implementation. Some aspects will involve promotion, and others will involve expenditure and procurement. Identifying the different aspects and what is required will make it easier to involve the relevant Committees and Sub-Committees to progress its implementation. It is understood that community gardens are now being favoured over allotments. It was suggested this should be investigated and confirmed. The Deputy Clerk is looking into cycle networks in Lowestoft and what can be done to improve the provision in the town.

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47.3. Supporting the growth in cycling, walking and other forms of transport/exercise – This ties in with the previous item. Feedback has been received from visitors to the town that, compared to other areas, Lowestoft has good cycle routes, but there are areas for improvement, particularly to link Lowestoft with other towns safely. Suffolk County Council has a map of routes but it is out of date. It was agreed the Town Council needs to promote cycling and other outdoor activities. It was queried whether the Town Council could create its own map of cycle routes. Staff will look into this. The Events and Communications Officer can explore other ways to promote outdoor activities, such as fun runs at the Town Council’s parks and open spaces.

48. Developing a policy which takes account of climate emergency considerations for utility procurement and contracts

The Finance and Governance Committee is also considering utility procurement and contracts. Enquiries are being made with the broker who previously sourced quotations from energy suppliers for details of the specification used to assess their green credentials. Should the Town Council advocate a move to electric vehicles, the number of energy suppliers it could work with in this respect would be limited, and may not have the environmental credentials that the Town Council is seeking. It was commented that this Committee needs to consider if it would wish the Town Council to take a policy position which could bind future Councils. Further information is still pending so it was agreed defer this item to the next meeting.

49. Progressing a public campaign with the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee and Events and Communications Sub-Committee to promote the local beneficial impact of trees

Cllrs Barnard and Green are taking photographs of the ancient trees in Lowestoft, to promote on the Town Council’s website. Members of the public have been asked to submit photographs of their favourite or noteworthy trees in the town. A tree promotional event could be linked to the opening of The Ness. The beneficial impact of trees will be promoted on the website. Funding from the Tree Council has been secured. A condition of the funding is that young people need to be involved with the tree planting. Ongoing maintenance of the trees also needs to be considered, and Norse have suggested water bags for some sites. The trees at The Ness have water bags and they are often reused. The benefit of them is that the trees take the water when needed, rather than the entire area being watered on a schedule. Bamboo tree guards are being used over plastic ones. This Committee will be involved with the planning of a public event, when it happens and in what format. When there are items to promote this will be done in other ways rather than just through the community pages of the Lowestoft Journal. This item will be carried forward to the next agenda for further consideration.

50. The management of trees at the Great Eastern Linear Park, following a complaint from a member of the public

A member of the public has expressed concern regarding the size of the sycamore trees to the rear of his property, and the number of trees which are now growing there. East Suffolk Norse’s arborist visited the property earlier in the year and advised that no action was required, and the suggested action from the member of the public would be in contravention of the Town Council’s Tree Policy. In common law, members of the public are permitted to cut back any branches overhanging their property. This issue will also be considered by the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee. It was suggested that a site visit should be completed before a decision is made, and it was recommended that the visit is completed by Councillors who are also members of the AID Committee. Cllrs Barnard and Pearce

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volunteered and will speak with the member of the public also. It was requested that East Suffolk Norse's arborist be invited to offer advice.

51. Submitting an application to Suffolk County Council for carbon reduction funding

It was suggested that an application could be submitted for funding towards installing solar panels on the community halls. The Whitton Residents Hall already has them, but Gunton and Uplands do not. It was requested that this item be deferred to the next meeting, so the Committee can research this in more detail before making a recommendation. Cllr Barnard will circulate the link to more information about the funding. The Gunton Estate Residents Meeting Hall should be reopening soon on a limited basis. A public meeting regarding the Hall's Management Committee had been planned but was postponed due to the pandemic. It was requested that the meeting be re-scheduled and the topic of solar panels could be discussed there. Officers will liaise with those managing the Hall regarding the public meeting and to seek their views on solar panels.

52. Making amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Town Council's Committees and Sub-Committees to more appropriately reflect how the Town Council's climate emergency declaration is being taken forward

The Terms of Reference of all the Committees and Sub-Committees require review from a climate emergency perspective, as they are quite generic at the moment and may not necessarily reflect how the Town Council is progressing its climate emergency declaration. It was suggested these could be reviewed by officers and brought back to this Committee with suggested amendments. The Town Council may not always take the most environmentally friendly option with every decision it makes, but should be able demonstrate that it has taken consideration of all options, and why it has decided to take the decision it has. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference should be more tailored and robust now from a climate emergency perspective and this will be considered further at the next meeting.

53. Date of the next meeting

6 October 2020 15:30

54. Items for the next agenda and close

There were no specific requests in addition to the items which are being carried forward from this meeting.

55. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream. There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting at 17:11.