

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee
Via Video Meeting
15:30 on 6 October 2020

MINUTES

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

56. Welcome

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

57. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Graham Parker. Cllr Alan Green had advised he would be late. Cllr Hardie had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Youngman proposed acceptance of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Barnard; all in favour.

58. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllrs Barnard and Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 69, specifically the Gainsborough Drive pond.

59. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 1 September 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

There were no comments and the draft minutes were noted.

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

A comment had been received from a member of the public to say they had not seen the high profile campaign to promote cycling which the Council had agreed to do. It was explained that responses had been received to the consultation which was promoted in the local press and on Facebook. This will be discussed further at item 62.

61. How to implement the Health and Wellbeing Emergency Declaration as a working document

Following an approach from the Council, the Waveney Valley Athletics Club has advised that it would be happy to work with the Council on any initiatives it would like to progress. This is something which the Events and Communications Officer can progress and promote. There is also the Lowestoft Half Marathon and various fun runs which could be considered, at a time when such activities are permitted again. This Committee had previously agreed that the Health and Wellbeing Emergency Declaration is too big to be implemented as a whole. Staff are working on allocating actions to the relevant Committees and Sub-Committees to consider. It was requested that this item and the next item remain on the agenda so actions can be taken forward as required, particularly as recommendations are made from other Committees and Sub-Committees.

62. Responses to the cycling consultation run in the Lowestoft Journal and online

Responses have been received and circulated previously. The Deputy Clerk has started work on a document to bring together all the ideas the Council has been considering about cycling. A map-based consultation for cycling and walking strategies is mentioned in East Suffolk Council's October Planning Newsletter. The Deputy Clerk has contacted the relevant officer, who is happy to speak with this Committee ahead of its next meeting about the initiative. Staff have used the Lowestoft Journal and the Town Council's website and Facebook page to promote cycling in the town and it was suggested that the Town Council could contact local cycling groups to discuss activities and promotion when it is appropriate to do so.

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Cllr Green arrived 15:42

There used to be a 'Bike and Go' scheme at the train station but the scheme has ended. This may be something the Town Council decides to pick up as several areas now run similar schemes. It was suggested that any ideas Councillors have should be sent to Deputy Clerk to be included in the document she is putting together. The draft document will be circulated to the Committee, including the consultation responses. A Community Engagement Policy is being developed and it was suggested this could include provision for engagement with clubs. Cllr Barnard will contact Highways England about the development of a cycle route between Hopton and Lowestoft. Suffolk County Council has provided a response as to why no schemes in Lowestoft are being prioritised to benefit from funding, but the matter is ongoing.

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

The Clerk is analysing information she has received. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting.

64. 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

It is difficult to progress a public event in the current circumstances. The Tree Council is reassessing its planting criteria, due to the Covid-19 restrictions in place, and the Council may be able to postpone the planting to next year. It was suggested that a page be added to the website with information about trees locally, including the ratio of people to trees and tree types. It was agreed that the beneficial impact of trees should be promoted more, not just ancient and veteran trees. It was agreed that the online campaign should begin now, with a public engagement event to be considered when restrictions allow, including engagement with schools. Cllr Barnard will take photographs of the ancient trees in Gunton. It is understood there is an app to identify trees, which the Council could provide a link to from its website. A former Councillor produced a map of the trees in Kensington Gardens and it was agreed this would be beneficial to have for all the Town Council's parks.

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

The Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee also considered this item at its meeting yesterday. It had previously been suggested that this funding could be put towards installing solar panels on the Gunton Estate Residents Meeting Hall. Those managing the Hall have welcomed the idea but are not sure if the roof is strong enough to support solar panels. It is understood that the maximum amount of funding for a single application is £2,000, but the total cost of installing solar panels would be significantly more, and for that reason the AID Committee did not wish to progress an application for funding. It was queried whether there were any other projects which the funding could be used towards. Staff will check the criteria and progress through the necessary channels if so.

66. Suffolk County Council's 'net zero' policy plans, including what actions the Town Council could take

Suffolk County Council is moving to purchase one hundred percent renewable electricity for all its services as soon as possible, and it was suggested that the Town Council should follow suit. The Council has no policy position on nuclear energy yet. The purchase of new petrol and diesel cars could be prohibited within the next ten to fifteen years. Should the Town Council promote the use of electric vehicles, it would wish to consider which suppliers are available. Cllr Barnard proposed a recommendation to Full Council for Lowestoft Town Council to

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become a 'net zero' Council by 2030; seconded by Cllr Lang; all in favour. Should this be approved by Full Council, a strategy for achieving this needs to be considered, including the short and long term goals and the first steps, which will also be important for the budget-setting process.

67. 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

Staff have started to look at the Terms of Reference for each Committee and Sub-Committee. The Planning and Environment Committee's Terms of Reference are already quite detailed with regard to the climate emergency, and every recommendation put forward to East Suffolk Council includes those requirements as well. This presents a good example of how the climate emergency declaration is being taken forward. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee, for example, has a very broad statement in its Terms of Reference regarding the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee, and consideration will need to be given to how the climate emergency declaration can be taken forward through that Sub-Committee. This may include not approving a budget for projects with a negative carbon impact unless they provide significant benefits to the public. This Committee could look at the Terms of Reference for each Committee and Sub-Committee, or each member of the Committee could be assigned Terms of Reference to review and suggest amendments ahead of the next meeting. Most of the Committees and Sub-Committees will have a generic statement to ensure the climate emergency declaration is taken into account during decision making, but that does not mean that it binds the Council to always take the most environmentally friendly option. An amendment was suggested to the Planning and Environment Committee's Terms of Reference during the meeting, where it shall support the use of electric cars, this should also include sufficient car charging points. Should the Council approve this Committee's recommendation for the Town Council to become 'net zero' by 2030, this should also be reflected in the Terms of Reference to ensure it is progressed. It was agreed that staff will assign specific Terms of Reference to each member of this Sub-Committee to review ahead of the next meeting. It was requested that some standard wording is still included in all the Terms of Reference, which is relevant to all the Committees and Sub-Committees, then specific points can be listed after that.

68. How to manage water usage in the Town Council's parks

Generally, water is available on site at most of the Town Council's parks. A lot of money is spent on watering at the moment and it was queried whether this is justified and necessary. The bowling greens require a lot of watering. Some rainwater is collected in the parks but not enough to cover the demand. Water butts were requested by the Friends Group for Kensington Gardens but advice was sought and the risk to the public, particularly the Legionella risks, are too great. It was suggested that mulch could be used to help retain water, and the Council may need to give more careful consideration to the type of plants it purchases in the future. It was suggested that advice be sought from the Royal Horticultural Society about sustainable water usage, and from East Suffolk Norse about anything they do differently in other areas. It was requested that this matter be added to the agenda of the next Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee meeting for further consideration.

69. The results of the environmental assessments of the Town Council's ponds

The assessments have been completed but the report has not yet been received. It was agreed to carry this item forward to next agenda. There was a concern about the water levels

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in the Gainsborough Drive pond and it was explained that the pond is rain fed, so water levels will fluctuate depending on the weather conditions.

70. Date of the next meeting

3 November 2020 15:30. As discussed at item 62, the East Suffolk Council officer leading on the cycling and walking strategies will speak with the Committee at 15:00 on 3 November, directly ahead of their next meeting. Cllr Lang advised he may not be in attendance for this session.

71. Items for the next agenda and close

Other than items already identified during the meeting, there were no further requests for items to be added to the next agenda.

72. 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 16:39.

Signed:

3 November 2020