

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 20 January 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Neil Coleby, Alan Green, Peter Lang, Paul Page (Chair), Andy Pearce and David Youngman

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

42. Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were reminded of the right to report and the application of the video meeting protocol, and the meeting was welcomed. As the Chair had given apologies and the Deputy Chair was not present at this point in the meeting, the Sub-Committee was asked to appoint one of its members to preside at this meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed that Cllr Green preside over this meeting; seconded by Cllr Lang. There were no other nominations. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

43. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sue Barnard, Jacqueline Hardie and Alice Taylor. Cllr Paul Page had advised he would be late. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

44. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

45. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 16 December 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

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

A public comment had been submitted to Budget and Loan Sub-Committee which was not relevant to that Committee and was passed to this Sub-Committee to consider instead, under item 47. The comment spoke against the Climate Emergency Committee being subsumed by the Planning and Environment Committee.

47. Committee and Sub-Committee structures and Terms of Reference, including to receive any comments from other Committees and Sub-Committees

The purpose of the review is to consider structures, including Terms of Reference but also how the Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups interact with one another. It is hoped this will reduce the length of meetings and agendas, whilst ensuring items still receive the consideration they require. The suggestion of the Climate Emergency Committee being subsumed by the Planning and Environment Committee was considered. The Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee and Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee also consider environmental matters and these should also therefore sit under the Planning and Environment Committee if its remit were to be extended to include all of the Town Council's environmental considerations. With certain matters there is the potential for conflict with planning and climate based considerations, and this could send out the wrong message about the Council's commitment to its Climate Emergency Declaration and its goal to achieve net carbon neutrality. It was queried whether the Planning and Environment Committee has the capacity to give climate emergency issues the due consideration they need. It was suggested that the Climate Emergency Committee should remain a standalone Committee, reporting to Full Council, which other Committees and Sub-Committees can feed in to, as is the case currently. As Chair of the Climate Emergency Committee, Cllr Youngman

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 20 January 2021

commented that many of the members of the Planning and Environment Committee seem to be pro-development, and seem to send a lot of recommendations to East Suffolk Council for tree removal, and would not wish to see the Climate Emergency Committee subsumed by the Planning and Environment Committee. It was suggested that the Planning and Environment Committee should be renamed as the Planning Committee and the Climate Emergency Committee renamed as the Climate and Ecological Committee.

Cllr Coleby joined the meeting 16:17

It was suggested no changes should be made to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee and the Neighbourhood Development Plan Sub-Committee. Should the Planning and Environment Committee's name change it was suggested that its Terms of Reference would not need to be amended, as it is understood that the environment is referenced only within the context of planning. Cllr Lang proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee for the Planning and Environment Committee to be renamed as the Planning Committee and the Climate Emergency Committee to be renamed as the Climate and Ecological Committee, and for the Climate Emergency Committee to remain as a standalone Committee reporting to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Pearce. There was a recap of the discussion to enable Cllr Coleby to participate in the vote. All Councillors voted in favour. It was clarified that the Planning and Environment Committee is not consulted on tree applications in the same way that it is other planning applications, and it can only note them and submit comments, rather than recommend approval or refusal.

It is understood that the Events and Communications Sub-Committee reports to the Finance and Governance Committee because of its financial delegation. It was suggested that this Sub-Committee sits more logically under the AID Committee, and so should be moved back to that Committee, but with its financial delegation intact, with an amendment made to the AID Committee's Terms of Reference to allow it to grant this delegation. Item 6d of the AID Committee's Terms of Reference is to review Council policies. As that responsibility is now covered by this Sub-Committee, it was suggested this be removed from the AID Committee's Terms of Reference, although the AID Committee will still have input into policy reviews, as is the case now. To reduce the length of agendas and meetings, it was suggested that Councillors should be mindful of how long they speak for on individual items, and more delegations should be granted to Committees, where appropriate. Committees should be asked to review and consider what delegations they would wish to take on. It was suggested that some of annual horticultural and planting budget could be delegated to Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee and/or AID Committee, with appropriate reporting back to the Finance and Governance Committee and/or Full Council. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Finance and Governance Committee that the Events and Communications Sub-Committee reports to the AID Committee, with its delegated budget attached, that the AID Committee be enabled to grant delegations to the Events and Communications and Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committees (amounts to be determined at a later date), and that item 6d is removed from the AID Committee's Terms of Reference; seconded by Cllr Lang. The Finance and Governance Committee can make decisions on items of expenditure up to £10,000. It was suggested other Committees could be granted similar authority up to £5,000 and Sub-Committees up to £2,000, to avoid entire budgets being delegated to a single Committee or Sub-Committee. The Events and Communications Sub-Committee already has a delegated budget exceeding this amount, but the budget for events is pre-agreed, and the previous suggestion was for individual items of expenditure, rather than an overall delegation.

There was a discussion on meeting frequencies. It was suggested the Events and

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 20 January 2021

Communications and the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committees should meet once every two months, rather than monthly, particularly as the workload of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee should be less in the next civic year, once all of the policies have been reviewed in detail this year. It was suggested that draft agendas should be shared with the relevant Chair twenty four hours before publication. One Committee should be given ownership of debating an item, with other relevant Committees and Sub-Committees asked to feed in their comments. It was suggested that quorums should be rationalised across the Committees and Sub-Committees. Some have struggled to achieve the quorum at their meetings and with it often being the same small group of Councillors attending each meeting there is not much diversity of opinion.

Cllr Page joined the meeting 16:34

The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee tends to meet quarterly, other than when the budget setting process necessitates it meeting more frequently. It was queried whether the Climate Emergency and Community Safety Committees need to meeting monthly. It was suggested that the Climate Emergency Committee should continue to meet monthly for now, particularly as it is now considering how the Council can reach its net zero target by 2030. It was agreed that the Community Safety Committee could meet once every two months. It was agreed that some Committee and Sub-Committees need only meet as required, and it will be for officers and the Chairs to decide whether a meeting is necessary. The other Committees and Sub-Committees could be asked to consider their own meeting frequencies and feed back separately to the Finance and Governance Committee or Full Council.

Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee that the AID, Finance and Governance, Climate Emergency and Planning and Environment Committees continue to meet as per their current schedules, with the Community Safety Committee to meet every other month and the Personnel Committee to meet twice a year, with additional meetings as required; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee that the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee continues to meet monthly, that the Terms of Reference of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee remain the same to allow the flexibility for that Sub-Committee to meet more regularly during the budget setting process, then less frequently through the rest of the year unless required, for the Neighbourhood Development Plan Sub-Committee to meet as and when required and for the Allotments Sub-Committee to meet once every six months, then for the rest of the Sub-Committees, such as the Events and Communications Sub-Committee, to meet every other month; seconded by Cllr Lang; all in favour.

It was agreed that Working Groups should continue to meet as and when required until they have achieved their purposes.

Cllr Pearce had made a recommendation earlier in the meeting which had not been voted on, regarding moving the Events and Communications Sub-Committee back to the AID Committee, but retaining its delegation, providing the AID Committee with the authority to delegate budgets to the Events and Communications Sub-Committee and the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, and removing item 6d from the AID Committee's Terms of Reference. The draft budget for 2021 – 2022 includes a separate budget heading for the climate emergency, so it was suggested that the Climate Emergency Committee could have a delegate budget also. It was requested that the Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer, identify certain budget areas which could be delegated to Committees, and the maximum

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 20 January 2021

amount that Committee could approve per item of expenditure. It was clarified that there is no suggestion that entire budgets should be delegated to one Committee or Sub-Committee. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Clerk looks to identify budgets that are suitable for delegation to Committees and Sub-Committees and feeds back to this Sub-Committee at its next meeting, with any onward recommendation from there being made to Full Council at its meeting in February; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance that the Events and Communications Sub-Committee reports to the AID Committee, rather than the Finance and Governance Committee, but retaining its financial delegation; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee that item 6d is removed from the AID Committee's Terms of Reference, as the responsibility of reviewing policies is now with this Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Lang; all in favour.

A comment had been made earlier that only one Committee should lead on any particular item, with other relevant Committees and Sub-Committees asked to comment. This could be difficult for officers to identify which Committee should lead, as often several are relevant, and it may be that some consideration around the Terms of Reference is required. Officers will also consider the discussions this Sub-Committee has had today and feed back any comments to February's meeting. Creating more Working Groups or Sub-Committees in an attempt to relieve the burden on a particular Committee is not always effective as it often creates more work and another tier at which to consider an item. Often discussions are simply repeated at more than one Committee, rather than the Committee members considering an item under that particular Committee's remit.

48. Consideration of the following Town Council policies, following their review by Committees:

48.1 Tree Policy – It was suggested that items 48.1 – 48.6 be taken together, as they have already been reviewed. There was a discussion about the condition of the Sparrows Nest public conveniences, but these have already been identified as one of the priorities for refurbishment in 2021 – 2022. In terms of the Toilet Strategy itself, there have been no significant changes. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to adopt the policies and procedures as identified in items 48.1 – 48.6 as reviewed and amended; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

48.2 Toilet Strategy

48.3 Cycling Strategy

48.4 Environmental Policy, including noting the decision at the last meeting to recommend its adoption following the review of Committee and Sub-Committee structures

48.5 Adverse Weather Policy, including proposed amendments by the Personnel Committee

48.6 The Conferring of the Title of Honorary Freemen and Freewomen policy, particularly with regard to conferring the title upon an organisation or object, and related arrangements

49. Review of the following Town Council policies:

49.1 Grant Awarding Policy – The policy makes reference to specific years and it was suggested this could instead be replaced with 'the previous year' to save an amendment being made each year. This year the entire grant fund was diverted to the Covid-19 grant fund, but in the previous year the Council had decided that grant applications would be considered in June and December, rather than throughout the

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 20 January 2021

year, to allow fairer comparison between each application. There has not been an occasion yet where the entire grant fund has been used. Cllr Lang proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee that the policy be amended for applications to be considered quarterly; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

- 49.2 Grievance Procedure – The Procedure states that a grievance about the Clerk would be submitted to the Chair of the Personnel Committee. It was queried whether that would constitute a delegation to an individual Councillor, or whether it should be considered by a panel of Councillors appointed from the Personnel Committee instead. If the Chair of the Personnel Committee were not making the ultimate decision this would be acceptable, however the Clerk will review the procedure so the process does not just involve the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

Cllr Youngman temporarily left the meeting 17:09

It was suggested that a panel of Councillors could be drawn from the Personnel Committee, in a similar way to how complaints are handled.

- 49.3 Health and Safety Policy – There were no comments.

- 49.4 Heritage Plaques Policy – One typographical error was identified at point 3.1.

- 49.5 Incident Reporting Procedure -

Cllr Youngman returned 17:10

The Clerk has made amendments to the procedure and the amended document was displayed at the meeting. The amendments more explicitly state what should happen and when. The Sub-Committee was happy with the amendments.

- 49.6 Investment Policy – It was queried whether the wording in the policy reflects resolutions made in the last year, regarding the investment account. The way investments are dealt with is being reviewed. The policy should be appropriately worded, and has been amended to reflect the need for ethical investments. Cllr Lang proposed a recommendation to adopt the Health and Safety Policy, Heritage Plaques Policy, Incident Reporting Procedure and Investment Policy; seconded by Cllr Pearce all in favour.

- 49.7 IT, Internet, Social Media and Email Policy – There are references in the policy to the Data Protection Act 1998, which has now been superceded. It was suggested that more generalised wording, such as ‘prevailing data protection legislation’ would be more appropriate. A typographical error was identified at point 10.4.

- 49.8 Legionella Control and Water Hygiene Policy – The Clerk will review this policy before it is brought back to this Sub-Committee.

- 49.9 Lone Working Policy and Risk Assessment – This policy will be particularly relevant when the Council appoints officers who will primarily be working outdoors. The Council may have to consider what communication devices it provides, particularly for emergencies. The existing policy is acceptable for the current situation, but will be reviewed specifically for any staff working outdoors once the recruitment process starts. Whenever there is any change affecting any of the policies they would be reviewed again, particularly where it relates to health and safety as this would be required by law. It was agreed the policy should be reviewed again and amended before the Annual Meeting in May, when all of the policies and procedures are reviewed and adopted again.

- 49.10 Media Policy – The policy refers to training for the Clerk and Councillors, if required. It was queried whether there is a mechanism to review training, and whether the training requirement is being reviewed. It is likely that by-elections will be held in May. Cllr Page may not have received the opportunities for training which other Councillors have had, but this could be picked up with any training arranged following the by-elections. Officers endeavour to arrange appropriate training for all new Councillors, which existing Councillors are invited to as a refresher. It was suggested the Personnel

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
16:00 on 20 January 2021

Committee could review training and training requirements. There are private companies who can offer appropriate training to local Councils. Some training can be covered internally, and some is also offered by the District and County Councils. The importance of media training was discussed, as individual Councillors are frequently approached by the media for comment on certain matters.

49.11 Member Officer Protocol – There were no comments. Cllr Lang proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to adopt the IT, Internet, Social Media and Email Policy, the Lone Working Policy and Risk Assessment, the Media Policy and the Member Officer Protocol; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

50. Date of the next meeting

17 February 2021 16:00

51. Items for the next agenda and close

This Sub-Committee reports to the Finance and Governance Committee. Recommendations from this meeting will be considered by the Finance and Governance Committee before going on to Full Council. This Sub-Committee has requested some feedback from the Clerk at its next meeting, but the Finance and Governance Committee will already have met by then, so it was requested that an item be added to the Finance and Governance Committee's agenda, seeking that Committee's approval for any residual items arising from today's discussions to go straight from February's meeting of this Sub-Committee to Full Council.

The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the livestream of the meeting. There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting.

52. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

17 February 2021