

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
19:00 on 15 March 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks (Chair), Christian Newsome, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Deputy Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance, either in person or remotely via Zoom webinar

181. Welcome

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

182. Apologies for absence

Cllr John Pitts had given his apologies but had not provided a reason. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

183. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary in items 187.3, 189.3 and 192. Cllr Youngman declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 189.2 and 189.3. Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 187.2. Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 190 and declared he is Chair of the Gunton Residents' Association. Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 189.2, and declared that she is a member of the Gainsborough Drive Pond Group and Vice Chair of the Gunton Residents' Association.

184. The draft minutes of the meeting on 15 February 2022

Cllr Breakspear proposed approval of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

185. Public forum

No advance comments had been received. There were no members of the public in attendance, either in person or remotely via Zoom webinar.

186. Monitoring expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget

The budget monitoring spreadsheet was displayed at the meeting. The Finance and Information Officer had advised that agreed maximum budget figures had been used where invoices are still pending. The tree watering cost is for the trees purchased via funding from the Tree Council and is not the annual budget for tree watering.

187. Five-year plans for the Town Council's parks, including the following:

187.1 The cost of over-entrance archway signs – The Chair had expressed some concern at the last meeting regarding the cost. The quotations received had been reviewed at the last meeting and were displayed again. There has not yet been a formal decision to proceed with the archways. If approved, it was suggested that Kensington Gardens should be prioritised as this is its centenary year. The Council would also need to determine how many of the entrances there should have archways. Cllr Breakspear did not consider the installation of any archway signs to be essential for the centenary. Cllr Pearce proposed to defer the implementation of the archways until April 2023, and in the meantime creating a five year plan to support this and explicitly budgeting for up to three for Kensington Gardens as part of the next

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budget round. In the interim, public engagement should take place, including at events for the Big Green Week and the Kensington Gardens centenary. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. It was requested that an item is added to the next agenda to consider the approach to public engagement.

187.2 Planting plans – Cllr Breakspear has got plans for Kensington Gardens and has been liaising with Norse’s grounds person regarding Sparrows Nest and Belle Vue Park, who has been keen to contribute ideas. The Project and Committee Clerk will send Cllr Breakspear details of the planting plans for Sparrows Nest and Belle Vue Park as specified in the five year plans, for Norse’s input. Cllr Breakspear will be liaising with the Friends of Fen Park also, and Cllr Pearce will help to arrange a site visit. The plans will be used to seek quotations to inform a decision on what can be progressed this year. Plans should be finalised by the end of May for an order to be placed.

187.3 Feedback from the site visit to Pathways Care Farm’s sensory garden, and how to develop a sensory garden at Sparrows Nest – The Councillors who had attended the visit reported they had found it beneficial. Not of all the aspects of the Pathways’ sensory garden could be reflected in a public space but staff at Pathways had offered ideas and explained how they had developed their garden, and had offered to advise the Council. Former Councillor Neil Coleby had put together an initial concept which is what agreed could be shared with them and circulated to members of this Sub-Committee. Cllr Barker advised she would be happy to liaise with Pathways. Cllr Pearce proposed that Cllr Barker should liaise with Pathways Care Farm for advice regarding the development of a sensory garden at Sparrows Nest, using the initial concept document for information; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

188. The Ness:

188.1 Feedback from The Ness Steering Group regarding progressing a condition survey of the Drying Racks – The Ness Steering Group had agreed in 2020 that no work should be carried out on the drying racks. The Council is not bound by this decision and the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee has already agreed it would like to progress a condition survey, which is being progressed alongside other sites, including tennis courts.

188.2 Repairs and maintenance and any future usage of the pile driver – The pile driver is in a poor condition and would not be able to stand upright. It was queried whether it could be moved or whether leftover wood at the site could be used to create something sculpturally. It was agreed that the Community Wardens should be asked to make suggestions.

189. Play areas:

189.1 The scheduling of refurbishments for years four and five – It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

189.2 Refurbishment options for the play areas to be progressed in year one (St Margaret’s Plain, Bentley Drive and Rosedale Park) – Three quotations had been received for the St Margaret’s Plain play area, and were displayed individually. Regarding the first option, the Sub-Committee considered that the proposed material may not be best suited to this site. The Sub-Committee considered that the second option met all the requirements and particularly appreciated the theming and retention of some of the grass. Regarding the third option, the Sub-Committee considered this did not offer quite the same value for money as the second option and thought the plan seemed crowded. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to approve option two; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. It was noted that the quotation would expire before April’s Full Council meeting. Officers can liaise with the supplier

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to see if the quotation could be held on the basis that a recommendation has been made to accept it. Cllr Pearce proposed that if this is not possible, an Extraordinary Full Council meeting should be arranged as soon as possible after the AID Committee meeting, should the recommendation be approved; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. The Project and Committee Clerk will be progressing quotations for the Bentley Drive and Rosedale Park play areas. It was requested that the supplier of the first option considered for the St Margaret's Plain play area is invited to quote for the Bentley Drive play area, as they materials they had suggested may be better suited to this site.

189.3 An update on agreed works at the Britten Road play area – There was no update on the installation of a slide on the toddler unit. A quotation to re-establish the undergrowth had been received and was displayed. Chestnut fencing would be used as temporary measure. Storage of the fencing when it is no longer required was discussed. Officers have been researching storage solutions in general. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to approve the quotation to re-establish the undergrowth at the Britten Road play area; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

190. Ponds:

190.1 The installation of signage at Fen Park regarding swan feeding – The Friends of Fen Park would welcome signage and would prefer it to relay information on appropriate food to give to swans, rather than a message to stop the feeding of swans altogether. Similar signage has been produced in consultation with the RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust, for the Gainsborough Drive pond, regarding duck feeding. The idea of general signage which could be applied to any park, regarding wildlife feeding, was discussed. It was agreed Fen Park would still require separate signage regarding swan feeding. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers, in conjunction with members of this Sub-Committee to progress six signs for Fen Park regarding swan feeding, within a maximum budget of £750. Cllr Pearce further proposed requesting officers to explore the concept of sign regarding feeding wildlife, which could be used across all parks as required. Cllr Barker seconded the proposals and all Councillors voted in favour.

190.2 Implementation of the Pond Policy, including progress with a new draft policy – The Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee has asked this Sub-Committee to review the policy. The existing Pond Policy has not previously been implemented. The Council requires specialist advice on an annual maintenance regime, particularly after any dredging is carried out. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next agenda.

191. Options for identifying and mapping the Town Council's tree stock

The Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee would welcome this Sub-Committee's input. Officers had been looking into the software being used for the Neighbourhood Development Plan, but this does not provide a function for the plans to be updated as more trees are planted. Cllr Breakspear has started looking into this and has an app to identify tree species. Cllr Breakspear will liaise with the grounds maintenance staff at Sparrows Nest, who may be able to assist with that area. An item will be added to the Finance and Governance Committee's agenda if suitable software is found. The Community Wardens may be able to map other areas over time. It was suggested that licensed drone flyer could be asked to assist with aerial images for mapping. Over time it was suggested that the Council could tag its trees once they are mapped for cross referencing. Cllr Pearce proposed that Cllr Breakspear liaises with Norse's grounds person at Sparrows Nest with regard to tree mapping there, and for Cllr Breakspear and officers to review the

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effectiveness of the app in mapping and determining species, or whether to purchase specialist software. Cllr Pearce further proposed adding an item to May's agenda to review progress and consider a way forward. Cllr Youngman seconded the proposals and all Councillors voted in favour.

192. An update on planned projects at Clarkes Lane

The survey closes this week. So far approximately twenty responses have been received. Once the survey closes the responses will be analysed. The survey has been sent to schools in the area as requested. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting.

193. Progressing a composting compound in Kensington Gardens and separate bins for disposal of grass cuttings

The Community Warden and Project and Committee Clerk undertook a site visit with the Friends of Kensington Gardens and Norse. For grass cuttings, Norse suggested three bins, which would incur an emptying cost of £12 per week. Cllr Pearce proposed approval to progress three bins for Kensington Gardens to dispose of grass cuttings, with the charge to be applied as an amendment to the existing grounds maintenance schedule, rather than a standalone charge; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. The Friends of Kensington Gardens would like to produce mulch on site. The previous compound was removed due to concerns regarding vermin. A three bay compound in a different location within the park has been proposed. Quotations are being sought and will be brought to the Sub-Committee for consideration. Fen Park had also been identified as a pilot site for producing mulch on site. The Council has adopted a Mulch Policy which it needs to implement. A site visit to Fen Park had been discussed as part of the planting plans. It was requested that an item is added to the next agenda to consider composting/mulching in Fen Park and in the interim Cllrs Breakspear and Pearce will liaise regarding a site visit with the Community Wardens and Norse.

194. An update on progressing designs for a Holocaust Memorial bench in Kensington Gardens

Cllr Parker temporarily left the meeting 20:21

The AID Committee has selected a design, which was displayed. The Office Assistant has been liaising with the Community Rail Partnership regarding the installation of Kindertransport themed artwork at the train station, and has received a positive response.

Cllr Parker returned 20:23

It is understood the Community Rail Partnership will be commemorating the Kindertransport anniversary on 12 December. The Sub-Committee would like to see the installation of the artwork progressed within this timescale if feasible.

195. An update on the installation of memorial lecterns in Belle Vue Park and Kensington Gardens

The lecterns have been ordered and confirmation of a delivery date is pending.

196. An update on approved memorial tree planting in Belle Vue Park

It was decided at December's Full Council meeting to approve this application. The Council had a policy within its Open Spaces Strategy not to permit individual memorial planting. It has since been agreed to permit individual memorial planting, subject to approval of a formal application. Where approved, the planting will be undertaken by the Town Council, with the costs borne by the applicant. A policy is being developed but it was agreed to approve this application in the interim. Cllr Pearce has met with applicant on site. A cherry tree is the preferred species but the applicant does not have a preference regarding a specific location within the park. It is understood provision had been made for the planting of one cherry tree within the planting plans for Belle Vue Park. Officers could not find this

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within the five year plans but will check again. The applicant would be happy for that tree to be planted as the memorial tree, as long as it is specifically identified as their memorial tree. If a cherry tree has not been included within the plans, it was agreed officers could liaise with the applicant and select an appropriate location. The draft policy outlines the costs as quoted from Norse. Officers have been researching the best materials to use for plaques and will also liaise with the applicant regarding this. Cllr Pearce proposed that officers make contact with the applicant to discuss options regarding the location and the plaque, and to make them aware of the indicative costs and draft policy as guideline to requirements, making it clear it is not yet published; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers to decide on the best material for the plaque; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

197. The effectiveness of the Town Green boundary hedge and fencing

The chestnut fencing will either be removed once the new hedging is established or will become less visible. It was reported there is still an issue with litter at the site and the Community Warden has already asked Norse to address this. It has been reported that an access gate has been installed with the fencing but in front of the hedge. It was requested that officers check to ensure the positioning of the gate is suitable for its intended purpose.

198. An update on the refurbishment of the Sparrows Nest beacon

The final quotation is pending. A maximum budget has been approved but the cost may exceed that. It was suggested this could be added as an agenda item if an Extraordinary Full Council meeting is required after the AID Committee meeting. If not, the Finance and Governance Committee may be able to approve the difference between the previously approved budget and the final cost.

199. Date of the next meeting

19 April 2022 19:00

200. Items for the next Agenda and Close

As discussed during the meeting, an item will be added to consider ways to capture feedback regarding the archways.

It was requested that an item is added to May's agenda to receive feedback from the Councillor 'Safari' trip to the Somerleyton estate.

An update was requested regarding the Belle Vue Park lodge cottage's thatched roof. It was reported that a site visit has taken place. It is understood that no immediate work is required but the roof is approaching end of life. The thatcher currently has a three year waiting list and will be providing a quotation for the works, though this is subject to change within the next three years.

It was requested that an item is added to the next agenda to receive an update regarding lighting in parks. It was requested this is also added to the next AID Committee and Community Safety Committee agendas.

There were no confidential items for consideration and the meeting was closed at 20:50.

201. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

19 April 2022