

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:30 on 15 February 2022

MINUTES

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

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

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

157. Welcome

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

158. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sonia Barker. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

159. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 166, 169 and any matters relating to Fen Park. Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in any matters relating to Kensington Gardens. Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary in items 168.2, 169.2 and 172.

160. The draft minutes of the meeting on 18 January 2022

It was agreed that any references to Cllr Youngman should be amended to Cllr Elise Youngman for clarity. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes with this amendment; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

161. Public forum

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

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

The boundary hedging has been planted at the Town Green but the Town Council has not yet received the invoice. The watering costs for the trees purchased via funding from the Tree Council have come in under budget, but further trees are due to be planted as part of the 'Treebilee' project, which should not exceed the overall budget for watering. It was clarified that the shrub purchased for Sparrows Nest had been at the request of Norse and was not due to vandalism.

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

163.1 The cost of over-entrance archway signs – Two quotations have been received. Cllr Breakspear has been liaising with a potential third supplier but clarification is needed regarding the specification to ensure all suppliers are quoting to the same brief. It was agreed to discuss this further during the confidential session.

As part of the five year plans, an update was requested on planting plans. Cllr Breakspear and the Committee and Project Clerk will be meeting on Friday to review the plans, before feeding back to the Sub-Committee to agree a way forward. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers, in liaison with members of this Sub-Committee, to progress the planting plans; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in

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favour. This will mean that meetings to progress the plans can take place via Zoom and will not have to wait for formal Sub-Committee meetings to take place.

164. Feedback from a Zoom meeting on proposed locations for swift bird boxes and how to proceed

Cllr Brooks and the Committee and Project Clerk had a Zoom meeting with a representative from the Suffolk Save Our Swifts Group. The representative was shown images of the Town Council's buildings to advise in principle which ones may be suitable. Sparrows Nest had been put forward as a suggestion previously but the buildings did not meet the necessary criteria. Gunton Residents' Meeting Hall, Whitton Residents' Meeting Hall and Jesters Diner were identified as potential locations. Some building work is due to take place at Jesters Diner, which the Save Our Swifts Group has been made aware of. Site visits will be arranged and the cost will be discussed. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers, in consultation with members of this Sub-Committee, to progress the installation of swift boxes; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

165. Progressing the decision of Full Council to install reflective strips and/or spotlights at the bicycle racks in Normanston Park, within a maximum budget of £6,000 (under delegated authority to this Sub-Committee)

Norse have advised that the reflective strips are on order. At its last meeting, the Sub-Committee had advised that it would want to see this work progress more urgently and the Community Warden may be able to do so. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers to progress this on health and safety grounds, to only be brought back to the Sub-Committee if the work is not practicable within the budget; seconded by Cllr Pitts; all in favour.

166. Progressing the decision of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee to produce a specification for the provision of lighting in Belle Vue Park, Fen Park and Normanston Park, including receiving feedback from a Zoom meeting with Norse

Norse recommended a contractor they work with who could provide specialist advice about the lighting. As a first step, the Sub-Committee would need to draw up a plan of where it would like to see lighting in each of the sites, and the extent and type of lighting at each site. This may differ site by site. St George's Park in Great Yarmouth had been used as an example in the meeting. Some trees had been removed from the park to increase the visibility and spread of light which had alleviated some of the anti-social behaviour issues. There would be an initial cost to connect or supply electricity to each site. On top of this, the cost per column is likely to be £1,500 - £2,000 for installation and the same again for annual maintenance. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers, in consultation with members of this Sub-Committee, to produce a specification for this Sub-Committee to consider, with Cllr Lang to be invited to discuss Normanston Park and the Friends of Fen Park to be invited to discuss Fen Park. Cllr Breakspear seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

167. Concerns regarding the condition of the Drying Racks, including feedback from Councillors visiting the site, and the need for signage

The Drying Racks are replicas. It was queried whether they should be restored, replaced or removed altogether. Some are in a poorer condition than others. There is fencing surrounding the Drying Racks both due to contamination of the land and for ecological reasons. Although the Drying Racks are replicas, it was felt that they are symbolic of the heritage of the area and signage could be affixed to the fence to show historical information and images of the Drying Racks. The Council could engage with two local historians and the Maritime Museum regarding the content. It was suggested a condition

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survey of the drying racks should be progressed. If restoration is feasible, it was suggested this could be progressed via a boat building company in Oulton Broad. The purpose of the condition survey would be to determine the longevity of the structures for preservation, and identify whether any are at risk of collapse. Cllr Pearce proposed progressing a condition survey of the drying racks and simultaneously engaging with two named local historians and the Maritime Museum regarding the content for signage for the fencing surrounding the drying racks. Should the condition survey identify a need for restoration or replacement, the International Boatbuilding Training College could be approached. Cllr Parker seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

168. Play areas:

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

168.2 Refurbishment options for the play areas to be progressed in year one (St Margaret's Plain, Bentley Drive and Rosedale Park) – Quotations for St Margaret's Plain are pending. Beauty and the Beast was suggested as a potential theme for Rosedale Park. A separate toddler play area had also been suggested for Rosedale Park. Bentley Drive has not yet been discussed in detail, but it was suggested that the footprint of the play area could be extended. The fence surrounding the Rosedale Park play area is in a poor condition. The fence may not have to be retained but a fence would be required if a separate toddler area were to be progressed. Cllr Pearce proposed that three quotations are sought for refurbishment of the Rosedale Park play area and Bentley Drive play area, which each supplier to provide at least two cost options; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

168.3 The extent of refurbishment work required at the Britten Road play area – This was discussed at the last meeting but Britten Road has been identified as a year two refurbishment. The teen equipment has been removed and the matting has been replaced. It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting to receive an update on interim work, such as the installation of the slide.

169. Ponds:

169.1 The installation of signage at Fen Park regarding duck feeding – Members of the public are feeding the swans on a daily basis and it was suggested it may be more appropriate to have signage to prevent feeding the birds at all. The Friends of Fen Park have indicated signage would be welcome. The Sub-Committee would welcome the views of the Friends Group as to appropriate wording for the sign. The Council has also engaged with the RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust on signage it has previously designed. There had been several incidents of the life preserver being thrown into the pond, which had been affecting the swans. There had been no reports of this recently.

169.2 Implementation of the Pond Policy – Matters such as the Council's position on bird feeding are not yet included in the policy. Cllr Brooks has circulated some information from Suffolk Wildlife Trust on pond management. The management of each of the Town Council's ponds needs to be reflected in the policy. The requirements at each site will be different. The current document contains lots of useful information, but this does should not necessarily be included in a Council policy document. Cllr Pearce proposed decommissioning the current Pond Policy and developing a new policy which relates specifically to the Town Council's ponds. When dredging is progressed the Council will need advice regarding ongoing maintenance and how regularly dredging should take place. Cllr Parker seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. Cllr Pearce will start putting a draft policy together, in liaison with officers.

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170. Whether it is possible to expedite certain tasks, particularly those relating to health and safety concerns

The Finance and Governance Committee has delegated certain repairs and maintenance budgets to the Clerk with a per-item expenditure limit of £5,000, with the exception of high value assets or a particularly urgent repair, where the delegation could then increase to £10,000. Any expenditure will be reported back to the relevant Committees and Full Council in the usual way.

171. Progressing the identification of the Town Council's tree stock

A former Councillor had carried out this exercise at Kensington Gardens. The report would need to be updated with the trees planted since. It was suggested that Sparrows Nest, Belle Vue Park, Normanston Park, Fen Park and the updates to Kensington Gardens should be prioritised. Apps are available which can help to identify tree species. It was agreed that the Friends Groups should be invited to participate. The reports would need to be easily updateable and the Town Council has digital mapping software which may enable this. Norse's Countryside Officer previously agreed to work with the Council for one half day per month and it was suggested the Council may wish to engage with local schools. Cllr Pearce proposed that officers explore how the results could be mapped digitally and report back to the next meeting; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour. The Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee decided to plant the 'Treebilee' trees in Gunton Community Park and Rosedale Park, and allocated a budget for tree protection. The National Association of Civic Officers has identified 11 March as the date for trees to be planted as part of the Queen's Canopy. The Community Warden has identified specific locations within the parks and will be visiting these with Norse's Arborist next week. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers to decide on the sites and locations for the trees, upon advice from Norse's Arborist; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.

172. Marina Theatre advertising on Town Council land

It was commented that the advertising sign on the Town Green, in the Heritage Action Zone, looks unattractive. The Theatre also has advertising sites at Belle Vue Park, Sparrows Nest and the Ammunition Bunker. The Clerk is liaising with them regarding this. The Community Warden has raised further concerns regarding the Town Green, including the condition of the town sign, which the Town Council is presuming ownership of. Norse have carried out the planting to fill in the gaps in the boundary hedging and have been instructed to remove the litter. Matters relating to the Town Green will be considered at the next meeting of this Sub-Committee or the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee.

173. An update on planned projects at Clarkes Lane

The public survey is being progressed.

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

Officers had been instructed to seek a design for a Kindertransport themed bench. It was suggested that the theme could be expanded to more widely incorporate the Holocaust Memorial, particularly to convey a message of peace and hope. The company supplying the Holocaust Memorial lectern could also supply a bench to match. Officers will continue to approach suppliers to provide designs for a bench.

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

The order has been placed and a delivery date is pending.

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176. An update on a planned site visit to Pathways Care Farm and a ‘safari’ of the Somerleyton Hall estate

Cllr Barker has made arrangements. The ‘safari’ will be taking place on 2 March and the visit to Pathways Care Farm on 24 February. Cllr Youngman would like to attend the visit to Pathways and will liaise with Cllr Barker.

177. The start time of future meetings of this Sub-Committee

It was agreed delegations should be used where appropriate to ensure meetings run efficiently. Cllr Brooks proposed future meetings of this Sub-Committee should begin at 19:00; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. It was noted that Cllr Newsome would not be able to attend some meetings of the Planning Committee due to its start times.

178. Date of the next meeting

15 March 2022 at 19:00.

179. Items for the next Agenda and Close

Regarding item 167, this Sub-Committee had previously discussed the condition of the pile driver. This was not included in The Ness project. The pile driver is currently laying on its side and some of it appears to be rotten. Trying to stand it upright may present a health and safety risk. It was agreed to consider this further at the next meeting.

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

180. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

163.1. The cost of over-entrance archway signs – It was agreed that the specification for the over-entrance archway signs should be sent to the supplier Cllr Breakspear has been liaising with regarding other projects in Kensington Gardens. Cllr Taylor’s design may need to be modified to sit atop the brick pillars. The draft designs could also be adapted to make them unique to each park. Gates had not been included in the specifications. Two quotations had been received so far and two or three archways would be needed for Kensington Gardens, which is being prioritised due to it being the centenary year. Based on the quotations received so far, the cost may be prohibitive and it would likely only be that one park could be progressed per year, particularly for parks with multiple entrances. There were concerns that the cost may not be justifiable to the public and this will be considered further at the next meeting. The Council has not specifically budgeted for the archways, but they could be funded from the parks budget or reserve.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:32.

Signed:
15 March 2022