

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
15:00 on 16 August 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks (Chair), Alan Green, Graham Parker and Andy Pearce

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk), James Cox (Finance Assistant) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

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

33. Welcome

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

34. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Nasima Begum. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

35. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

It was noted that officers would have an interest in matters related to personnel.

36. The draft minutes of the meeting on 20 July 2021

An amendment was identified on the second page of the minutes, specifically the third and fourth items in the table of recommendations. It was agreed that 'unassigned' should be amended to 'undesigned'. On page three of the minutes, it was clarified that the first recommendation on that page (regarding rental income being allocated to the Parks Earmarked Reserve) was for one year only. The minutes will be amended to reflect this. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the minutes with the amendments as identified; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

37. Public forum

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

38. Expenditure by Committees and Sub-Committees from their delegated budgets

Documentation to monitor expenditure by Committees and Sub-Committees from their delegated budgets had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were noted.

39. The 2021 – 2022 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and embedding a five-year budgeting plan (some aspects may be confidential)

With regard to items 39 and 40, the draft Budget format as suggested by Cllr Pearce had been circulated and has been supported in principle by the Finance and Governance Committee and officers, with a recommendation to adopt the proposed format being made to Full Council. Cllr Pearce proposed endorsing the recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

40. The format of the 2022 – 2023 Lowestoft Town Council Budget (some aspects may be confidential)

This was covered with the consideration of the previous item.

41. The adequacy of the elections, personnel and Christmas lights budgets across 2021 – 2023

The current budget provision for Christmas lights should be adequate to maintain the current provision and operation of the three year contract. Officers were asked to confirm if this is the case, and if not the Council will need to precept the difference next year. The

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Council should also build up a capital reserve for Christmas lights over the next three years in preparation of the contract renewal. There have been five by-elections so far this year. Even if the Town Council has not yet been invoiced for them, it was requested that officers obtain an idea of the cost from Electoral Services. The Clerk has contacted Electoral Services for an indicative cost of the 2023 ordinary elections as well. Discussions regarding the personnel budget will be held in confidential session.

42. Any matters arising from the Finance and Governance Committee meeting, including the following:

42.1 The format of the budget and reserves documents – These have been considered by the Finance and Governance Committee, which has made a recommendation to Full Council to adopt both documents. Cllr Pearce proposed an endorsement of the recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

42.2 An update on the Sparrows Nest building complex (confidential) – None of the Committees have yet had the chance to analyse the condition survey. This Sub-Committee could note its implications but the report will be circulated and reviewed by the relevant Committees.

43. A recommendation from the Community Safety Committee to establish a budget for the maintenance and improvement of the Town Council's Community Halls

Until now, Community Halls have been included under the 'Miscellaneous' tab of the budget document. The Finance and Governance Committee has made a recommendation to Full Council to establish a budget and associated earmarked reserve and to build up a capital reserve for them. It is anticipated that the budget would be approximately £5,000 - £10,000 per year across all of the Town Council's halls, and building up a capital reserve over and above repairs and maintenance. If condition surveys of the halls have not been carried out recently it was requested that this is arranged over the next twelve months. The Town Council does cyclically instruct condition surveys to identify what is needed and when. The Town Council also need to be aware of aspects which may not show wear and tear, such as flat roofs, and ensure that any surveys include such things. There had been issues reported with the toilets in the Gunton Residents' Hall which will need to be checked. In previous years, Councillors have undertaken asset tours. By their nature they have had to be fairly superficial due to the number of sites being visited, so it may be more beneficial to carry out targeted visits. If required, condition surveys of the halls can be instructed, with a site visit if needed to identify what the Council may wish to include in a maintenance contract. It was suggested that community halls and parks should be prioritised for site visits. The Marina Theatre is also keen to meet with the Council. Officers can work out the logistics of the visits. It was noted that there is a planned preventative maintenance schedule in place for Whitton Residents' Hall and cyclical spreadsheet for when actions are due, and officers will check this has been incorporated into budgeting plans. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to establish a community halls budget to go with the community halls earmarked reserve already proposed, and to collate condition survey information to inform that budget; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

44. The East Suffolk Norse contract (confidential)

To be discussed during the confidential session.

45. Date of the next meeting

Cllr Pearce proposed 20 September at 11:00 as the date and time of the next meeting, to start consideration of the 2022 – 2023 budget; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

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46. Items for the next Agenda and Close

The purpose of the next meeting will be to start the annual budgeting process for 2022 – 2023.

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

47. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

42.2 An update on the Sparrows Nest building complex (confidential) – The condition survey will be reviewed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee and the Finance and Governance Committee. Officers are already trying to progress important priority one matters now.

44. The East Suffolk Norse contract (confidential) – There was a discussion about arrangements going forward. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Norse Contract Working Group feed ideas into the Finance and Governance and AID Committees, with the aim of identifying the specification of services by the middle of November; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

41. The adequacy of the elections, personnel and Christmas lights budgets across 2021 – 2023 – The plans recommended by the Personnel Committee are within the budget, but out of hours arrangements need to be considered.

The Finance Assistant and Committee Clerk left the meeting 16:07 for the remainder of the consideration of this item

Signed:
20 September 2021