

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency Committee
Via Video Meeting
15:30 on 6 April 2021

MINUTES

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

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

140. 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.

141. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Lang. Cllr Jacqueline Hardie had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

142. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllrs Green and Youngman declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 152 as members of the National Trust.

143. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2021 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

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

A comment had been received with regard to item 148, expressing disappointment about the trees removed unlawfully and requesting that the Council considers replacing them with the most mature saplings available, as it can take some years for trees to establish.

145. The draft Cycling Pledge

A Cycling Strategy had been started but was mostly beyond the Town Council's capabilities to achieve. The Cycling Pledge is being drafted and will set out what the Council would like to achieve. Cllr Pearce has emailed the local Member of Parliament for his thoughts on how the Town Council may promote and improve the cycling provision in the town, within its remit, and will forward this to officers to follow up. The Town Council would like to be part of any multi-jurisdictional town wide strategy. It was suggested that the Council should highlight any hazards reported by cyclists. Suffolk Highways tends to assess the urgency of remedial works based on motor vehicle usage rather than cyclists.

The Clerk temporarily left the meeting 15:37

146. How to support the reduction in pollution

The Town Council is limited in what actions it can take within its remit.

The Clerk returned 15:38

It can promote walking and cycling where appropriate on land that it owns and can support efforts to encourage the use of public transport and more environmentally friendly modes of transport. Pollution monitoring was discussed at the last meeting and East Suffolk Council has provided a link to the data it has. The Town Council will be undertaking a professional assessment of its own carbon footprint, including premises it owns. The Council has set aside a budget towards implementing measures identified by the audit. There have been issues with unauthorised tree removal but the Council has a replacement policy, including a commitment to plant orchard trees. Tree Council funding was secured previously and the purchase of those trees should go ahead this year. The Council could consider an annual tree planting budget and related tree planting strategy. It seems there is an increasing, town-wide issue with litter and fly-tipping. Cllr Green has also approached East Suffolk Council regarding incidents of

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bonfires, particularly where inappropriate materials are being burned. An issue of unattended bonfires at allotment sites has been raised with the Allotment Association. The draft Neighbourhood Development Plan is supportive of environmental matters including cycling provision. This extends to the wider Lowestoft area, and will fundamentally affect policy positions across Lowestoft should it be adopted at referendum. The Town Council can help to promote and initiate schemes to benefit local residents and businesses. It does not necessarily have the capacity to assess what schemes are best for the town, but if a credible organisation makes a recommendation, the Town Council can offer support with rolling it out and broadcasting information. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next agenda. The Committee requested some high level data from East Suffolk Council as to how the Town Council can help to support the reduction in pollution. Officers are making enquiries to see if data exists locally on the health effects of pollution. A representative from East Suffolk Council has offered to meet with the Committee separately to discuss this further and it was suggested this issue could also be added to the agenda for the next Quarterly Liaison Meeting.

147. The specifications for the refurbishment of the Sparrows Nest and Fen Park public conveniences

Some of the proposed specifications may be difficult to assess in environmental terms. It was suggested that companies providing solutions for public conveniences could be approached to provide specifications which offer a good environmental solution without jeopardising the project structurally or functionally. Organisations such as Groundworks and Greenest County may also be able to offer advice. When considering the specifications, the Toilet Strategy Working Group primarily focussed on durability and robustness of the products and would like to avoid using wood wherever possible. Lighting and water facilities were discussed but specifications between sites may differ depending on the individual structures. Compostable public conveniences had previously been discussed for sites including The Ness, but this Committee would not recommend them for Fen Park and Sparrows Nest due to the location of the public conveniences within the parks and the high amount of usage those sites receive. The consensus of the Working Group was to progress a single, gender neutral public convenience in Fen Park, but this still requires a decision of Full Council. The Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee will also be considering this item. This Committee would like the specifications to be as environmentally friendly as possible.

148. Arrangements for replacement trees/planting, in line with the Town Council's Tree Policy, following the unauthorised removal of trees from Town Council land

The incidents at Gunton Cliff are being treated as criminal damage and investigated by the Police. In the interim it was agreed that it is important for the Council to adhere to its policy for replacing trees. The replacement trees do not necessarily have to be planted at the same site, but in this instance the Committee would like to see replacement trees planted where they have been removed to help restore and improve the environment which has been destroyed. The Town Council will be formally writing to residents in the area and this could also extend to the area surrounding the Gainsborough Drive pond, where there have also been issues. There have been further incidents of environmental vandalism, including daffodils being spoilt. There have also been several incidents of arson. These issues will be added to the relevant agendas for consideration. The comment from the member of the public implored the Council to consider purchasing the most established trees it can as replacements. This would likely affect the cost but enquiries can be made and the Council can consider the options available. The Council will use its communications platforms to strongly condemn the negative effects on the wider community these actions have had. The Council may also have to consider its legal budget as well, as it has not previously encountered this sustained issue. The Council may wish to consider setting aside a budget for pursuing private prosecutions in the future. The Committee expressed its thanks to the Police for their assistance. Funding was previously secured from the Tree Council, but purchase and planting

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of the trees was delayed due to the pandemic. This will be organised to coincide with National Tree Week. The replacement of the daffodils destroyed may be more difficult as planting is seasonal. The Council may instead wish to consider broadcasting a positive environmental message. The Clerk has already been seeking expert advice regarding replacement of the trees, and other complementary planting has also been suggested to benefit the environment, such as buckthorn. It was suggested the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee can be asked to consider this as well.

149. 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

This is ongoing and will be carried forward to the next meeting.

150. The development of the Preliminary Assessment of Sites for Contamination Procedure and the Selection of Materials for Site Development Procedure

These are intended to inform the relevant processes and ensure the management of tasks is effected properly. It is hoped that more will be developed in due course. These procedures are not necessarily strategic but designed to embed important principles. The Council may wish to impose some of these ideas onto its contractors also. It was suggested that the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee could also review such procedures. Regarding the Preliminary Assessment of Sites for Contamination Procedure, it was suggested that if contamination is identified for the first time, provision could be added for assessing financial and insurance risks. It was suggested that the Selection of Materials for Site Development Procedure could be considered by the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee, as it mentions the use of mulch, which the Sub-Committee has been discussing. It also mentions the segregation of waste, and the provision of bins is being considered as a priority. There are segregated bins at The Ness but it appears that these are not being used as intended, so the Council may not wish to commit expenditure to increase the provision of segregated bins. The wording of point 4b of the Preliminary Assessment of Sites for Contamination Procedure will be reviewed to take the earlier comments into account. Point 4l of the Selection of Materials for Site Development Procedure mentions the segregation of waste, but is more about the legal requirement where recycling happens that the waste should be segregated. The wording here will be reviewed. Point 4i of that procedure covers the use of mulch. Although weeds can be used in the production of mulch the Council would want to ensure it is not spreading weeds around its parks and open spaces.

151. The Broads Authority's guide to understanding and addressing the impact of new developments on peat soil

The Broads Authority's guide was noted.

152. The National Trust's Blossom Together initiative

This Committee was generally in favour of the idea of supporting this initiative. It was suggested the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee could also consider how the Council could be involved.

153. Anti-littering initiatives, including Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring Clean 2021, and to note Lowestoft Town Council's comments to East Suffolk Council on seasonal changes affecting litter

The issue of littering in the town is of great concern to this Committee. It would be difficult for the Town Council to unilaterally address this issue, particularly as it does not own all of the land in the town, but it could encourage more volunteer groups, work with other authorities and increase the efforts on its own land to discourage littering. Litter picks could be supported on Town Council land under the existing insurance arrangements. It was suggested that the

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Council could work with local schools to engage youths. A couple of the schools were due to complete a litter pick of parts of the Great Eastern Linear Park, but this had to be cancelled due to lockdown restrictions. The AID Committee has recently considered an application from a food trader offering a free drink to customers who litter pick the area. It was suggested the Council could discuss incentivised litter picking with its other tenants. There have been ongoing issues at Arnold's Bequest, which will be considered by the Charity Board, but some of the areas are difficult to access. Cllr Page is in contact with an individual who runs a litter picking group and will send the details to officers.

154. Date of the next meeting

11 May 2021 15:30 – Meetings would not be able to take place during the period after the legislation allowing Councils to meet via video meeting ends and lockdown restrictions are eased to enable face-to-face meetings to resume. The next meeting of this Committee will therefore be 18 May. It is possible the Annual Meeting will also be held on 18 May, but that will be discussed further at April's Full Council meeting.

155. Items for the next agenda and close

The Committee would like to continue its consideration of the provision of bottle banks in the town and will extend its discussion to including clothing banks.

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 16:54.

156. Resolution to close the meeting to the public