

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
15:30 on 2 November 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Alan Green, Peter Lang (Chair) and Andy Pearce

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: There was one member of the public in attendance (in person)

84. Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained and the meeting was welcomed. The Chair and Deputy Chair had both given apologies. Cllr Green nominated Cllr Lang to preside over this meeting; seconded by Cllr Barker. There were no further nominations. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour.

85. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Paul Page and David Youngman. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

86. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllrs Brooks and Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 91 and 96. Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 91, 92 and 93.

87. The draft minutes of the meeting on 5 October 2021

At item 75, it had been agreed that Cllr Elise Youngman would be included in the liaison with the Warren School and local residents, as one of the ward Councillors. A typographical error was identified at item 78. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes with the amendments as identified; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

88. Public forum

Cllr David Youngman had submitted a comment for consideration at item 97. There was one member of the public in attendance who did not wish to speak.

89. Monitoring expenditure by this Committee from the climate emergency budget, under delegated authority

There had been no expenditure from this budget so far, but funds have been earmarked within this budget, including for the carbon footprint assessment. Groundworks has been appointed to complete the assessment, which will be fundamentally based on energy consumption and will cover all the Council's assets and activities, where there is clear and quantifiable data. The Clerk is working on the Climate Action Plan, which is nearing completion. It is hoped the Council will be able to access ongoing expert advice. The energy efficiency of the Town Hall will need to be addressed and may impact the Council's carbon footprint.

90. Thresholds for delegations to the Clerk for time urgent, emergency and general expenditure

Cllr Pearce proposed that for items which were not currently covered by an existing delegation, a delegation of £2,500 per item be set for time urgent, emergency and general expenditure to allow the Clerk to progress matters that are required between meetings. This will not affect existing delegations. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Brooks and all Councillors voted in favour.

91. Any matters to raise with Cllr James Mallinder (East Suffolk Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment), and to receive feedback on any matters previously raised

The suggestions previously put forward for bottle bank locations have been fed back to Cllr Mallinder. The new multi-agency working group has discussed the idea of arranging for skips

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to be placed in central locations periodically at advertised times for local people to dispose of larger waste. The action points raised at that meeting are being considered by East Suffolk Council and will be discussed further at the next meeting. A doorstep glass collection may return in the future when the new environment bill is passed. The working group has also discussed the importance of weed clearance to enhance the town's planned economic regeneration. Cllr Barker has written to the local Member of Parliament, copied to Cllr Mallinder, expressing her concerns regarding the impact of raw sewage being pumped into rivers and the sea. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Committee approaches Mr Aldous to enquire why he voted as he did, and how that approach would be consistent with the economic regeneration of the town. Cllr Pearce further proposed asking Cllr Mallinder for East Suffolk Council's thoughts on the bill and the decision reached. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Barker and all Councillors voted in favour.

92. Next steps to progressing planned projects at Clarkes Lane, including community engagement and seeking professional advice

The Elmtree ward Councillors undertook a site visit as part of the community engagement. Cllr Barker has collated the comments and sent them to the Deputy Clerk as part of the draft survey. The Clerk will be contacting the Warren School about the various planned projects in Clarkes Lane.

93. Feedback from the Gull Wing Stakeholder Group regarding cycle lane provision

Cllr Barker took forward the question raised by this Committee. The response has been circulated. Cllr Barker has produced a full report from meeting, which will be circulated this week. Information given by the Project Group previously was misleading, and it has been clarified that the cycle provision across the bridge will be a shared space with pedestrians. It is understood there will be clear signage to indicate this.

94. Whether to reinstate chicane gates at the Great Eastern Linear Park

It is understood this relates to the entrance to the park from Evergreen Road. Norse may be able to provide a quotation and would be able to confirm whether the reinstatement of the gates would cause them an issue in terms of required access to the site, and whether the gates would impede access by mobility vehicles. It is not clear why these gates were removed when the ones at Marham Road are still there. The Council would need an informed opinion of the risks presented with gates having been removed. The Council has appointed a health and safety consultant who may be able to advise. Cllr Pearce proposed referring this matter to the Community Safety Committee for consideration, taking account of the climate emergency and environmental perspectives also; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

95. An update on East Suffolk Council's map-based cycling consultation

Suffolk County Council had announced plans for improving cycling provision, which did not include Lowestoft. Separately, East Suffolk Council has opened a consultation on its Cycling and Walking Strategy, which the Planning Committee will be responding to on behalf of the Council. This Committee can feed in any comments to the Planning Committee. This consultation follows the initial map-based consultation which was held last year. The Planning Committee will also be considering proposals from Suffolk County Council relating to improvements to a specific area in Lowestoft.

96. The current provision of a bus service in Lowestoft

It is understood some form of service around the Gunton estate may be reinstated but further details are not yet available. It is understood that the Government will be investing funding into improving bus services, but it appears that East Anglia will not be benefitting. It is understood that Suffolk County Council will be opening a consultation regarding bus services in the area. It was commented that the current bus service in and around Lowestoft is poor, particularly in the evening. Cllr Pearce proposed that an approach is made to First Bus, to

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advise that the Town Council, having declared a climate emergency is keen to promote public transport in terms of community engagement, community cohesion and combatting social isolation, and would like to know more about the plans for the bus services in Lowestoft, including any plans to move to more climate energy efficient transport. It was further proposed that a Zoom meeting with First Bus is requested, which would be open to all Councillors to attend; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. It is understood that the buses provided to Lowestoft are often not brand new but are sent over from other areas. In her role as the Town Council's representative to the Gull Wing Stakeholder Group, Cllr Barker will raise the importance of communication regarding revised bus routes and bus stops.

97. The decision of the Finance and Governance Committee to progress the installation of an electrical vehicle charging point at Hamilton House and considering what the initial investment in electric vehicles will include

Cllr David Youngman had submitted a comment, which was read out. Cllr Youngman raised concerns regarding the move to electric cars, particularly with regard to the impact of lithium mining, the disposal process of old batteries and the strain it would place on the power grid. The Council needs to ensure it is ethical in its approach to achieving net zero. The Council may wish to progress the purchase of an electric van, rather than a car, particularly if it runs some grounds maintenance services internally. There had been some concern raised about the cost of this. It would not be feasible for staff to use public transport for all site visits and inspections, particularly where there are several on one day. There had been some concern regarding the purchase of laptops for Councillors and mobile telephones for staff. Mobile phones form part of the equipment required by staff to carry out their work. It is understood that electric car batteries can last between ten to twenty years and may be recyclable. The Town Council was offered the opportunity to install an electric vehicle charging point as part of works being carried out by East Coast Community Healthcare, which would reduce the cost of installation. Budget provision has been made at least, even if a final decision is still pending. A decision is not required immediately but if the Clerk is made aware of a more urgent need for a decision, it will be taken to the first available and appropriate Committee or Full Council meeting. Electric bicycles can be charged via a standard mains adapter. Consideration has previously been given to the purchase of an electric bicycle, but staff may also need to transport equipment to sites, which would be difficult on a bicycle. A bicycle may also not provide the safest form of transport in inclement weather or after dark. It would be difficult for the Council to achieve net zero whilst staff are using petrol vehicles to travel between assets. The Council has previously decided to put funds into a reserve towards the purchase of an electric vehicle(s). So far this reserve contains just over £7,100. Subject to the budget for 2022 – 2023 being approved, the funds added in that year will bring the total to approximately £15,000. Separately, the Council has £25,000 in the climate emergency reserve, and should be adding £12,500 to it in the next financial year. Financially, the Council should therefore be able to progress the purchase of an electric vehicle next year. It was suggested that the decision regarding the purchase of an electric car/van is deferred until it is known whether the Council will be internally managing any of its grounds maintenance, where a van may be more appropriate. It was suggested that the purchase of a small van would still be beneficial regardless of this. The Government has recently made a significant investment into progressing hydrogen vehicles and a lithium extraction plant. The Climate Action Plan will embed any move to more climate energy efficient vehicles from petrol and the justification for doing so. Staff will not be using the vehicle for travelling to and from work. Lease options for such vehicles may be available.

98. The provision of Tetra Pak recycling facilities

A member of the public runs a 'Use It All' stall at the Triangle Market. Cllr Pearce proposed carrying this item forward and approaching this member of the public to attend the next meeting to talk about this scheme; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

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99. A Climate Action Plan

It was noted that development of the Plan is underway.

100. A Climate Action Event

5 June 2022 marks World Environment Day and COP27 will be taking place in November 2022. It was requested that the Events and Communications Sub-Committee takes forward the planning of any events for these, with input from this Committee. An event for COP26 will be taking place in the town on 6 November this year. It was noted that Lowestoft received an Eco-Church bronze award.

101. Date of the next meeting

7 December 2021 15:30

102. Items for the next agenda and close

It was requested that an item remains on the agenda to give continued consideration to electric vehicles. The Finance and Governance Committee and Full Council will also need to consider this matter, particularly how assets can be monitored if a decision is made not to purchase or lease an electric vehicle.

There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting at 17:08.

103. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:
7 December 2021