

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
16:00 on 20 October 2021

MINUTES

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

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

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

39. Welcome

Both the Chair and Deputy Chair had given apologies for this meeting. Cllr Green nominated Cllr Pearce to preside over the meeting; seconded by Cllr Brooks. There were no further nominations and all Councillors voted in favour. The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained, and the meeting was welcomed.

40. Apologies for absence

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

41. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

42. The draft minutes of the meeting on 18 August 2021

Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

43. Public forum

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

44. Reviewing the following Town Council policies:

44.1 Code of Conduct – Enforcement of the Code of Conduct is carried out by the Monitoring Officer. There has been no update on the new draft of the Code, for which there had been a consultation. The Clerk had raised this Sub-Committee's previous comments to the Monitoring Officer, which were regarding confidentiality issues, particularly if one party breaks confidentiality and misrepresents the outcome of a Code of Conduct complaint, the other party has no right of reply. The Sub-Committee had also queried the benefit of making a complaint under the Code of Conduct when the sanctions are limited. The Sub-Committee had no issue with the Code itself. A response from the Monitoring Officer is pending.

44.2 Disciplinary Procedure – Point 9.1 of the Procedure refers to the type of companion who may attend a disciplinary hearing. Cllr Pearce proposed expanding this point to include 'or another person, at the discretion of whomever is handling the hearing'; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

44.3 Equality and Diversity Policy – It was agreed previously that this Policy would be reviewed again following the inclusivity review. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to adopt this Policy, with any comments to be fed into the next meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

44.4 Noticeboard Protocol – When the Protocol was initially adopted, the noticeboards were intended for more exclusive use by the Town Council. The Clerk has reviewed the Protocol and had some suggested amendments to reflect the Council's decision to

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allow recognised community groups to use the noticeboards also. The Clerk's proposed amendments were reviewed at the meeting. Cllr Pearce also suggested an amendment that keys may be made available to recognised community or residents' groups at the discretion of the Council or Clerk, conditional upon the key remaining the property of the Council and returnable on demand, and a prior signature agreeing to abide by this Protocol. Any loss or theft of the key must be immediately reported to the Town Council. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to adopt this Protocol, incorporating the amendments suggested by Cllr Pearce and the Clerk; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

- 44.5 Financial Regulations – These have been reviewed in detail previously and the Sub-Committee was satisfied that the Final Regulations are sufficiently robust. It was agreed that any comments should be fed back to the Finance and Governance Committee.
- 44.6 Financial Risk Assessment – It was queried whether there any risks arising from the Council not fulfilling all planned recruitment, and if so how this will be managed. It was agreed that any comments should be fed back to the Finance and Governance Committee.
- 44.7 Freedom of Information Publication Scheme – It was confirmed that any requests the Town Council receives are recorded in a spreadsheet. There were no amendments to the Scheme suggested by the Sub-Committee and it was agreed that any comments should be fed back to the Finance and Governance Committee.
- 44.8 Friends Groups Policy – It was requested that this Policy is reviewed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee as well and that any feedback is made directly to the Finance and Governance Committee.
- 44.9 Grant Awarding Policy – Point 1.3 of the Policy still refers to applications being considered quarterly and should be amended to monthly. Point 1.3 also still references sports clubs, which does not align with the Council's decision to waive leisure fees for clubs in 2021 – 2022. Point 5.1d of the Policy states that a project is unlikely to be funded if there is limited or no other contribution funding. An amendment was suggested here to include 'unless a decision is required to secure match funding', as there may be an intention to seek funding from multiple sources, with the Town Council receiving the application first. At points 7.2 a and b, it was suggested that the references to specific years should be amended to 'the preceding year'. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to adopt this Policy, with the amendments as identified; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 44.10 Grievance Procedure – As with the Disciplinary Procedure, it was suggested that the definition of 'companion' should be expanded. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Finance and Governance Committee to adopt this Procedure, with that amendment; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 44.11 Health and Safety Policy – The Council has appointed a Health and Safety Consultant, who will be reviewing the Council's policies and procedures in due course. The appointment of the Health and Safety Consultant will be referenced in the appropriate risk management documents. For this item and items 44.12, 44.13 and 44.14, it was agreed that any comments should be fed back to the Finance and Governance Committee.
- 44.12 Heritage Plaques Policy – This was covered with the consideration of item 44.11.
- 44.13 Incident Reporting Procedure – This was covered with the consideration of item 44.11.
- 44.14 Investment Policy – The Reserves Policy has recently been amended, which may affect this Policy. It was agreed that any comments should be fed back to the Finance and Governance Committee.

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45. The development of a public art policy

The Policy could cover what the Council purchases and commissions and the criteria which underpins the decisions taken by the Council. The proposed art trail and similar projects under consideration would need to be compliant with the Policy, complement other planned projects in the same areas and tie in with the five year plans. Cllr Brooks will research if other Councils have adopted similar policies and will send the details of officers. The Council may wish to broaden its existing Acquisitions and Disposal Policy or adopt a new Policy covering Art, Heritage and Museums, incorporating a Public Art Policy. If possible, prior to the next meeting, officers will start to put a framework for the Policy together.

46. Date of the next meeting

15 December 2021 16:00 – Last year, several meetings had to take place during this week as they could do take place over the Christmas period. It was agreed to defer this meeting to Wednesday 12 January 2022 at 16:00.

47. Items for the next agenda and close

There were no requests for items to be added to the next agenda.

There were no confidential matters for discussion and the meeting was closed 16:40.

48. Resolution to close the meeting to the public