

Lowestoft Town Council

Extraordinary Full Council Meeting

Held via Video Meeting

19:30 on 5 May 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Robert Breakspear, Colin Butler, Neil Coleby, Amanda Frost, Alan Green (Mayor), Jacqueline Hardie, Peter Knight, Peter Lang, Paul Page, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, John Pitts, Alice Taylor.

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk)

Also in attendance: Sheila Moss King and Jess Johnston (MossKing Associates Limited). One member of the public was present for part of the meeting.

217. Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were reminded of the right to report and the application of the video meeting protocol.

218. Apologies for absence from any councillors not in attendance

Apologies were received from Cllr Keith Patience and Cllr David Youngman. Cllr Knight proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; All in favour.

219. Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

There were none.

220. Minutes of the previous meeting on 27 April 2021

It was agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting could be signed by the Mayor:

Proposed: Cllr Pearce; Seconded Cllr Hardie; All in favour

221. Public forum

There were no members of the public present at this stage. However, one advance comment from a member of the public had been received and was read to the meeting:

'The Town Hall Report prepared and written by MossKing is a rare example of a well written accessible summation of the consultation. What is also impressive is the comparatively large number of local participants who obviously care about the Town Hall's future. In light of this I hope that only those items really deemed to be confidential will be exclude the public from tonight's meeting.'

222. The Town Hall

The following matters regarding the Town Hall (some aspects were taken into confidential session) were considered as part of this item:

222.1. The business plan and audience development work by MossKing

222.2. Lowestoft Town Council investment in the Town Hall development and any related community engagement and application for borrowing approval from the Secretary of State

222.3. Preparation for submission of a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund

On items 222.1 to 222.3 Sheila Moss King gave a presentation (a copy of the PowerPoint is held by the Town Council) about the business planning and audience development activities to date and the work on the potential layout of the Town Hall.

Sheila Moss King clarified that there would be no car park on the Town Council's land. Newer additions to the building would be rearranged internally where listed. The areas which were substandard on Mariners Street would be improved and some areas which were of no heritage value would be removed. The Mayor said that car parking for the public on the area at the rear had been agreed in principle by East Suffolk Council and Sheila Moss King noted that social housing was not deemed viable in the Colliers report. The needs of the Register Office were described. The needs of the Town Council needed considering and might require an extension. The second floor provided some opportunity.

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Cllr Frost left the meeting at 19:56, returned at 19:57 and left again at 19:59.

It was noted that there should be a certain flow of the building for weddings and receptions. The outside space would be an attractive space for all. It would be inclusive and have disabled access. There would be a large space for many activities and the café, museum etc space would be flexible. A tourist information space could be included.

Cllr Frost re-joined the meeting at 20:08.

Sheila Moss King described the potential usage and scheduling of the Town Hall which showed realistically how timings for different types of activities would work, taking account of set up and close down.

Cllr Frost left the meeting and re-joined at 20:12.

The key outputs were noted such as the direct and indirect creation of jobs and work experience opportunities. The activity plan was noted including the target audiences.

It was noted that local people attend a wide geographical area for education.

222.4. Next actions and any delegations

Other than the discussions above, the substantive matters regarding costs and delegations were dealt with in confidential session.

223. The date of the next meeting and any delegations required

Annual Meeting of the Town Council. 7.30 pm on Tuesday 18 May 2021 to be confirmed.

Full Council 7.30pm on Tuesday 25 May 2021 to be confirmed.

224. Items for the next agenda and close

None raised.

Cllr Frost left the meeting at 20:30.

225. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Cllr Pearce proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour. The Mayor thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream or attending via the webinar and the live stream was closed as the meeting went into confidential session. It was confirmed the meeting would end following the confidential session.

The agenda items covered in the confidential session discussions revolved around these agenda items:

222.1 The business plan and audience development work by MossKing

222.2 Lowestoft Town Council investment in the Town Hall development and any related community engagement and application for borrowing approval from the Secretary of State

222.3 Preparation for submission of a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund

222.4 Next actions and any delegations

A confidential presentation on costs was considered. Sheila Moss King noted that there was no commitment at this stage to the layout. Architects would be involved and a development stage would follow (if funding was secured). There was a discussion about whether the Town Council would occupy the Town Hall and the need for future-proofing and expansion for additional staff.

Cllr Breakspear left at 20:38.

Jess Johnston left at 20:40.

The draft estimated income and expenditure were noted across initial years and subsequent to grant funding conditions. The agreed budget would form part of the bid for development funding. The Council might have some income gains through direct managing some aspects of

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the facilities. Financial and VAT advice would be needed in practice and business rates would need further exploration. Staffing needs were noted. It was likely that there would be some bedding in time until the Town Hall moved into a more sustainable position (owing to initial outlay required).

It was clarified that the estimate for on-costs had a number of exclusions which would be covered by tenants and in other ways. The building would have lower repair costs owing to being newly renovated but would still require maintenance. Clarifications were given about the grant income that would apply for a number of years and there was a discussion about specific costs such as for the lift maintenance. The need to sustain the enthusiasm and interest of stakeholders and the public through outreach work was noted. Costs and staffing would need further consideration. There were discussions about whether the Town Council should move wholly into the Town Hall without continuing with any base elsewhere which would necessitate the Council being fully accommodated within the Town Hall layout.

It was clarified that the café financials included catering. A certain income would be needed for a commercial operation. Car parking would be needed for a wedding but it was thought not necessarily on site.

Capital costs have been assessed and additional costs have been identified compared to the original estimates in previous work including re-servicing/energy rating improvements which would be required. This leaves a shortfall for which there is no obvious additional source of funding.

It was noted that the Council had already allocated some funds towards the Town Hall.

Cllr Pitts left the meeting at 21:27.

The option of the Town Council accessing a loan based on a worked through business case was considered and it was noted that a loan would spread the costs.

Licensing needs were discussed. It was noted that the Town Council meetings could not take place within a room serving alcohol.

A 5 minute break took place from 21:34 to 21:39.

It was noted that the Town Council would have to consider any existing commitments.

It was noted that the most sustainable option should be considered.

Cllr Pearce proposed requesting the shortfall in the capital funding costs through a Public Works Loan Board loan repayable over 30 years, subject to approval of the Secretary State and relevant funding from the Towns Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund and conditional on the Town Council's cashflow position being addressed. Other options for funding were to be explored. Delegation to the Clerk, the Chair of Finance and Governance Committee and the Mayor to take this forward. Cllr Pearce proposed and Cllr Taylor seconded; All in favour.

Cllr Begum left 22:12

It was proposed that the Clerk in conjunction with the Councillor members of the existing Town Hall project group should have delegated authority to decide the bid content and could so decide as long as they were able to reach a consensus decision i.e. without objection from among them. Peter Lang (as Deputy Mayor), Peter Knight (as HAZ representative), Colin Butler (as Lowestoft Place Board representative), Neil Coleby (as Chair of Assets, Inclusion and

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Development Committee), Alan Green (as Mayor), Andy Pearce (as Chair of Finance and Governance Committee), Alice Taylor (as HAZ representative) and Jacqueline Hardie (as HAZ representative) are the current councillor representatives. Cllr Pearce proposed; Cllr Coleby seconded; all in favour.

Meeting closed: 22:15.

Signed:
18 May 2021