

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
13:00 on 30 November 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Alan Green, Paul Page, Graham Parker 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)

94. Welcome

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

95. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Nasima Begum. Cllrs Keith Patience and Alice Taylor had not provided apologies and were absent. Cllr Green proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

96. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 101.1a. Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 99.8, 102, 103.4 and 103.12. Regarding item 101.1a Cllr Pearce declared that he knows the applicants but has no pecuniary or local non-pecuniary interest in this item. Regarding item 103.5, Cllrs Brooks, Green and Pearce declared that they had undertaken a site visit with the Cricket Club but had no pecuniary or local non-pecuniary interest in this item.

97. The draft minutes of the meeting on 4 November 2021

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

98. Public forum

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

99. Budget and Loan:

- 99.1. Monitor the budget for 2021 – 2022, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – Information had been circulated. It was noted that there had expenditure from the community engagement and events budgets.
- 99.2. Bank reconciliations – October's bank reconciliation had been submitted to the Councillor bank reconciliation signatory.
- 99.3. The draft minutes of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meetings on 8, 15, 22 and 29 November 2021 – A meeting of the Allotments Sub-Committee, involving representatives from the Allotments Association, is to be arranged. In the interim, the Committee would like to be made aware of any sites which may have financial implications for the Town Council as landowner. Individual issues, such as overgrowth, will be discussed during the Sub-Committee meeting.
- 99.4. Decisions from November's Full Council meeting regarding the 2022 – 2023 budget – Full Council received recommendations regarding the reserves, arising from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meetings on 15 and 22 November. Cllr Pearce has been updating the reserves document and Full Council has agreed to delegate authority to officers, in conjunction with this Committee, to review and agree the document. The changes are to names, structures and revised targets, and in some cases transfers between reserves but the changes are not involving expenditure. Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the recommendations arising from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meetings on 15 and 22 November regarding reserves;

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seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. Other documents currently being prepared can be referred to Full Council.

- 99.5. Any input from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meeting of 29 November 2021 into any recommendations this Committee may wish to make to Full Council regarding the 2022 – 2023 budget and precept – There were no new recommendations arising from the meeting on 29 November.
- 99.6. Recommendations to Full Council on the draft 2022 – 2023 budget and precept – A significant amount of work towards the draft budget and precept has been completed. The draft budget and precept should be fully prepared over the next two meetings of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee, with the exception of the Norse contract costs. As there are no more meetings of this Committee between now and December’s Full Council meeting, Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee to make recommendations directly to December’s Full Council meeting on the draft budget and precept; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. Thanks were offered to Cllr Pearce for his work towards preparation of the draft budget and precept. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meeting scheduled for 13 December was rearranged to 14 December to accommodate a meeting with Norse, the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee members and Norse Contract Working Group members, to discuss the contract costs.
- 99.7. Updated General and Earmarked Reserves positions, following resolutions made by Full Council in August – Cllr Pearce has been updating a working version of the reserves document with the changes agreed so far. Full Council granted delegated authority to officers, in conjunction with this Committee and the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee to agree the positions ahead of the next Full Council meeting.
- 99.8. Marina Theatre leases and funding (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

100. Payments:

- 100.1. The income and expenditure reports for November 2021, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – The income and expenditure reports were received and noted as follows:

November income

Date	Received From	Description	Amount
1 November 2021	Market	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
1 November 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
1 November 2021	J Hugman	Hire of Whitton Hall	£42
3 November 2021	C&C Consulting	Return of Double Payment	£42.30 + £8.46 VAT = £50.76
5 November 2021	East Suffolk Council	Contribution for Legal Advice	£2,000
8 November 2021	Market	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
11 November 2021	G Smith	Hire of Whitton Hall	£56
12 November 2021	HMRC	VAT Return Q2 2021	£36,829.50
15 November 2021	Market	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
18 November 2021	T Hugman	Whitton Hall Hire	£70
22 November 2021	Market	Weekly Market Income	£42.50
25 November 2021	Anglian Water	Links Road Car Park Works	£11,000

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25 November 2021	R Phipps	Whitton Hall Hire	£56
29 November 2021	Market Income	Weekly Market Income	£18.50
29 November 2021	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16

November expenditure

Date	Payment To	Description	Amount
1 November 2021	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall Gas	£57.11 + £2.86 VAT = £59.97
1 November 2021	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park Business Rates November 2021	£187
1 November 2021	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls Club Business Rates November 2021	£110
1 November 2021	East Suffolk Council	Hamilton House Business Rates November 2021	£2,008
1 November 2021	Trevor Brown	Internal Audit	£250
2 November 2021	C&C Consulting	Health and Safety Support (Direct Debit)	£42.30 + £8.46 VAT = £50.76
2 November 2021	Land Registry	Land Registry Searches	£6
4 November 2021	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions October 2021	£4,140.74
9 November 2021	Anglian Water	Water charges Denes Oval 2018-2021	£2,370.87 + £474.18 VAT = £2,845.05
10 November 2021	C&C Consulting	Health and Safety Consultancy	£735 + £147 = £882
16 November 2021	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Purchases	£166.63
17 November 2021	Henry Baker	Remembrance Film	£550
18 November 2021	NPower	Triangle Market Electric	£179.05 + £8.95 VAT = £188
18 November 2021	Need2Store	Civic Artefact Storage	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
19 November 2021	NPower	Kensington Gardens Electric	£71.52 + £3.58 VAT = £75.20
19 November 2021	NPower	Kensington Gardens Electric	£53.77 + £2.69 VAT = £56.46
19 November 2021	NPower	Denes Oval Electric	£208.32 + £10.42 VAT = £218.74
19 November 2021	NPower	Lowestoft Cemetery PC Electric	£59.56 + £2.98 VAT = £62.54
19 November 2021	NPower	Pakefield Street PC Electric	£82.03 + £4.10 VAT = £86.13
19 November 2021	NPower	Sparrows Nest Electric	£943.26 + £188.65 VAT = £1,131.91
19 November 2021	Waveney Glass Co Ltd	Hamilton House Reception Glass	£1,074 + £214.80 VAT = £1,288.80
19 November 2021	East Suffolk Norse	Whitton Hall Cleaning	£120 + £24 VAT = £144

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19 November 2021	Boggis Electrical Ltd	Marina Theatre First Floor & Bar Ventilation	£2,541.84 + £508.37 VAT = £3,050.21
19 November 2021	Boggis Electrical	Marina Theatre Disabled Toilet Alarms	£699.60 + £139.92 VAT = £839.62
19 November 2021	Fatstickman Ltd	Digital prints on Hi Vis Vests	£45 + £9 VAT = £54
19 November 2021	The Royal British Legion	Poppy Wreath Donation	£55.50
19 November 2021	HMRC	HMRC October 2021	£4,354.12
22 November 2021	NPower	Normanston Park Electric	£88.14 + £4.40 VAT = £92.54
22 November 2021	Anglian Water	Water Charges	£380.11
23 November 2021	British Gas	Gas Charges Whitton Hall	£10
23 November 2021	Anglian Water	Denes Oval Sewage 2018-2021	£2,801.43 + £560.29 VAT = £3,361.72
23 November 2021	BSA	Whitton Hall Emergency Lights	£136.92 + £27.38 VAT = £164.30
23 November 2021	Salaries	Salaries November 2021	£13,003.51
23 November 2021	Nicholsons Solicitors	Legal Advice	£489.60 + £97.92 VAT = £587.52
24 November 2021	East Point Business Services	Hamilton House Rent	£3,675 + £735 VAT = £4,410
24 November 2021	East Point Business Services	Hamilton House IT Support	£3,231 + £646.20 VAT = £3,877.20
24 November 2021	East Point Business Services	Hamilton House Capital Works Repayment	£3,357.40 + £671.48 VAT = £4,028.88
25 November 2021	C&C Consulting	Health and Safety Support	£180.80 + £36.18 VAT = £217.08
25 November 2021	Community Rail Norfolk	Community Rail Norfolk Support Grant and Contribution to Lowestoft Station Evacuation Day History Panels	£1,000
26 November 2021	St Johns Ambulance	Remembrance Day Support	£192 + £38.40 VAT = £230.40
29 November 2021	Eon	Whitton Hall Electric	£32
29 November 2021	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall Gas	£59.02 + £2.95 VAT = £61.97
29 November 2021	SALC	SALC Membership	£996.50

Whitton Deposit Returns

Date of Payment	Date of Hire	Amount Returned
16 November 2021	6 November 2021	£100
16 November 2021	13 November 2021	£100

Cllr Pearce had provided a document of previously agreed expenditure relating to the Community Halls, indicating which budget or reserve each item of expenditure should be

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funded from. Cllr Pearce proposed that the previously agreed expenditure for the Whitton Residents' Hall be funded from the Whitton Residents' Hall earmarked reserve, and the previously agreed expenditure for the Uplands Community Centre and the Gunton Estate Residents' Meeting Hall be funded from the Community Halls' earmarked reserve; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

The Marina Theatre had previously submitted a grant but it is understood that the purpose of the funding may be a landlord responsibility. The Theatre has funded the expenditure and an item may be added to December's Full Council agenda for reimbursement. It would be more appropriate for the reimbursement to be made this way rather than via a community grant.

- 100.2. Any payments for approval (see schedule) – The Committee was asked to consider approval of the purchase of a key safe, at £207. The current key safe is inadequate and the purchase of a new one is important for security and management of assets. Cllr Green proposed approval of the purchase of the key safe, at a cost of £207; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

101. Grants:

101.1. Grant applications:

101.1a. Another Angle Studio for £2,400 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval of this application, subject to any planning consents which may be required; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

101.1b. A request from Lowestoft Shopmobility for additional grant funding of £20, in addition to the £317 previously approved – This is for an unexpected additional cost stemming from the original application. Cllr Green proposed approval of the additional funding of £20; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

- 101.2. A request from the Promoting Pakefield Group to repurpose the grant funding previously given – Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in this item. Cllr Brooks proposed approval of this application; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

102. Standing Orders and Policies:

102.1. Reviewing the following Town Council policies:

102.1a. Financial Regulations – At point 1.7 it was suggested that 'brings' should be amended to 'may bring'. Regarding point 1.13, the Council had previously written off a bad debt for £200, which was confirmed as legitimate. Point 4.1 refers to financial delegations to the Clerk. New financial delegations have recently been agreed but where delegations exist for Committees it is good to clarify delegations which extend to the Clerk. The recent delegations are complementary to those which already exist. It was suggested that 'or credited to reserves' should be added to point 4.2. Regarding point 4.3, the Council has not yet discussed a cost of living increase backdated to April, but has opted to apply NJC terms to all staff other than the Clerk. The Council has appointed new staff since April, in which case any backdated cost of living increase would be on a pro rata basis. It was suggested to amend point 4.3, as salary budgets do not have to be reviewed by October necessarily, but this needs to happen before the budget is set. A typographical error at point 6.11 was identified. Points 6.18 and 6.19 relate to debit cards and do not refer to credit cards, which the Town Council has, with agreed delegations to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. Expenditure via the credit cards is reported via the proper processes. Officers will review these two points to see if any amendments are required. Point 6.20 refers to petty cash. The Council only holds a nominal amount of petty cash now. It was suggested the wording of 6.20.a be amended to reflect that the Council will hold no more than £250 in a petty cash float. It was queried why point 7.6 refers only to senior officers. In effect, all officers are treated as senior officers and performance is

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monitored and targets set via the appraisal process. The Council may decide to appoint apprentices in the future. Officers will review the wording of this point. Officers will check points 11.1b and 11.1h to ensure the stated thresholds are still relevant. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Financial Regulations, with the amendments as identified and any additional amendments put forward by officers; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

102.1b. Financial Risk Assessment – It was suggested that Councillors should send their comments to officers to feed into the next Full Council meeting. It was queried whether investment in environmentally friendly organisations is covered. The Investment Policy does not just cover investment in organisations, but covers matters such as banking arrangements. The Council does review the ethics of the companies it deals with. There have been concerns regarding negative costs linked with investments and companies going under, so it would be timely to review the Investment Policy and Financial Risk Assessment now Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to the Clerk to receive and collate feedback from individual Councillors on the Financial Risk Assessment and Investment Policy, and feed them into the next Full Council meeting; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

102.1c. Investment Policy – This was covered with the discussion of the previous item.

103. Other financial matters, including:

103.1. Reviewing the Town Council's Asset Register – This item is also on the Asset Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee's agenda. It was agreed that any comments should be fed into that Committee. Condition surveys are kept separately. It was suggested that the AID Committee should discuss keeping a condition survey report, to show what work has been completed and when, and the findings. This can be used to track the depreciation of assets for long term budgeting purposes. East Suffolk Norse do not undertake condition surveys but do organise the annual play inspection reports. The AID Committee will be reviewing this year's play inspection reports and considering priorities. Work is underway to confirm which equipment within the Marina Theatre is owned by the Town Council. It was requested that once this is complete, a list of the Town Council's confirmed assets within the Theatre is added to the Asset Register as an appendix. From a climate emergency point of view, the Committee would not wish to replace equipment just because an improved model has come onto the market, if the equipment is not in need of replacement. Any further comments regarding the Asset Register can be sent to officers to feed into the AID Committee meeting.

103.2. The implementation of approved capital projects, including progressing pond works and appointment of a project manager to oversee toilet refurbishments – Site visits to public conveniences have taken place recently. An agreement has already been made to prioritise the Sparrows Nest and Fen Park public conveniences this year. Recommendations regarding priority order of the other sites will be considered by the AID Committee. The refurbishment of the Triangle Market public conveniences is being considered outside of the public conveniences budget. Norse is happy to project manage the works and is reviewing the Triangle Market works. Project management budget provision has been agreed this will potentially extend to the pond works as well, but it may be that other agreed works could be managed in house.

103.3. Agreeing a budget for the reinstatement of the Sparrows Nest beacon – Full Council has delegated authority to officers to obtain quotations and proceed with this work, within a maximum budget of £4,500. Cllr Pearce proposed that the expenditure is taken from the ring fenced Sparrows Nest component of the parks and open spaces reserve, subject to that reserves position being agreed; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

103.4. The cost of works required to secure a boundary of the Britten Road play area – One quotation has been received so far. Another company which was approached has requested further information, including the total length of the boundary. There had been discussions about erecting the fence on land which is indisputably owned by the Council, and a site visit

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- with the contractors would be required. A price per metre could be requested in the interim. Approval to proceed is still required from Full Council. Advice is being sought from the companies approached on the type of fencing to suit the Council's requirements.
- 103.5. A request from the Cricket Club for assistance/support of their proposals to improve the Denes Oval clubhouse facilities, following a site visit on 23 November 2021 – The Cricket Club is seeking permission to carry out primarily interior decorative/refurbishment work, pending a decision about longer term improvements. The Club is happy to do the work, but would welcome any assistance the Town Council could give. The Tennis Club has submitted proposals for the improvements it would like to see. The Cricket Club has been encouraged to send in its proposals for consideration. The roof and windows need remedial work but this should not affect the Cricket Club's request. The indicative cost of the changing rooms and clubhouse renovation work (primarily the benches, hooks and interior painting) is £3,177.84 and the club is looking to undertake the work itself. The refurbishment of the spectator area (primarily painting and cleaning of walls) will again be carried out by the club and the overall cost of the changing rooms and clubhouse renovation and spectator area improvement is likely to be between £4,000 - £4,500. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of these two costed proposals, with the Town Council to fund the work up to a maximum budget of £7,000. Expenditure should come from the grants budget but the club will not be invited to submit an application, as the Town Council will be working with its tenant to improve an asset, but there is a community element, hence the suggestion of this budget. Cllr Green seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. Full Council has agreed to fund the Tennis Club's project, based on the detailed proposals submitted. Joint meetings with both clubs will be required to progress the proposals, particularly those involving the shared space of the pavilion. The Toilet Strategy Working Group has recommended addressing the public conveniences as part of the wider refurbishment of the pavilion. The AID Committee will discuss the perimeter wall. Cllr Pearce proposed an in principle commitment to discuss the remaining proposals with the Cricket Club, including the idea of support, depending on costs and planning consents, and to welcome the submission of a detailed proposal, including liaison with the Council regarding the detail and specification. If available, quotations can be considered at January or February's meeting, for a more detailed discussion about cost and timescale; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. Regarding the immediate works, it is understood that the Cricket Club would make the purchases then invoice the Council.
- 103.6. Any expenditure requests from the Community Safety Committee meeting of 24 November 2021, which may exceed that Committee's financial delegation – This meeting was cancelled.
- 103.7. The financial implications of acquiring electric vehicles – Practically, it would be possible to continue the Council's current procedure of reimbursing staff for mileage related to Council business, with officers using their own vehicles. Concerns have been raised over the use of lithium and the expenditure related to purchasing an electric vehicle. It would be difficult for the Council to achieve net zero without any expenditure and it could explore lease options as an alternative. This Committee has already agreed to fund a charging point at Hamilton House. Secure storage of the vehicle needs to be considered. The Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee can put together a specification for the vehicle but a broad consensus is needed first. The Council already has £32,140 between the climate emergency and electric vehicle reserves, with another £20,000 being allocated whether the Council decides to transition to electric or not. The Council could budget to recover the reserve over the next two years, without the need to precept for an electric vehicle purchase. Cllr Brooks proposed exploring the options of leasing or buying an electric vehicle (preferably a small van) for use by Town Council officers for Council business, including storage options and availability of charging points. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal and it was clarified that the Committee was not being asked to make a decision or recommendation on the purchase of a vehicle, and the Climate Emergency and Ecological Committee will look at a specification in more detail. All Councillors voted in favour.

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Cllr Parker left the meeting 15:10

- 103.8. The application of the decision to purchase staff car parking passes – The cost has already been agreed at £650 per pass per year. At the moment, it is easier to reimburse staff for the odd day that they need to pay for parking for Council related business and the Clerk advised it would preferable to delay the purchase of the annual passes. Cllr Pearce proposed to support this position; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. This expenditure will be taken from the parking budget. The employment of new staff may change this position in future. Full Council would be asked to consider any additional funds needed.
- 103.9. Determining where the unbudgeted 2021 – 2022 membership to the Suffolk Association of Local Councils should be funded from – The pro rata amount is £996.50 for six months. Cllr Pearce taking this expenditure from the consultancy earmarked reserve. Expenditure for the inclusivity review and Neighbourhood Development Plan consultancy will also be taken from there. Recovery of this earmarked reserve will be budgeted for in 2022 – 2023. Cllr Green seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the meeting 15:16

- 103.10. An update on asset transfer matters (some aspects may be confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.
- 103.11. Potential community asset transfers once existing land transfer matters are resolved (some aspects may be confidential) - To be discussed during the confidential session.
- 103.12. Any expenditure requests from the Events and Communications Sub-Committee meeting of 25 November 2021 that may exceed that Sub-Committee’s financial delegation, including two possible additions to Major Events (some aspects may be confidential) - To be discussed during the confidential session.
- 103.13. An update on the Hamilton House lease and business rates (confidential) - To be discussed during the confidential session.
- 103.14. Rent arrangements for a tenant during any period of closure required for building works (confidential) - To be discussed during the confidential session.

104. Date of the next meeting

13 January 2022 14:30

Cllr Brooks returned 15:19

Cllr Pearce proposed amending the start time of meetings of this Committee to 13:00 for the remainder of the financial year; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

105. Items for the next agenda and close

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

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

106. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

106.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required:

- 103.10. An update on asset transfer matters (some aspects may be confidential) – There had been no updates since the Full Council meeting.
- 103.11. Potential community asset transfers once existing land transfer matters are resolved (some aspects may be confidential) - There had been no updates since the Full Council meeting.
- 99.8. Marina Theatre leases and funding (confidential) – The Town Council’s solicitor is working on the rationalisation of the two leases and Supplemental Agreement in line with Council decisions to date.
- 103.12. Any expenditure requests from the Events and Communications Sub-Committee meeting of 25 November 2021 that may exceed that Sub-Committee’s financial delegation, including two possible additions to Major Events (some aspects may be

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confidential) – An agreed has been made with Norfolk and Waveney MIND to host a Festival of Kindness at some point between June to September, pursuant to a potential longer term relationship. The event is to be hosted on Town Council land and the Town Council may make a donation towards it.

The Events and Communications Sub-Committee previously discussed sponsorship of the Scores Race. Cllr Pearce proposed treating both the sponsorship of a sporting event and the Norfolk and Waveney MIND events as major events, with a £5,000 maximum budget allocated to each, in line with other major events; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. The AID Committee will also be considering this item as the parent Committee.

103.13. An update on the Hamilton House lease and business rates (confidential) – The Clerk has contacted Anglia Revenues, regarding the duplication of business rates, payment of business rates for the Links Road car park and the BID levy on the Town Hall as a vacant property. The Hamilton House lease is still with solicitors and the matter will be considered further by Full Council.

103.14. Rent arrangements for a tenant during any period of closure required for building works (confidential) – The Council can work with the tenant on timing and how to manage their business during the works. The Town Council can now choose the contractor and the Clerk is exploring options.

The meeting was closed 15:49.

Signed:

13 January 2022