

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:30 on 18 January 2022

MINUTES

Present (in person): Cllrs Sonia Barker, Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, John Pitts and Elise Youngman

In attendance (remotely via Zoom): Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee and Project Clerk)

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

136. Welcome

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

137. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Christian Newsome. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

138. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 149.1, 149.2, 148.4, 149.1 and 149.3. Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 142.1, 148.7, 148.8, 150 and 155 (regarding an update she intends to provide at the next meeting). Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to Kensington Gardens. Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to the Gainsborough Drive pond and St Margaret's Plain. Cllr Parker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 149.1 and 149.2.

139. The draft minutes of the meeting on 14 December 2021

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

140. Public forum

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

141. Monitoring expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget

The amounts given on the spreadsheet appear to be the maximum budgets allocation, rather than the specific expenditure. The maximum budget for bulb ordering was £6,000, but it is understood that the final expenditure was just under £4,000. It is understood the cost of tree watering was also not as much as anticipated. It may be that invoices for the final costs have not yet been received but officers will try to obtain the actual figures for the next meeting.

142. Five-year plans for the Town Council's parks, including the following:

142.1 An update on planting plans, including feedback from a Zoom meeting with Norse – Planting plans for Kensington Gardens, Belle Vue Park, Sparrows Nest and The Ness were discussed specifically as part of the Zoom meeting. The Sub-Committee would need advice as to what to order, when to order and quantities needed. A follow-up meeting is required, either as part of the next meeting of this Sub-Committee or as a standalone meeting. The Committee and Project Clerk will send the planting plans to Norse for comment. Norse have already advised they can source some of the specific bulbs identified, others would need to be ordered online by the Council from other suppliers but could still be planted by Norse. The Council has Friends Groups at some

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of its parks, but in areas which do not, efforts could be made to find volunteer support when required for planting. It was suggested that Lowestoft in Bloom may be able to support or offer advice. Cllr Breakspear is the Town Council's appointed representative and would also be able to offer advice. Orders being placed with Norse need to be prepared by the end of June. The Sub-Committee will need to identify what projects it would like to prioritise for this year and next. An item will be added to May's agenda of this Sub-Committee to finalise the plans. Cllr Brooks proposed that the Committee and Project Clerk liaises with Cllr Breakspear and Norse to progress the planting plans; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Preparation of the beds will also need to be planned in advance. Cllr Barker has been liaising with Pathways Care Farm, who have advised they would be happy for the Sub-Committee to visit their sensory garden to inform its discussions. Cllr Barker will liaise with the Committee and Project Clerk to make arrangements, and it was agreed that March would be the best time of year to see the garden, on a Thursday or Friday if possible. Cllr Pearce proposed that in addition to the earlier resolution, a separate meeting is arranged for the end of February, either in person or via Zoom, for a progress update, to identify priorities for this year and the next and to establish costs; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

- 142.2 Development of a horticultural calendar – This would primarily be for the annual planting. Norse have confirmed that orders should be placed with them by the end of June and it has already been agreed that an item will be added to May's agenda to finalise the plans. The Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee may also need to approve any expenditure which exceeds this Sub-Committee's financial delegation. The specific planting plans can also be added to the horticultural calendar, once priorities for this year and next have been established and the dates for ordering are known.
- 142.3 The cost of over-entrance archway signs – Two quotations have been received but differ greatly in cost. One of the providers has quoted for the design and measurements supplied, whereas the other has taken account of the fact that the design may need to be modified to install onto the existing brick pillars. Kensington Gardens has been used as an example to seek initial quotes, and has at least three entrances which may require archways. Not all entrances in all of the parks will require an archway. Where possible, the same design should be used for each park, as per the draft design supplied by Cllr Taylor, which has been used to seek the quotations. Contractors should also be invited to visit the sites so they can see what adaptations may be needed to the design before a quotation is supplied. Enquiries would need to be made with suppliers to ensure the archways would not deteriorate in the environment they would be in. Cllr Parker proposed seeking further quotations for comparison, using Kensington Gardens as the pilot site; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. The Committee and Project Clerk is in contact with a third supplier and was given the name of another contractor who may have contacts in this area.
- 142.4 The cost of items relating to the Kensington Gardens centenary – Cllr Breakspear had a site meeting to look at some designs for structures for the pond, and will circulate the draft designs. Solar options may need to be considered for the fountain. An item will be added to February's AID Committee agenda to consider the designs. A list of the items agreed by the Friends of Kensington Gardens will be circulated ahead of that meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed that plans are made to install a Kindertransport bench in Kensington Gardens in December, which will coincide with the Kindertransport anniversary and is also within Kensington Gardens' centenary year;

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seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

143. Small-scale planting at the Links Road car park

Cllr Pearce proposed deferring this item to May or June's agenda. Work at the site is ongoing but plans can be made over the summer, ready for when the site can be accessed again. Planting would need to be sympathetic to this environment. Cllr Parker seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

144. Feedback on proposed locations for swift bird boxes and how to proceed

The response from the Suffolk Bird Group had been circulated. The nesting boxes would need to be installed onto two storey building and the Group has suggested that one of the Museums in Sparrows Nest may be suitable. The Museum would need to agree to broadcast the call sign to attract swifts. Capital works to the building complex in Sparrows Nest are taking place over the next few years which could cause significant disturbance. The Maritime Museum is separate from this and could still be a potential location. The Sub-Committee agreed it would like a Zoom call with the Suffolk Bird Group to discuss this further.

145. The decision of Full Council to install reflective strips and/or spotlights at the bicycle racks in Normanston Park, within a maximum budget of £6,000 (under delegated authority to this Sub-Committee)

This has already been raised with Norse and a response is pending. It had been agreed that reflective strips would be progressed as this could be done more quickly as an interim measure until a more permanent solution can be found regarding lighting, which will be considered later on the agenda.

146. Installing spotlights at the Normanston Park Skate Park (some aspects may be confidential)

It was clarified that this has not been suggested to encourage skating after dark. It is hoped that illuminating the area will deter anti-social behaviour, but it is not suggested that the lights remain on all night. This has been fed back to Norse, and could be tied in with any wider proposals regarding lighting in the park. The Council would need to be considerate of neighbouring properties when considering lighting. Cllr Pitts proposed that the terminology should be 'adequate lighting' rather than spotlights specifically; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. It was suggested that a Zoom meeting with Norse should be progressed, which would also inform item 152.

147. Concerns regarding the condition of the Drying Racks

It appears at least some of the drying racks are rotting. The Council could consider replacement as the ones currently there are replicas themselves. Cllr Parker proposed that a site visit should be undertaken to look at the condition of the drying racks; seconded by Cllr Pearce. It was suggested that information signage could be considered, displaying an image of the original drying racks. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour. The pile driver looks to have been discarded at the site. Cllr Brooks proposed looking into whether it could be put upright and used to display information; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. It was queried whether removal of the drying racks would affect the rare invertebrate's habitat. Advice would be needed and the proposals would need to be carefully managed.

148. Play areas:

148.1 The scheduling of refurbishments for years four and five – It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

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- 148.2 Refurbishment options for the St Margaret's Plain play area – Site visits took place last week with two potential providers. Both were positive but Councillors had some reservations about the materials proposed from one of the providers. A site visit with a third potential provider is taking place this week. There is a small area of land on the opposite side of the path, which East Suffolk Council has indicated it would be willing to transfer to the Town Council's ownership on a cost neutral basis, if for a demonstrable community benefit, once existing land transfer matters are complete.
- 148.3 Improvements required to the Rosedale Park play area, taking account of the Play Inspection Report and a recent site visit – The annual Play Inspection report has been circulated and identified one high priority issue which has been remediated. The fencing surrounding the play area is in a poor condition. The AID Committee has identified this play area as a priority refurbishment for year one. It had been agreed that dogs should not be permitted in the Town Council's enclosed play areas. Cllr Pearce proposed that as with St Margaret's Plain, providers should now be invited to the site to make recommendations as to its refurbishment, making it clear that the fence would need to be addressed at the same time. Any ideas Councillors may have regarding a potential theme should be sent to officers. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. Those who attended the site visit (Cllrs Butler and Green, the Community Warden and the Committee and Project Clerk) had suggested that the space could accommodate a separate, fenced, toddler play area. The existing fence would require a total replacement or removing altogether. Cllr Pearce proposed asking providers to give two quotes – one for refurbishment of the play area within its existing footprint, and one for refurbishment of the play area within its existing footprint, plus a separate toddler area; seconded by Cllr Elise Youngman; all in favour. Cllr Pitts had identified that a bench requires replacement and the matting is in a poor condition. The park is a largely open space popular with dog walkers, which will need to be taken into consideration, particularly regarding the fencing.
- 148.4 Repair and maintenance of the damaged matting at Fen Park – Sections to replace the damaged areas have been ordered. The black and red matting has been highlighted in Play Inspection report, and it was suggested Norse should look at this matting again. It was suggested that an item should be added to the next agenda to consider how certain items, particularly health and safety issues can be fast tracked. This can be considered but it is understood that there are ongoing issues with suppliers meeting demands and availability of materials and contractors to carry out the work. Officers can already progress certain works if they are deemed as an urgent health and safety priority. It was agreed that a discussion should take place at the next meeting for an appropriate delegation to progress items which the Council deem to be a priority on health and safety grounds, even if Norse do not.
- 148.5 An update on the installation of gates for the gaps in the fencing around the Fen Park play area – The AID Committee has requested that this proceeds. Cllr Pearce proposed endorsement of this decision; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.
- 148.6 The provision of creative/art spaces within the Town Council's parks – St Margaret's Plain has already been identified as the pilot site. It was suggested that this could take the form of a chalkboard or similar. The Council would not wish to encourage graffiti extending to other areas, which is why one site has been identified as the pilot site.
- 148.7 The installation of a music-themed piece of art or play equipment at the Britten Road play area – The Committee and Project Clerk has spoken with a sculptor recommended by Cllr Brooks, who would in principle be interested in working with the Town Council on an item to complement the play area, such as a new bench. The sculptor would first like to see plans for the new play area, if it does undergo a full refurbishment. Britten Road has been identified as a year two project. Cllr Pearce

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proposed that further consideration should be given at February's meeting as to the extent of the works at Britten Road; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

148.8 An update on commencement of approved works at the Britten Road play area (some aspects may be confidential) – This was also discussed by the AID Committee. As well as the replacement matting, the Committee had also previously agreed to Norse's suggestion of the installation of a slide and a replacement steering wheel for the toddler tower unit. The Committee and Project Clerk has requested an update from Norse. The matting has been replaced.

Cllr Pearce proposed suspending Standing Order 3y for twenty minutes to allow the meeting to continue; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

149. Ponds:

149.1 Progress with the Fen Park and Gainsborough Drive pond dredging – The AID Committee has made a recommendation to Full Council regarding the appointment of a contractor to carry out the Gainsborough Drive pond dredging. A Zoom with the same contractor to discuss Fen Park has been requested. The contractor has been made aware of the recommendation to Full Council and has been asked whether the work could still be completed at Gainsborough Drive by the end of February.

149.2 An update regarding the issue of duck feeding at the Gainsborough Drive pond – Officers will check where the signs are. It was requested that the old Waveney District Council 'do not feed the ducks' sign is removed.

149.3 The installation of signage at Fen Park regarding duck feeding – It was agreed to defer this item to the next agenda and seek the views of the Friends of Fen Park in the interim.

149.4 An offer from a private individual to install a water fountain in the Kensington Gardens fish pond – There was no update to report.

150. An update on planned projects at Clarkes Lane

Cllrs Barker and Elise Youngman recently had a Zoom meeting with the Deputy Clerk and a public survey is being drafted.

151. The need for additional metal fencing at Kensington Gardens

This was considered by the AID Committee and referred to this Sub-Committee to give Councillors the opportunity to visit the area. If this is a health and safety risk it was queried whether there are any alternatives to metal fencing. The Community Warden is looking at gabions instead and will put forward a recommendation.

152. A specification for the installation of lighting in Belle Vue Park, Normanston Park and Fen Park

It was agreed to defer this item to February's meeting. Cllr Lang would like to input regarding Normanston Park and the Friends of Fen Park would also like to input. Where possible, comments should be sent to officers in advance of the meeting to collate and feed back to the Sub-Committee. It was agreed this item should be moved to the top of the agenda for any external input.

153. The cost of refurbishment and the location of the Sparrows Nest beacon

Cllr Pearce proposed that the beacon should remain in Sparrows Nest; seconded by Cllr Brooks; five Councillors voted in favour; two Councillors abstained from the vote. The AID Committee will consider the cost of refurbishment at its next meeting. The Finance and Governance Committee will consider the cost if it exceeds the AID Committee's financial delegation, or a delegation to officers can be considered to progress the refurbishment, as it will need to be completed in time for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

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154. Date of the next meeting

15 February 2022 18:30

155. Items for the next Agenda and Close

Cllr Barker will give updates on site visits she has been arranging.

There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting at 20:42.

156. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

15 February 2022