

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 14 December 2021

MINUTES

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

In attendance (remotely via Zoom): Sarah Foote (Deputy Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee and Project Clerk)

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

116. Welcome

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

117. Acceptance of apologies for absence and to note a change to this Sub-Committee's membership

Apologies were received from Cllrs Sonia Barker and John Pitts. Cllr Christian Newsome had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

118. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items 128.4, 128.5 130.1 and 130.2.
Cllr Brooks declared a local non-pecuniary interest in any matters relating to Gunton.

119. The draft minutes of the meeting on 16 November 2021

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

120. Public forum

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

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

The expenditure for tree watering and the recent bulbs orders will come from the horticultural budget. The expenditure was not approved by this Sub-Committee as it exceeded the financial delegation, but the total expenditure from the horticultural budget will still be confirmed to Sub-Committee members.

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

122.1 An update on planting plans, including scheduling a Zoom meeting with Norse – The meeting with Norse is being arranged. This will be to discuss regular annual planting. Capital works to parks will be considered under the five year plans.

122.2 The cost of over-entrance archway signs – The Community Warden has taken measurements of the entrances which are being used to seek quotations.

122.3 The cost of items relating to the Kensington Gardens centenary – The Friends of Kensington Gardens' Annual General Meeting has been postponed. Cllr Breakspear has a site meeting shortly with a metal worker to discuss the Peter Pan themed sculptures. The Friends Group has some funds to contribute towards the project. Cllr Breakspear will report back when more information is available. Seeking quotations for a Kindertransport bench is difficult without a design. Cllr Breakspear will liaise with the person he is meeting onsite to see if they could design and quote for a suitable bench. Cllr Pearce has the photographs needed for the lectern and will forward them to the Committee and Project Clerk.

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

It was suggested that this item should be deferred until January or February, as it cannot progress until after major works in this area have been completed, but plans can still be made in advance. The area is primarily wild and any planting will be complementary and appropriate for the environment.

124. Whether to explore the option of installing swift bird boxes in the Town Council's parks

Further information had been circulated. There were some concerns about the appropriateness of installing the boxes on or near cafes. The organisation which made the approach has advised that swifts are clean. There could however be practical issues with connecting to an electricity supply to play the call sign needed to encourage swifts to nest. The Sub-Committee would like to look upon this favourably, but before liaising with any tenants it would like to identify two to three sites to see if they would meet the criteria. Cllr Pearce proposed that officers take photographs of the cliff behind the Denes Oval, the cliff behind Martello in Sparrows Nest and the Jubilee Bridge, and send them to the organisation which made the approach, to see if these locations would meet the necessary criteria; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

125. The Ness:

125.1 Feedback from a site visit with Suffolk Wildlife Trust – It was suggested that this item should be deferred to the next meeting, pending the Zoom meeting with Norse to discuss planting plans. Suffolk Wildlife Trust have sent a report following the site visit, which will be sent to Norse in advance. The Sub-Committee would like advice on what could safely be planted without disturbing protected areas. The Sub-Committee would like the area to look visually attractive but natural. Fencing has been erected on the advice of East Suffolk Council's Environmental Protection Officer. Norse requires an access gate to be installed to carry out grounds maintenance. There are large puddles at the site which need to be addressed. It was suggested that East Suffolk Council could be approached to cover some of the cost of developing the coastal garden.

125.2 Maintenance and issues with vandalism – The Clerk has enquired as to the status of the swings and a response is pending.

126. Progressing 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)

Quotations are being sought.

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

The request arose from users of the Skate Park, following a site visit by Cllrs Pearce and Elise Youngman. It was clarified that this was not with the intention of supporting late night skating, and indeed it had been suggested that lighting is only provided until 21:00 at the latest. The suggestion arose from a security point of view. Norse had previously provided advice which had been fed back to the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee. This Sub-Committee respects the advice, but thinks the intended purpose of the lighting may have been misunderstood. Cllr Pearce proposed progressing a Zoom meeting with Norse to discuss how the request arose, the intended purpose of the lighting, and the feedback received from users so far; seconded by Cllr Elise Youngman; all in favour.

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128. Play areas:

128.1 The 2021 play inspection reports – Immediate health and safety concerns at Rosedale Park have been addressed, but a site visit is recommended.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the meeting 19:19

It was clarified that Bentley Drive is referred to as the Parkhill play area and Clarkes Lane is referred to as Chaukers Crescent. Issues with the matting at Fen Park are still to be addressed.

Cllr Brooks returned 19:21

No very high priority issues were identified in the inspections. One high priority issue was identified and has been addressed. Other lower priority issues will be picked up as part of regular maintenance or on health and safety grounds and will be monitored.

128.2 A priority order for play area refurbishments – Cllr Elise Youngman identified Bentley Drive, Clarkes Lane, St Margaret's Plain and Fen Park as the priorities. It was agreed that Fen Park could be progressed in year two so long as the matting is addressed in meantime. It had been agreed that minor improvements to St Margaret's Plain would be progressed alongside Britten Road and Sparrows Nest if funds permitted, but it may be that the equipment is reaching end of life and will require a more significant refurbishment. Cllr Elise Youngman proposed prioritising refurbishment of the Bentley Drive, Clarkes Lane and St Margaret's Plain play areas in year one; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Elise Youngman proposed scheduling the refurbishment of the Fen Park, Britten Road and Pakefield Green play areas for year two; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed scheduling the refurbishment of the Cotman Close and Normanston Park play areas for year three; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. An item will be added to the next agenda to consider the scheduling of play area refurbishments for years four and five.

128.3 Refurbishment options for the St Margaret's Plain play area – Site visits with two suppliers have been organised for January. At that point, an indication should also be given as to whether the existing equipment is reaching end of life.

128.4 Repair and maintenance of the damaged matting at Fen Park – This was covered with the consideration of items 128.1 and 128.2.

128.5 An update on the installation of gates for the gaps in the fencing around the Fen Park play area – Quotations are being sought.

128.6 The provision of creative/art spaces within the Town Council's parks – Cllr Elise Youngman had circulated details of chalkboard style equipment which could be installed in the Town Council's parks. Cllr Elise Youngman proposed treating St Margaret's Plain as a pilot site for such equipment; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

128.7 An update on commencement of approved works at the Britten Road play area (some aspects may be confidential) – The replacement of the matting should be underway. Quotations are being sought for the fencing. It is understood that Whitton Green play area is now open but the newly seeded grass is being monitored. An update on the installation of the outdoor fitness equipment was requested.

128.8 The installation of a music-themed piece of art or play equipment at the Britten Road play area – Officers are seeking quotations.

128.9 Replacement signage – This has opened a wider issue of whether dogs should be permitted in play areas. The Council will be asked to consider whether it would wish to progress a Public Space Protection Order to formally ban dogs from its enclosed play areas. The Sub-Committee would wish to support this in principle. Alternative signage could be considered for the play areas which are not enclosed. Officers were asked to survey all of the play areas and identify which are enclosed and which are

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not, then produce draft signage for the AID Committee to consider.

129. An update on Compass Street pocket park project/stakeholder meetings, legacy planning for ongoing maintenance and an update on the transfer of the land to Lowestoft Town Council

The land is owned by the housing association, which has not yet provided a response to officers.

130. Ponds:

130.1 Progress with the Fen Park and Gainsborough Drive pond dredging – A site visit to Gainsborough Drive has taken place recently. The contractor has advised they would be able to complete the work by the end of February. A Zoom meeting or site visit will be organised with this contractor for Fen Park.

130.2 An update regarding the issue of duck feeding at the Gainsborough Drive pond – A request had been made by the residents' group progress a sign which advises on the correct feeding of ducks. The group then considered a change in the specification but has since agreed to keep to the original specification for the signage and leaflets. There has not been as much demand for the leaflets since. It was suggested that use of the RSPB logo may be more effective than that of the Town Council as a local authority. The sign has already been produced and officers will check that it is with Norse. Cllr Pearce proposed approving the installation of the signage which has already been purchased and removal of any redundant Waveney District Council signs which say not to feed the ducks. If only one sign has been purchased it should be installed at one end of the pond, then brought back to Council to consider the purchase of another for installation at the other end of the pond, subject to budget provision. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. The need for signage at Fen Park was discussed but it had already been agreed that the signage purchased would be installed at Gainsborough Drive. An item will be added to the next agenda to consider Fen Park.

130.3 An offer from a private individual to install a water fountain in the Kensington Gardens fish pond – Cllr Breakspear will be able to give further information following a site meeting which will be taking place shortly.

131. Leaf clearance in the Town Council's parks and open spaces

Cllr Brooks raised a specific concern regarding the Great Eastern Linear Park. It is understood that Norse routinely carry out leaf clearance in the Town Council's parks, but not its open spaces. There would be an additional cost for services requested out of contract. Cllr Pearce proposed delegating authority to officers, in conjunction with Cllr Brooks, to assess whether leaf clearance is required at the Great Eastern Linear Park, and if so to arrange for clearance of the specific area highlighted by Cllr Brooks, with expenditure to be taken from the parks and open spaces earmarked reserve; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Cllr Brooks will take photographs of the area and send to officers.

132. An update on planned projects at Clarkes Lane

Cllr Barker has been liaising with the Deputy Clerk regarding a public survey. There has already been positive engagement with schools nearby. A meeting with the Ward Councillors has been scheduled for January.

133. Date of the next meeting

18 January 2022 18:30

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134. Items for the next Agenda and Close

It was requested that an item is added to consider how to involve more children and young adults with the Town Council's parks. The survey for Clarkes Lane will involve young people.

There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting 19:59.

135. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

18 January 2022