

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
Whitton Residents' Hall, Hawthorn Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9BB
17:30 on 15 June 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Jacqueline Hardie (Chair) and Andy Pearce

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)

1. Appointing the Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

Cllr Breakspear presided over the meeting for this item. Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Hardie for the position of Chair; seconded by Cllr Breakspear. Cllr Hardie nominated Cllr Pearce for the position of Chair; seconded by Cllr Brooks. The vote was taken in the order the nominations were made. Cllr Hardie received four votes and Cllr Pearce received one vote. Cllr Hardie was duly appointed as the Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee.

2. Welcome

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

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr John Pitts. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; four Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

4. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Breakspear declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items relating to Kensington Gardens. Cllr Hardie declared a local non-pecuniary interest in items relating to Fen Park. Cllrs Brooks and Pearce declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 12. Cllr Barker declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 13.2 (specifically the Britten Road play area).

5. The draft minutes of the meeting on 18 May 2021

Cllr Breakspear proposed approving the minutes of the meeting on 18 May 2021; seconded by Cllr Hardie; all in favour.

6. Public forum

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

7. Sub-Committee arrangements:

- 7.1 Membership of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee – The membership of the Sub-Committee was noted as those Councillors in attendance, plus Cllr Pitts.
- 7.2 Appointing the Deputy Chair of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee – Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Brooks as Deputy Chair; seconded by Cllr Breakspear. There were no other nominations and all Councillors voted in favour.
- 7.3 Reviewing and adopting the Terms of Reference of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee – The Terms of Reference had been reviewed ahead of the Annual Meeting, and had since been amended to reflect the Council's decision to delegate a budget to this Sub-Committee. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee to adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.
- 7.4 The delegated budget to the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee – This was noted,

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and is covered in the Terms of Reference.

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

- 8.1 Priorities for year one, including specifications for benches, bins and bicycle racks – The purchase of bins has been agreed. Full Council will be considering a proposal regarding the purchase of benches. In 2020 – 2021 there was an underspend from the parks development budget of approximately £39,000, which is being carried forward to this year's budget, plus an additional £36,000 in the parks development earmarked reserve. It has been proposed that the purchase of sixty five benches is progressed, subject to the purchase cost (including VAT) not exceeding the £39,000 underspend, and the installation cost not exceeding the £36,000 earmarked reserve. Expenditure for the bins will be taken from the 2021 – 2022 parks development budget. Cllr Pearce proposed supporting the recommendation regarding the purchase of benches; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. The five-year plan states that Leathes Ham is managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, but it is managed by Norse. Leathes Ham has not been transferred to the Town Council. It was agreed to discuss the provision of bicycle racks at a later date, once the purchase of bins and benches has been progressed.
- 8.2 Comments on the plans from the Friends of Kensington Gardens – June 2022 will mark the centenary of Kensington Gardens. The Council will need to start planning how this will be celebrated. The Friends Group were thanked for their input. It was noted that the Friends Group supported the ideas of a Kindertransport memorial bench, a Holocaust memorial lectern and associated planting in the Holocaust memorial garden. The Council has a budget for Holocaust Memorial Day and it is hoped the lecterns will be funded via District or County Councillors' locality funding. The Friends Group would like to see CCTV in the park. The Community Safety Committee is seeking input from all Councillors to identify sites which the Council should prioritise. It would be beneficial if the Friends Group could specify locations, and it was suggested Cllr Lang may be able to offer them some advice. It was noted that the Friends of Fen Park would also likely welcome similar advice. Information from East Suffolk Council about its provision of CCTV is pending. The Clerk has been researching options for solar powered CCTV. The cameras could be mobile and it is envisaged that monitoring could be arranged via a contract at Hamilton House, which could be live monitoring or just accessing recordings when required. The aspects of the five-year plan for Kensington Gardens which the Friends Group is happy with can go forward to the AID Committee and the costs considered. Drinking water fountains are not being progressed at this stage due concerns regarding legionella management. It is hoped that the Holocaust Memorial items can be progressed in time for Holocaust Memorial Day. Cllr Breakspear proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to progress the Kensington Gardens five-year plan items which the Friends Group supported; seconded by Cllr Hardie; all in favour.
- 8.3 Whether and how to develop a coastal sculpture trail – If progressed, it was suggested that this should be done through local artists. It would likely be a project that would develop over several years, and would incorporate the Town Council's parks and open spaces rather than the promenade itself. Cllr Pearce proposed carrying this item forward to August's agenda for ideas to be fed in and a discussion on how this could be progressed, including any consultation which would need to take place; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. It was agreed that Councillors who are members of Friends Groups would seek ideas from those Groups also.

9. Information boards and/or required signage for the Town Council's parks, including proposed designs for over-entrance archway signs

The Committee Clerk will re-circulate the document suggesting different types of signage, and the designs Cllr Taylor had created for the over-entrance archways. These can be adapted to suit individual parks, and it was suggested they could incorporate the Lowestoft

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coat of arms to tie in with the history of some of the parks. At the last meeting it was agreed to approach schools and colleges for their input on the designs. One responded positively initially but has not made further contact. The others have not yet responded. Quotations can be sought based on Cllr Taylor's design.

10. How the Town Council may be involved with the Queen's Green Canopy initiative

This is a national initiative in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and also ties in with item 11. The Council intends to progress tree planting as per the 2020 Tree Council awarded funding, as part of National Tree Week. The planting will be quite substantial and a budget has been agreed for ongoing maintenance. It was queried whether the two could be linked, and some of the Tree Council funded trees planted in the name of the Queen's Green Canopy. Cllr Pearce deferring items 10 and 11 to the next meeting, for officers to contact the Tree Council to state the Council's intention to plant the funded trees this year during National Tree Week, and to enquire whether the terms of the funding would allow a certain allocation of the trees to be designated to the Queen's Green Canopy. One condition of the Tree Council funding is that young people will be involved with the planting. Officers will re-circulate the plans put together for the Tree Council funded trees. All Councillors voted in favour of the proposal.

11. Progressing tree planting as per the 2020 Tree Council awarded funding

This was covered with the consideration of item 10.

12. The management of the Town Council's ponds, including oxygenation, de-silting and bank re-profiling

A meeting is being held shortly with a supplier of a product which aids de-silting. It is likely the Council will need to seek separate advice on the product, and some dredging may also be required. Cllr Pearce proposed that officers seek further advice on the measures required at the Fen Park and Gainsborough Drive ponds, and obtain preliminary quotations and timescales for dredging; seconded by Cllr Hardie; all in favour.

13. Play areas:

13.1 The provision of a path at the Stoven Close play area – One quotation has been received so far. Officers are seeking further quotations.

13.2 Options and costs for the refurbishment of the Sparrows Nest play area and improvements to the St Margaret's Plain and Britten Road play areas – The idea for the play area and planting in Sparrows Nest is an Alice in Wonderland theme. Improvements have been discussed for the St Margaret's Plain play area, which can be funded from the repairs and maintenance budget. Any painting will likely take place in the Spring. There had been some discussion about the mound in the St Margaret's Plain play area, but it is understood that children like to play on it as it is. The Committee Clerk is seeking quotations for a junior swing at St Margaret's Plain, and is approaching play equipment providers for a full package of play equipment at Sparrows Nest, including installation.

14. Alternative uses for the gate removed from The Ravine footpath

The gate was removed due to health and safety concerns and will cost approximately £700 to refurbish. It is understood there was a matching gate at the top of The Ravine which was removed some time ago. The gate may have some heritage value, but cannot be used in its current condition. Cllr Breakspear proposed that officers approach the college to see if they would be interested on working on the gate as part of a project with the Council. If so, the gate could be displayed in Belle Vue Park with a plaque and could form part of the sculpture

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trail as considered at item 8.3; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

15. A request from the Friends of Fen Park to install a noticeboard in Fen Park

The Friends of Fen Park have secured locality funding to purchase the noticeboard, and would be happy for the Town Council to display notices in it as well.

16. The security of Fen Park and the Britten Road play area, particularly regarding unauthorised vehicular access

Staggered barriers have been suggested for Fen Park, but the advice sought by officers states that they can be problematic for cyclists and mobility vehicles. Such barriers would not be effective at Britten Road as it is largely open space. The presence of CCTV could be a deterrent. The recruitment process for Community Wardens and Receptionist has been delayed due to the pandemic, but a meeting of the Personnel Committee will be arranged soon to discuss this, and the Clerk will meet with the Chair of the Committee before this. The delay has provided an opportunity for the job specifications to be reviewed.

17. The Ness:

17.1 Provision of a dog litter bag dispenser at The Ness – Cllr Breakspear has spoken with the provider, and will circulate photographs of where he thinks it would be most appropriate to install dispensers at The Ness. The provider has said they would be willing to fund two dispensers. Consideration would need to be given to how they would be installed, and advice could be sought from East Suffolk Council and the Project Manager. There was a concern that the dispensers do not encourage responsible dog ownership. The bags are biodegradable. It is understood the only cost to the Town Council would be the initial installation cost and the cost of refilling the bags. Locality funding may be available to support this. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting, and in the interim Cllr Breakspear will liaise with the Clerk regarding the specification of the bags.

17.2 Development of a coastal plant area – The North Denes is a mostly wild area which many appreciate. It has been suggested that areas of it could be used for coastal planting which changes with the seasons. If this progresses it may be able to incorporate some of the fenced off areas of The Ness. East Suffolk Council has a Licence to Occupy until November, which will be followed by a period of technical handover. Cllr Pearce proposed that between now and November, information is gathered about the type of plants which could be used and potential appropriate locations, in liaison with those with the relevant expertise. It was further proposed that this be incorporated into the five-year plans as a year two project, to be implemented in 2022 – 2023. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Barker and all Councillors voted in favour.

17.3 Road safety and the play area – There had been a concern that a family event usually held in Sparrows Nest in the Summer was to be moved to The Ness, but this is not the case. Most of the Town Council's play areas are enclosed. The Ness is not but the play area itself is some distance from the road and is generally aimed at older children. The Council will keep this under consideration.

18. Proposals from the Friends of Kensington Gardens with regard to issues concerning a 'pathway'

This was discussed at the last meeting. The Friends Group would like to use part of the area to install a wooden pergola. The Friends Group has produced a planting plan, which will be sent through, which aims to prevent children running through the garden itself. The plans will be considered once received.

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19. Date of the next meeting

20 July 2021 17:30 – Cllr Barker gave her apologies in advance for this meeting.

20. Items for the next Agenda and Close

An update on the refurbishment of the Sparrows Nest and Fen Park public conveniences was requested. A tender specification is being put together based on discussions already had by the Toilet Strategy Working Group and relevant Committees.

There were no confidential matters for consideration and the meeting was closed at 19:05.

21. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:

20 July 2021