

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
12:30 on 4 September 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Nasima Begum, Alan Green, Andy Pearce and Elise Youngman

In Attendance: Shona Bendix (Town Clerk), James Cox (Finance and Information Officer) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

1. To appoint the Chair of this Sub-Committee

Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Green as Chair of the Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr E Youngman; all in favour.

Deputy Chair also needed to be nominated in this meeting.

2. Welcome

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

3. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence from any Councillors not in attendance

Apologies were received from Cllrs Brooks and Parker with reasons provided.

Cllr Pearce proposed approval of Cllr Parker's apologies; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

For Cllr Brooks' apology no proposals were made, and the apology was not approved.

Cllr Begum was absent with no apologies provided.

Cllr E Youngman nominated herself as Deputy Chair; seconded by Cllr Green. It was noted that Cllr Parker also put himself forward as Deputy Chair but only if no other Councillor was nominated. A vote was held with all in favour of Cllr E Youngman who was appointed as Deputy Chair.

4. Declarations and dispensations

4.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – There were no declarations.

4.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

5. Public forum

An opportunity for the public to make comments on any matters on this agenda, and to consider any advance comments from the public – No members of the public were in attendance in person or via the webinar and no advanced comments had been received.

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6. **To review the 2023 – 2024 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves (some aspects may be confidential).**

Cllr Pearce requested that any budgets causing concern be notified to the Sub-Committee.

7. **To review the 2024 – 25 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves (some aspects may be confidential).**

It was agreed to review General Reserves at the next meeting.

Repair & Maintenance - The Town Hall would not be discussed in this meeting as officers were awaiting the results of the survey to inform costs for the remainder of the year.

The Finance and Information Officer confirmed the Repair & Maintenance was on target for the year. It was agreed to increase the 2024-2025 budget from £84,878 to £90,000.

Repair & Maintenance - Goods - This budget line covered regular supplies for grounds maintenance and it was agreed to keep it under review. This and the tarmacking budget line would be reviewed at a later meeting whilst the Finance and Information Officer seeks further information from the Facilities Maintenance Officer and the Parks and Community Officer.

Capital - The Finance and Information Officer suggested this budget be reviewed after the condition surveys have been completed. Cllr Pearce suggested a capital contribution be made to the Capital Reserve in 2024-2025. The Clerk explained the £50,000 budget for self-insurance accommodated any possible increase in legitimate claims where accidents occur.

Compliance - Certain amounts would need to be budgeted each year for when the next condition and tree surveys are due. The increase budget for legionella checks once the water butts have been installed in public areas could be allocated to the Water Improvement budget.

Consultancy & Health and Safety - The renewal of Health and Safety was due and the Clerk has requested quotes. It was suggested to maintain the platinum package until the grounds maintenance transition has been concluded. A breakdown of the renewals and indicative costs would be provided at the next meeting.

Consultancy & Health and Safety - Neighbourhood Plan - Confirmation was required on whether the current budget would be adequate for 2024.

Consultancy & Health and Safety - HR and payroll - In future this would be brought in-house and was not expected to be an appreciably different value. Currently there eighteen officers and the Clerk did not expect to exceed twenty officers, therefore the current HR figure may need to be updated to account for twenty staff members.

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Cllr Barker temporarily left the chamber at 13:01

If the Town Hall progresses and a team is set up for the project then the HR advice and Payroll budget lines would require an increase.

Cllr Barker returned to the chamber at 13:04

Community Safety - An item was requested for a future quarterly liaison meeting with East Suffolk Council to understand their strategy for CCTV and the liabilities associated with the Smart Towns initiative. After the quarterly liaison meeting on 15 September, an item would go on the next Community Safety agenda to consider CCTV options.

Community Safety - Defibrillator - This budget line showed no spend to date which was queried as there had been recent expenditure for two defibrillators. The Finance and Information Officer would check this.

Currently grounds maintenance officers carry phones and have a lone working system in place. The Clerk was asked to explore options for personal safety alarms.

Climate & Ecological - The travel budget included essential car user allowance for the year. No invoice had yet been received for extra street cleaning and officers were asked to follow this up. The Finance and Information Officer would review the three waste disposal budget lines and provide an update at a future meeting.

Parks and Open Spaces - The capital budget was increased to £45,000.

Parks and Open Spaces - Repair & Maintenance - The Finance and Information Officer confirmed the budget line was adequate, noting that the General Repair and Maintenance budget could be used if required.

Public conveniences - The priority for Sparrows Nest between toilet refurbishments and window replacement need to be discussed. The next toilet refurbishments in 2024-2025 also needs to be discussed.

Cllr E Youngman declared she works for the company who cleans the Town Council's toilets.

An item was requested for the October Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee agenda to make a recommendation on toilet refurbishments for 2024-2025, with indicative costs to be obtained so that this Sub-Committee can commence with the budgeting requirements.

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Cllr E Youngman temporarily left the chamber at 13:37

The Finance and Information Officer confirmed the remaining budget for 2023 was adequate and the current cost plus RPI would be adequate for 2024.

Cllr E Youngman returned to the chamber at 13:46

Horticulture - The tree inspections were ongoing at the time of the meeting and the pending report would inform the Sub-Committee of the appropriate budget for tree works.

An update on staffing costs was requested to inform the Sub-Committee of the required budget.

Horticulture - Watering Costs - This budget line would be reviewed at a future meeting whilst the Finance and Information Officer discusses it with the Facilities Maintenance Officer and the Parks and Community Officer, such as where the water bowsers are filled from. The bulb budget line was increased to £7,000.

8. Date of next meeting

11 September 2023 at 12:30 - It was agreed to hold the meetings on a weekly basis and then reduce the frequency as needed.

9. Items for the next agenda and close

- 10. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, namely any legal and employment issues relating to the matters on this agenda.**

The Chair closed the meeting at 13:59

Signed:
18 September 2023