

Lowestoft Town Council
Budget and Loan Council Meeting
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
12:30 on 30 October 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Alan Green (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Bernie Rappensberger and Elise Youngman (Deputy Chair)

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

61. Welcome

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

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Begum with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; six votes in favour and one vote against.

63. Declarations and dispensations

63.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr E Youngman declared she worked for the company who cleaned Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) owned toilets.

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

64. 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 and no advanced comments had been received.

65. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 2 October 2023, 9 October 2023 and 19 October 2023.

Cllr Pearce proposed the minutes of the 2 October and 9 October be approved; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

The minutes of the 19 October were in progress.

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

67. To review the 2024 – 2025 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves (some aspects may be confidential).

It was suggested to move the remainder of the meeting into confidential session and it was noted that this Sub-Committee had no delegations and would not make any decision in confidential session. The confidential session was required as the draft budget document included commercially and legally confidential information on contracts and leases. Recommendations would be made to Finance and Governance where the draft budget document would be shared publicly.

A query was raised on the necessity of moving into confidential session as contracts were often not discussed in the meeting, however it was explained that confidential information would be displayed on the screen throughout the meeting.

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68. Date of next meeting

6 November 2023 at 12:30

69. Items for the next agenda and close

Any items should be sent to the office.

70. 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.

Cllr Pearce proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; six votes in favour and one vote against.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 12:40

Cllr Pearce had worked through the budget document and brought suggestions for projects and items that were under active consideration. The document would be reviewed in this meeting.

General Reserves - Ring-fenced amounts had been suggested to cover the replacement of the cricket nets, the thatching for the Belle Vue cottage and the purchase of an electric vehicle.

Repairs and Maintenance - The document suggested to double the budget for gutter clearing in 2024-2025 to £10,000 to cover the Town Hall. This would also cover the facilities officers increasing the gutter cleaning schedules to spring and autumn. It was agreed to leave the provisional figure as £10,000 and review it once firmer costs for two annual cleans have been received.

Of the initial £25,000 budget for the Fencing and Walls budget line, £7,000 had been spent. Cllr Pearce clarified £18,000 would be carried forward and offset against the £25,000 budget and the £7,000 shortfall would be precepted. This budget line will need to be monitored.

Capital - As the reserves were challenged, Cllr Pearce suggested to precept £35,000 as a top-up to the Capital Reserves in 2024-2025 and earmark £20,000 to purchase a new ride-on mower, the expenditure of which would be subject to a purchase request from officers.

Compliance - The Energy Performance Certificate surveys were not budgeted for 2024 as they were valid for ten years. Legionella checks had been set at £9,000 to allow for the RPI increase and the installation of new water fountains that would require legionella checks. The Finance and Information Officer advised £12,445 for play inspections was too high and would check the appropriate figures. Of the anticipated year-end expenditure of £24,000, £20,000 would offset next year's budget and £13,000 to 14,000 would be precepted. This was a tentative year-end offset as actual year-end expenditure may be lower than anticipated.

Consultancy and Health & Safety - The 2024-2025 budget column for the HR & Payroll budget line needed to include the known contract costs with an allowance for inflation and a buffer to allow for ad hoc HR required.

Cllr Pearce explained the whole Consultancy & H&S budget line for 2024-2025 would be taken from reserves and nothing would be precepted.

Community Safety - The document recommended that the underspend from the £45,000

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budget line for Play Area Repairs & Maintenance be transferred to the main Play Areas budget and for the Community Safety Reserve be topped up to accommodate decisions on park security.

Climate and Ecological - £15,000 was suggested as a top-up figure for the main budget in 2024-2025. The Fuel and Travel Costs budget line had been increased to £10,500, based on the frequency of fuel usage claims and in expectation of an increase in 2024-2025.

£25,000 had been set for the year's Bulky Waste trial and on the basis that April to October 2024 would be covered by the 2023-2024 underspend, the current figure for the Bulky Waste budget line represented six months pro-rata and allowed for an RPI increase.

Cllr Rappensberger left the chamber at 13:50

The Chair closed the meeting at 14:00

Signed:
30 November 2023