

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
15:30 on 16 October 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Janet Craig, Paul Page (Chair), Andy Pearce and Deborah Ray (Deputy Chair - via zoom), and non-Councillors members Rachel Bunn and John Sillett

In Attendance: Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Public: One member of the public (in person)

77. Welcome

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

78. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

79. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

- 79.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllrs Barker and Brooks declared they were members of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and had both attended the conference in relation to item 84.3f. Cllr Craig declared she was an East Suffolk Councillor. Mr Sillett declared he was a member of East Suffolk Travel Association.
- 79.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

80. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 18 September 2023

Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Page; six in favour and one abstention as the member was absent from previous meeting.

81. 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 advanced comments had been received. The member of public notified the Committee that Hemsby had lost its beach and a film was due to be made on east coast erosion.

82. To monitor expenditure by this Committee from the climate emergency budget, under delegated authority

Cllr Pearce proposed, if the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership grant was approved by Full Council, the grant be allocated from the Climate and Ecological budget with no verification required from this Committee; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

83. To consider any matters to raise with Cllr Rachel Smith-Lyte (Cabinet Member for the Environment) or Cllr Caroline Topping (East Suffolk Council Leader with responsibility for Parish Liaison) and to receive feedback on any matter previously raised, including the following:

- 83.1. To consider the cross-party initiative by East Suffolk Council to tidy up hotspots across the region – It was agreed that Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) should support initiative. Whilst the Environmental Waste Group had previously initiated cross-community collaboration, going forward the Committee would focus on this new initiative,

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therefore Cllr Brooks, as chair of the Environmental Waste Group, would email its members to reach a consensus to formally disband the group.

84. To consider the following items on the agenda:

84.1. To consider the following in relation to the Earth Protector Town Status of Lowestoft Town Council and relevant actions:

84.1a. Sign the pledge for Plastic Free Communities as the Community Lead – LTC had been signed up and officers were awaiting receipt of the pledge that needed to be signed by the Committee.

84.2. To consider the natural environment with regards to Lowestoft's parks and open spaces and relevant actions:

84.2a. Approval of the budget allocation of £3,250 to the Water Improvement budget to fund a soakaway in Denes Oval, as requested by the Finance and Governance Committee – In order to reduce pressure on the Parks and Open Spaces budget, it had been suggested to allocate this expenditure to the Water Improvements budget. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the allocation; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

84.2b. Receive an update regarding the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership (confidential) – Cllr Pearce declared he was the LTC representative on the Partnership and would provide the update in confidential session.

84.3. To consider issues relating to the energy and water supply of the built environment of Lowestoft and relevant actions:

84.3a. To consider the installation of solar panels on the Martello building – This would be discussed in confidential session.

84.3b. Receive an update on a new energy supplier – Officers had provided initial data to a possible supplier and were awaiting a quote. Once received a meeting paper would be brought to the Committee with comparative costs for the current supplier.

84.3c. Receive an update on the water refill scheme – The Expression of Interest form had been submitted and officers were awaiting a response. Once the application has been approved and the corresponding information received, it would be brought back to the Committee to progress further.

84.3d. The costs for maintenance of water bottle refill stations – There were two options for the maintenance plan, the silver plan with costs of £269 per station per annum and the gold plan with costs of £449 per station per annum, there would also be a further monthly £72.56 charge for the Northumbrian Water Limited checks and topical cleans. It was suggested to hire the stations as a cost-effective measure, however the Committee agreed that the stations should be purchased and their usage monitored over the first year to determine potential roll-out to other sites. Cllr Brooks proposed LTC opt for the gold maintenance plan; seconded by Cllr Pearce. If the stations were subjected to any vandalism it would be noted and repaired. Cllr Pearce clarified his proposal would include vandalism reports as part of the first-year review, and officers could assess the insurability of the stations once installed. A vote was held on the proposal with all in favour. The Finance and Information Officer would ring-fence these fees against budget.

84.3e. Receive an update on water storage in parks – Officers had investigated providers used by other Town Councils and found units, at a cost of £30 to £80, and found that non-toxic treatments were also supplied for the units. The Committee agreed it should be the responsibility of officers to maintain the water butts, though access would be granted to any Friends Groups in the area.

Cllr Pearce proposed to proceed and order the water butts with a maximum budget of £400. Kensington Gardens would be the pilot site and input would be sought from the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee for future sites. The decision on number of

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butts and locations at Kensington Gardens was delegated to officers in conjunction with member of the committee. Cllr Brooks suggested Sparrow's Nest be included as a pilot site. Cllr Pearce amended his proposal to include Sparrows Nest and increased the maximum budget to £800, with the decision of the number of butts and locations within the parks delegated to officers. If further ancillary equipment is required post installation, this would be covered under the delegation to officers. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour. An item was requested for the next Allotments Sub-Committee meeting to consider these options for water storage.

- 84.3f. To receive feedback from a meeting attended by Cllrs Barker and Brooks regarding the accumulative impact of proposed energy projects on East Suffolk, and a possible invite to a speaker – The conference was well attended and raised several solutions regarding the proposed energy projects and how to transport offshore energy with minimal disruption to the land. Cllr Brooks proposed the conference speaker be invited to a meeting of this Committee to discuss the topic further with Councillors; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed East Suffolk Council be contacted, per item 83, to query their thoughts on the conference and if, as a primary authority, they feel it might have the support of the District Council; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

- 84.3g. A recommendation to Full Council to sign a Parish Councils letter requesting a visit from the Secretary of State concerning Sizewell C – Cllr Brooks proposed this letter be recommended to Full Council to sign; seconded by Cllr Pearce, who requested officers check the correct salutation for the Secretary of State on the letter; all in favour.

- 84.4. To consider public transport and alternative methods of travel and relevant actions:

- 84.4a. The provision of buses, with consideration of the state of bus stops and shelters – Mr Sillett requested this item be addressed by the Public Transport Working Group to have a comprehensive review of the subject and form a proposal to recommend to this Committee.

The Project and Committee clerk temporarily left the chamber at 16:43

Whilst attempts had been made in the past, the Committee noted bus shelters and their maintenance were not under LTC's jurisdiction.

The Project and Committee Clerk returned to the chamber at 16:46

- 84.4b. To consider the timescales for the purchase of an electric vehicle for officers – Whilst this would not be viable for the next twelve months, officers were asked to consider this internally.

Cllr Craig left the meeting at 16:53

Cllr Pearce proposed to not purchase a vehicle for the financial year 2024-2025 due to existing capital commitments and instead receive input from officers on their preferred timescales and type of vehicle, and if it was intended to replace the current vehicles with an electric vehicle. This feedback would be returned for further discussions and decision from this Committee and Full Council in time for the 2025-2026 budget rounds. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

- 84.4c. To note the Suffolk County Council Electric Vehicles Report – Officers were asked to consider the report and offer their opinion at a future meeting.

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84.5. To consider avenues of community engagement and relevant actions:

84.5a. Receive an update on the formation of a Lowestoft Pupils Climate Committee – Ms Bunn confirmed funding had been received to support student action and participation in sustainability and a further update would be provided at the next meeting. Engagement with Academy Schools and Trusts were more difficult as each trust had its own initiatives and expectations. The Big Green Week would be an opportunity to collaborate with the various groups and address concerns on the climate emergency. As Academy schools had been mentioned, Cllrs Pearce and Page declared they were on the School Committee of Roman Hill.

84.5b. Plans for the 'Big Green Weekend' for 2024 – Cllr Page suggested Friday 14 June be designated for a climate-themed school competition, with separate events on Saturday and Sunday. This would require a judging panel and a venue for the presentations, with the Orbis Centre previously explored. Ms Bunn would bring ideas to the next meeting, noting that the Energy Skills Centre could host the event and would approach renewable companies for sponsoring the event. It was requested to set this as the first item on the agenda.

Whilst this would remain as a standing item to receive updates, Cllr Pearce proposed any ongoing planning would continue between meetings under delegation to officers in conjunction with Councillors. Furthermore, a prize allocation would be considered for the competition and funded from Climate and Ecological budget. Ms Bunn seconded Cllr Pearce's proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

Ms Bunn left the meeting at 17:20

84.5c. Plant Based Councils – The initiative encouraged the provision of plant-based food when catering for meetings and events and the promotion of plant-based eating and its benefits. It was requested that this item be on the next agenda as Cllr Ray would provide a presentation on reduced meat consumption and its connection to reduced emissions. One member noted that meat-eating and animal farming was the largest contributor to climate change. Other members felt it was important to ensure all options, including plant-based, were catered for.

At 17:33 Cllr Barker proposed to suspend standing orders for fifteen minutes; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed to trial this initiative with any catering by LTC for meetings and events to be plant-based; seconded by Cllr Barker; four votes in favour and one abstention.

Mr Sillett left the meeting at 17:38

85. To review the decisions on this agenda from the perspective of nature

The Committee agreed nature had been considered in the decisions of this meeting.

86. Date of the next meeting

Monday 20 November - 15:30

87. Items for the next agenda and close

An item was requested to consider support for a local cycling group. An item was requested hear from a speaker on the Local Plan.

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- 88. 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 issues relating to the matters on this agenda**

Cllr Pearce proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session and to suspend standing orders for a further ten minutes; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved to confidential session at 17:42

A two-minute comfort break was taken at 17:43

Cllrs Barker and Page temporarily left the chamber at 17:43

Cllr Barker returned to the chamber at 17:45

Cllr Page returned to the chamber at 17:46

- 84.2b Receive an update regarding the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership (confidential) Kittiwake – Cllr Pearce provided a confidential update to the Committee.

- 84.3a To consider the installation of solar panels on the Martello building Solar panels – Cllr Pearce proposed this be considered on a non-committal basis to review the viability and costs and produce indicative proposals for the Town Council to consider, with grant funding from Hornsea Community Fund to be explored; seconded by Cllr Brooks.

The Chair closed the meeting at 17:54

Signed:

20 November 2023