

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:30 on 13 February 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce (Chair) and Bernadette Rappensberger

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Public: One member of the public was in attendance (in person)

136. Welcome

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

137. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Cllrs Begum, Coleby and Page were absent with no apologies received.

138. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

138.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Parker declared he was an East Suffolk Councillor and Vice-Chair of Gunton Residents Association. Cllr Pearce declared he was the Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) representative on the Lowestoft Kittiwake Partnership and the Chair of Gunton Residents Association.

138.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

139. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 16 January 2024

Cllr Brooks proposed approval subject to addition of the finance table as approved at the previous meeting; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

140. 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 – The member of the public spoke on item 144.2 and provided an update to the Committee on the SKYLINE project that had been funded by a previous grant application.

The member of the public also spoke on item 144.3 and thanked the Committee for their encouragement of the projects. The project had gained the attention of the National Archives who encouraged them to partner with an organisation to submit a grant application to expand on the project.

144.2 To receive an update from Ventura Cottage on the SKYLINE project

144.3 To receive a partnership request from Ventura Cottage

The Committee agreed to bring items 144.2 and 144.3 forward in the meeting. Cllr Pearce proposed to in principle express support for the partnership and hold a standalone meeting with the member of the public to discuss further; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour. Officers would schedule the meeting and extend an invite to the Town Hall Project Committee.

Cllr Parker temporarily left the chamber at 10:58

Cllr Parker returned to the chamber at 11:00

A decision would be made in March as the bids open in April 2024.

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:30 on 13 February 2024

141. To appoint an additional Bank Reconciliation Signatory

Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Rappensberger; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

142. Budget and Loan:

142.1. To monitor the budget for 2023 – An update had been received at the previous Full Council and the Finance Officers would provide the next update.

142.2. To note any bank reconciliations – November 2023 has been completed and December 2023 and January 2024 are in progress.

142.3. To consider the draft minutes and the appended confidential notes of the meetings on 20 November 2023 and 8 January 2024

142.4. To note minutes still to be considered pending completion:

142.4a. 4 December 2023, 11 December 2023 and 15 January 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed items 142.3 and 142.4a be deferred to March; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

143. Payments and Receipts:

143.1. To note the income and expenditure reports for January 2024 and February 2024 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the payment record up to 10th February 2024 and review the payment expenditure report on the return of the Finance Officer; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

143.2. To consider any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were no payments to approve.

144. Grants & Sponsorships

144.1. To consider the following grant applications:

144.1a. Lowestoft Foodbank - £1,500 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour. This would be allocated from the Food and Social Relief budget.

144.1b. The Hygiene Bank (Waveney Grassroots Project) - £1,500 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour. This would be allocated from the Food and Social Relief budget.

144.1c. First Light Festival - £5,000 – If approved this would not be funded from the Grants budget as it had a major events allocation.

A query was raised on whether Cllr Parker should remain in the chamber for this discussion as the festival is an East Suffolk Council backed project. The Acting Town Clerk advised Councillors to consider if they were pre-determined and if any East Suffolk Councillors had prior involvement with this application. Cllr Parker confirmed he had not been involved with this application as an East Suffolk Councillor and was not pre-determined.

Cllr Brooks proposed to refuse the application as the festival was not sustainable, there was no evidence of its benefit to Lowestoft and as the festival received enough financial support from other organisations. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal to reach a conclusion and the vote was held with one vote in favour, one vote against and two abstentions. As the vote was tied the Chair was used his casting vote to vote against the proposal.

Cllr Parker proposed to approve the grant as LTC had already set aside funding for the event, with a proviso that First Light be asked to update LTC on their plan and timescale to become a sustainable event and start making a direct contribution to the festival; seconded by Cllr Pearce; three votes in favour and

Lowestoft Town Council

Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 13 February 2024

one vote against.

- 144.1d. To receive a presentation from Project Apocalypse in relation to their grant application for £1,000 – The presenters were not in attendance and it was agreed to revisit this only if the office has been contacted by the organisation to reschedule the presentation.
- 144.2. To receive an update from Ventura Cottage on the SKYLINE project – This item was brought forward.
- 144.3. To receive a partnership request from Ventura Cottage – This item was brought forward.
- 144.4. To consider engagement with International Boatbuilding Training College to explore grant and sponsorship opportunities (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllr Pearce proposed the International Boatbuilding Training College be contacted officially through office to schedule a presentation to this Committee at a standalone meeting on possible funding or sponsorship opportunities, with any considerations to be brought back to this Committee; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 144.5. To consider engagement with the Excelsior Trust to explore grant and sponsorship opportunities (some aspects may be confidential) – Cllr Brooks proposed to recommend the approval of a sponsorship arrangement of £15,000, with the year one costs already set aside in the 2024-2025 budget, per year for three years to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

145. Marina Theatre:

- 145.1. To consider costs of servicing of equipment for Marina Theatre – This referred to the annual maintenance of the flying rig, the cost of which LTC was not aware of at the time of purchase. Cllr Brooks proposed to approve the cost; seconded by Cllr Parker. An amendment was requested for the supplier to invoice this to LTC in April 2024, which was accepted by Cllrs Brooks and Parker. A vote was held with all in favour.
- 145.2. To note the resolution of the Marina Theatre Project Committee regarding Party Wall Agreement with the Marina Centre (Cultural Quarter Redevelopment) and consider statutory requirements to appoint a surveyor – The Marina Theatre Project Committee, in conjunction with the Marina Theatre Trust, had resolved to not consent to the works, as concerns from the two parties had not been taken into account, and to not appoint a surveyor. The office had since been advised that under the Party Wall Act they were not able to refuse consent and the party wall survey needs to be enabled with a surveyor appointed. The Acting Clerk advised the Committee that the independent surveyor appointed by East Suffolk Council were completely impartial and recommended the Committee appoint the same surveyor. As this was a statutory duty and would be at no cost to LTC, Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the officer recommendation and opt for the surveyor appointed by East Suffolk Council; seconded by Cllr Brooks; three votes in favour and one abstention. The Acting Clerk confirmed this had been discussed with the Marina Theatre and the Trustees would be notified of this decision.

146. Other financial and governance matters, including:

- 146.1. To consider the following quotations recommended for approval by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee and review the budget allocation:
- 146.1a. Refurbishment of the Kensington Gardens bridge, within a maximum budget £7,970 – The Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee had approved up to £7,500 to be allocated from the Parks Development budget and requested this Committee approve the remaining £470. It was noted that this cost had already been ring-fenced in the 2024-2025 Waterways and Ponds budget. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the entire cost, noting that the 2024-2025 Waterways and Ponds budget was to be offset against the Earmarked Reserves so the works could proceed this financial year; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 146.2. Grounds Maintenance:

Lowestoft Town Council

Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 13 February 2024

- 146.2a. To receive an update on the expenditure against budget for the changes to grounds maintenance operations from 2023/2024, including areas where the budget may be challenged (some aspects may be confidential) – This would be reviewed with the Finance Officer.
- 146.2b. To consider reallocation of budget from Grounds Maintenance to General Reserves where express leasing provision has been made – Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the reallocation noting that the existing delegation to officers under the Grounds Maintenance budget for 2023-2024 had to be used to secure a vehicle lease and therefore a reallocation of funds from the Grounds Maintenance budget to the ring-fenced leasing provision within General Reserves; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 146.3. To consider changes to timetabling of the staffing budget (confidential) – To be discussed in confidential session.
- 146.4. To consider any staff terms and conditions (confidential) – To be discussed in confidential session.
- 146.5. To consider transfer of Arnold’s Bequest funds to the charity board’s newly created bank account – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 146.6. To receive an update regarding the pending condition survey on the Denes Oval clubhouse and using the findings of the survey to commission a schedule of works for refurbishment of the clubhouse (some aspects may be confidential) – An update on the status of the condition survey would be provided either at February Full Council or the March Finance and Governance meeting.
- 146.7. To consider the feasibility of a Public Works Loan in 2024 for the refurbishment of the Denes Oval wall and essential clubhouse repairs as discussed by the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee – This it was deferred to the next agenda as it was dependent on the outcome of item 146.6.
- 146.8. To receive an update regarding obtaining an updated prioritised and costed schedule of works for capital preventative repair work to a building in Sparrows Nest (some aspects may be confidential) – An updated surveyor report for the works was required, though it would need to note that the window replacement works have progressed, and it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.
- 146.9. To consider obtaining legal advice regarding planned demolition works and disturbance to nesting red listed Kittiwakes – Cllr Pearce proposed this issue be resolved through dialogue with East Suffolk Council to understand their mitigations to prevent disturbance of the nesting kittiwakes on the Marina Theatre building and to seek legal advice if it is required; seconded by Cllr Brooks; three votes in favour and one abstention.
- 146.10. To consider the merits of Lowestoft Town Council adopting a bespoke Code of Conduct – It was agreed to defer this item to the next agenda.
- 146.11. To consider the implementation of the Town Council’s IT Policy with regard to email correspondence – It was agreed to defer this item to the next agenda.

147. To review the following policies:

- 147.1. Appraisals
- 147.2. Environmental
- 147.3. Equality and Diversity
- 147.4. Financial Regulations
- 147.5. Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
- 147.6. Friends Group
- 147.7. Grant Awarding
- 147.8. Health and Safety
- 147.9. Heritage Plaques
- 147.10. Infrastructure Investment Plan
- 147.11. Investment

Lowestoft Town Council

Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

10:30 on 13 February 2024

147.12. IT

Concerns were raised that this was an inadequate way to resolve and it was suggested to convene a working group. Cllr Rappensberger offered to join the working group, if the meetings are held between 10:00 – 13:30. Cllr Pearce proposed a delegation to this working group to discuss and make a recommendation directly to February Full Council; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour. Numbers for membership would be considered at the Full Council meeting to ascertain if the Sub-Committee could be re-established.

148. To consider the Heads of Terms and lease for Unit 2 (some aspects may be confidential)

There was no update and it was agreed to defer this item to the next agenda.

149. To note all matters of outstanding legal work, set priorities and agree actions (some aspects may be confidential)

150. Date of the next meeting

12 March 2024 10:30

151. Items for the next agenda and close

Any items should be sent to the office.

152. 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 employment matters and legal issues relating to the matters on this agenda, including the following:

152.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required – Cllr Brooks proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 12:11

146.3. To consider changes to timetabling of the staffing budget (confidential)

The position of Asset Manager was originally budgeted to begin in October 2024. Cllr Pearce proposed to approve the recommendation to Full Council for the appointment to be brought forward, subject to Full Council approving the specification for recruitment; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

149. To note all matters of outstanding legal work, set priorities and agree actions (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate prioritisation of the legal work to the Acting Town Clerk, in conjunction with the consultant, subject to this prioritisation taking into account the risks of deferral and for this Committee to be updated on a monthly basis; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:14

Signed:

12 March 2024