

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
13:00 on 7 December 2023

MINUTES

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

In attendance: Sarah Foote (Deputy Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk)

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

65. Welcome

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

66. Approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jen Jones and Christian Newsome, with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr E. Youngman; all in favour.

67. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

67.1. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – Cllr E. Youngman declared a pecuniary interest in items relating to the Town Council’s cleaning contract.

67.2. Written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted -There were none. Regarding item 73, the Deputy Clerk advised that the Project and Committee Clerk would leave the room. The Deputy Clerk will stay to answer any questions then leave the room for the discussion.

68. The draft minutes of the meeting on 7 September 2023 and the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 23 November 2023

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes and confidential notes. Regarding the confidential note from the previous meeting at item 61, a policy for this is already in place and Cllr Pearce requested an amendment to the note to reflect this. Cllr Pearce seconded Cllr Brooks’ proposal, subject to requested amendment; all in favour.

69. Public forum

No advance comments had been received and there were no members of the public in attendance.

70. Policies:

70.1. Review of the following policies:

Cllr Green advised he had not reviewed the policies. Cllr Pearce advised a review of the Data Retention Policy may be required, following the recent Full Council decision regarding YouTube meeting recordings, and if the Town Council decides to keep the recordings publicly available for any longer than twelve months. Cllr Pearce suggested a review of the Lone Working Policy may be required in relation to the Town Council’s workshop premises. With regard to the Complaints, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, Cllr Brooks understood the time limits for resolution or for an update to be provided had been standardised (Cllr Pearce agreed the decision was to standardise this to ten working days), but this had not been reflected in all the relevant procedures. Cllr Barker noted the Data Protection and Retention Policies may require updating to reflect the Town Council’s new IT system and the recent Full Council decision about YouTube meeting recordings. Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation to the Finance and

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Governance Committee to adopt the listed policies, subject to the amendments being applied as discussed; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

70.1a. Code of Conduct

70.1b. Complaints Procedure

70.1c. Data Protection Policy

70.1d. Data Retention Policy

70.1e. Disciplinary Procedure

70.1f. Equality and Diversity Policy

70.1g. Grievance Procedure

70.1h. Health and Safety Policy

70.1i. Incident Reporting Procedure

70.1j. Lone Working Policy

- 70.2. How to enact the Equality and Diversity Policy – Cllr Brooks considered this would be a big task and would extend to all aspects of the Council, including training, recruitment, communication and accessibility of its assets and services. Cllr Barker considered the Council's commitment to equality and diversity is already covered in the policy, and is demonstrated through the Council's actions, including its communications, public events and accessibility. Cllr Pearce asked for consideration to be given to communication with harder to reach members of the community, and enabling participation by considering any barriers which may be preventing those who wish to become a Councillor in the future. Cllr Pearce proposed for the Policy Review Working Group to consider this item further and make recommendations back to this Committee; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 70.3. The appraisals process – Cllr Pearce requested the review of the appraisals process specifically with regard to the Council's transition to a three-tier staffing structure. In response to a query from Cllr Brooks, it was confirmed that Cllrs Barker and Green, as the Mayor and Chair of the Personnel Committee, had undertaken appraisals training, but their respective Deputies had not. Cllr Pearce noted that the training had taken place after the Clerk's appraisal had been completed, which was not the process Council had agreed. Cllr Brooks proposed that appraisals training for the Deputy Mayor and Deputy Chair of the Personnel Committee be arranged as soon as possible and ideally before the end of January; seconded by Cllr Pearce. It was agreed the training should be annual as the incumbents of these roles will change, and if they do not, refresher training should still be undertaken. Cllr Brooks amended her proposal to include that the incumbents should not be undertaking appraisals until they have completed their training; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

71. Responsibilities, job specifications and salary ranges for the following roles, and making recommendations to Full Council on whether or not to proceed (some aspects may be confidential):

71.1. Cleaning of public conveniences –

Cllr E. Youngman temporarily left the meeting 13:28 for the consideration of this item

The Deputy Clerk noted there was some contractually sensitive information regarding costs, which would need to be discussed during the confidential session.

The Deputy Clerk temporarily left the meeting 13:29

Cllr E. Youngman and the Deputy Clerk returned 13:29

Cllr E. Youngman was asked by Cllr Patience to disclose the name of the organisation she is employed by, and was advised by the Deputy Clerk that she did not have to disclose the information during the public session.

- 71.2. Workshop-based operative – This item had been requested by facilities staff during a meeting with the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee. The workshop required an increasing amount of preparatory time in the morning and it was considered a workshop-based operative would be beneficial to assist with this set-up, manage the

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building and be available to support the grounds maintenance staff. It was considered this would be a full-time position, with the same salary range as the grounds maintenance staff. Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation to Full Council to progress the recruitment of this position. Cllr Pearce seconded the proposal, on the basis this would be from April 2024 for budgeting purposes. Officers were asked to provide the salary range and job specification to the Full Council meeting. The vote was taken and six Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

- 71.3. Gardeners – Cllr Pearce clarified this role would be distinct from the grounds maintenance operatives, and would not be assigned to specific locations. It was suggested the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee could consider this further, however the agenda for the next meeting had already been published, and there was no delegation for that Sub-Committee to make recommendations directly to Full Council. Cllr Pearce proposed to refer this item to Full Council for consideration with no recommendation from this Committee. Cllr Patience considered the Green Book to define the role of gardeners. Cllr Brooks requested for this to be circulated and seconded Cllr Pearce’s proposal; six Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

72. The redistribution of the Asset Manager post responsibilities, and making a recommendation to Full Council on whether or not to fill the vacancy (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Pearce requested consideration of this item after 73.1 in confidential session.

73. The terms and conditions of staff (confidential), including the following:

To be considered during the confidential session.

- 73.1. Any interim staffing arrangements
- 73.2. Reviewing staff training and professional development
- 73.3. Pay reviews with effect from April 2024

74. An update from the Clerk on any staffing issues (confidential)

To be considered during the confidential session.

75. Date of the next meeting

4 January 2024 13:00.

76. Items for the next agenda and close

Councillors were advised to send any requests to the office.

Cllr Brooks proposed to move the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

77. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

- 77.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required

- 71.1. Cleaning of public conveniences –

Cllr E. Youngman temporarily left the meeting 13:54 for the consideration of this item

It was suggested officers could check whether the Town Council’s contractors are Real Living Wage employers and should do this routinely before contractors are appointed. There was a discussion regarding the current arrangements for cleaning public conveniences and the possibility of outsourcing or directly employing staff to cover this. Cllr Pearce proposed to delegate authority to officers to produce a job specification for two part-time employees, including the salary range and the cost of personal protective equipment; seconded by Cllr Barker; five Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

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Cllr E. Youngman returned 14:10

73.1. Any interim staffing arrangements -

The Project and Committee Clerk left the meeting 14:12 for the consideration of this item

A confidential update was provided by the Deputy Clerk.

Signed:

4 January 2024