

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:30 on 14 May 2024

MINUTES

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

In Attendance: James Cox (Finance and Information Officer) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Public: Two members of the public (in person)

178. Welcome

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

179. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Begum and Coleby with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

180. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

180.1. 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. Cllr Pearce declared he had prior knowledge of items 187.4 and 187.5 as a local ward councillor but has had no part in the project or application.

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

181. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 22 April 2024

Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

182. 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 – It was agreed that the member of public would speak on item 187.5 which would then be brought forward in the agenda.

The member of public spoke on the aims of the heritage project to present local heritage stories in a digital format to ensure the material was archived for posterity. To apply for the bid, they required a partner who were a recognised group to assist with the finances and asked Lowestoft Town Council be that partner.

Cllr Page entered the chamber at 10:38

On the question of longevity of the project should the original members be unable to continue the work, the Committee were assured the work could be taken on by other groups and a digital will with all passwords would be maintained.

187.5 To receive the notes and ratify the suggestions of the meeting with Ventura Cottage regarding a bid to the National Archives with Lowestoft Town Council as their partner - Cllr Pearce proposed to maintain the Committee's in-principle support with an item on the next agenda to review this. In the meantime, a meeting would be held with Ventura Cottage to finalise specific details such as the timeframe, finance details and risk management, another meeting would also be held with Ventura Cottage and the National Archives to establish details on grant eligibility. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

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Deliberations would need to be completed by the time the National Archives bid opens for four weeks on 25th June.

183. To consider the following items deferred from the previous meeting:

183.1. To consider the implementation of the Town Council's IT Policy with regard to email correspondence – This item had been received from the Personnel Committee regarding concerns on the exchange of information and opinions over email which should be dealt with at the meetings, and how this should be managed through the IT Policy.

It was suggested to either refer this matter to Full Council with no recommendation as it involves all Councillors, or all Councillors be asked to be mindful of the IT Policy.

Cllr Brooks proposed an item be on the next Full Council meeting to draw the attention of Councillors to the IT policy and ask they be mindful of the provisions in the policy regarding email usage; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

184. Budget and Loan:

184.1. To monitor the budget for 2023 – 2024, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – This item now related to the 2024-2025 budget. The budget document was currently confidential due to the inclusion of rent. It was agreed that a public version of the budget with legal items redacted would be discussed and implemented in the future.

184.2. To note any bank reconciliations – March has been completed and April was awaiting the close of year-end.

185. Payments and Receipts:

185.1. To note the income and expenditure reports for April 2024 and May 2024 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – The expenditure reports would be produced after the closure of year-end and would be circulated to Full Council.

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

186. Grants & Sponsorships

186.1. To note the receipt of the following grant applications and consider whether they require urgent consideration:

186.1a. St Luke's Whitton Pantry - £2,000 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

186.1b. Sunrise Film Festival - £5,000 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce who requested an amendment that it be subject to the confirmation of further funding being obtained and event application permissions being granted, with the half the budget to be allocated from the Grants budget and half from the Community Engagement budget, which was agreed. A vote was held with all in favour.

It was noted that grant applications were considered on a quarterly cycle, save those requiring urgent funding, to ensure there would be no shortage of funding by year-end.

187. Other financial and governance matters, including:

187.1. To note receipt of the 2024 NALC Model Finance Regulations and agree a timetable for consideration and adoption – Cllr Pearce proposed to recommend to Full Council the renewal of the existing finance regulations for two months (from the Annual General Meeting to July 2024), noting that it may be obsolete in parts, on the

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understanding that the new regulations, or revisions to the existing regulations, would have been considered and adopted in that timeframe; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

187.2. Grounds Maintenance:

Cllr Parker proposed when the Budget & Loan Sub-Committee meet for the 2025-2026 budget, that they work towards hiring our grounds maintenance services to other parishes. The proposal was note seconded and it was instead agreed for an item first go on the next Finance and Governance Committee (F&G) agenda to receive the feasibility of this from the Grounds Maintenance team with suggested timescales.

187.2a. To consider the cost and budget allocation for the service costs of grounds maintenance vehicles – Information on the cost of maintenance of the vehicles and machinery would be brought to the next F&G meeting to ascertain if additional funding needed to be ring-fenced in the budget.

187.2b. To consider the purchase of a quality second-hand van of transit size, or smaller, within a budget of £10,000 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce who requested an amendment that this be on the basis that the remainder of the £30,000 ring-fenced in General Reserves for vehicles be expanded by £5,000 and allocated at the £10,000 maximum budget with a delegation to officers to agree the specification and proceed with purchase within this budget. Cllr Brooks agreed to the amendment and a vote was held with all in favour.

187.2c. To consider the purchase of mowers for the sports facilities – The Grounds Maintenance team currently had four mowers approaching end-of-life and as six mowers were required for maintenance works an extra two needed to be urgently purchased at this time, with the remaining four replacements to be purchased next year.

A £10,000 had been set for each mower and a £20,000 budget had already been ring-fenced in the Capital Earmarked Reserves. Cllr Pearce proposed to authorise a £10,000 budget for one ride-on mower with a delegation to officers to purchase immediately if the need is urgent and for Full Council to approve the purchase of the second mower, otherwise the purchase of both mowers would go to May Full Council with the recommendation to approve the expenditure of £10,000 per mower from the ring-fenced budget with a delegation to officers to source and purchase the mowers. Cllr Brooks seconded with a request that the officers explore if there would be a cost benefit of buying both mowers together, which was accepted and added to the proposal. A vote was held with all in favour.

187.2d. To consider initial hire of an aerator and future purchase at a cost of £15,000-£20,000 – The Grounds Maintenance team were intending to hire equipment in autumn 2024 to undertake the works and consider purchase the following year therefore the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee would need to consider the budgets.

Cllr Pearce proposed officers provide a specification and indicative quote for purchase of the aerator in 2025-2026, plus alternative options such as hire and lease in year one, with the comparative costs to be considered by June F&G to make a recommendation to June Full Council.

Cllr Parker temporarily left the chamber at 11:41 and returned at 11:42

Cllr Rappensberger seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

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- 187.3. To consider approval of the expenditure and budget allocation of £1,236 for an ecology report for the Marina Theatre Project – Cllrs Brooks and Page declared they were members of Suffolk Wildlife Trust who may be commissioned for report. Cllr Pearce proposed the report be funded from the 2024-2025 Climate and Ecological Emergency budget on the basis that once the Towns Fund agreement has been signed the required funds would be drawn down to reimburse the cost; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.
- 187.4. To consider a recommendation to Full Council on grant and sponsorship opportunities with the International Boatbuilding Training College – Cllr Pearce proposed to provide in principle support, on the basis that the sponsored bursary would provide training for residents in the parish of Lowestoft, with a meeting to be arranged with the International Boatbuilding Training College to confirm what can be offered with the associated costs and start date of the bursary. This information would be provided at the next meeting in order to make a recommendation to Full Council in June. Cllr Parker seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.
- 187.5. To receive the notes and ratify the suggestions of the meeting with Ventura Cottage regarding a bid to the National Archives with Lowestoft Town Council as their partner – This item was considered at the beginning of the meeting.
- 187.6. To consider the Town Council submitting a planning application to sensitively recreate the original 100-year-old wall advertising at 127 High Street, Lowestoft or, alternatively, submitting a statement to highlight that a third party is undertaking this work on behalf of the council. East Suffolk Council's pre-planning application guidance refers – Ventura Cottage had submitted a grant to LTC for part-funding of a project to re-create signage on a third-party owned wall that faces onto the Triangle Market, which would be considered in June. East Suffolk Council had advised Ventura Cottage that to qualify for a fee exemption of the pre-planning application, then the application would need to be submitted by LTC, or LTC would need to confirm that this project was being carried out on LTC's behalf.

Cllr Pearce proposed officers contact East Suffolk Planning to confirm the LTC's in-principle support of the project, subject to the planning and ownership consents and funding being secured, and to clarify LTC had been approached to part-fund the project but had not commissioned the project and would not be delivering the project. As a potential part-funder and owner of the adjacent land that would benefit from public realm enhancements, LTC were in agreement for the application of pre-planning advice to be submitted in their name on the understanding that the project would only proceed if the planning and ownership consents and funding had been secured, if this would qualify for a fee exemption. Furthermore, if ESC confirmed this would not qualify for a fee exemption, then Ventura Cottage would be asked to submit a separate grant application to cover the cost of the pre-planning fee. This would be in addition to the main application to part-fund the project.

Cllr Parker would abstain from voting as he was a member of the East Suffolk Planning Committee.

Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with four in favour and one abstention.

188. Date of the next meeting

11 June 2024 10:30 – To be confirmed at the Annual General Meeting.

189. Items for the next agenda and close

No items were requested.

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190. 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:

190.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required – There were no resolutions.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:56

Signed:

18 June 2024