

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 16 July 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Paul Page, Andy Pearce (Chair) and Bernadette Rappensberger

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

The meeting commenced at 10:14 once a quorate number of Councillors were in attendance.

15. Welcome

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

16. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

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

17. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

17.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Begum declared she held the position of Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) Mayor in relation to items 25.2 and 25.3. Cllr Rappensberger declared she was the LTC representative on the Friends of Fen Park. Cllr Pearce declared he was a trustee of Disability Advice North East Suffolk but as the item was to receive and note a grant feedback form he would remain in the chamber but not participate in the discussion.

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

18. To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 24th June 2024

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

19. 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 and no members of the public were in attendance.

20. To review and adopt Committee arrangements:

20.1. To agree the meeting schedule – Cllr Brooks proposed to maintain the current schedule of the second Tuesday of the month at 10:30 as the majority could attend this time and all other options still resulted in members being unable to attend; seconded by Cllr Begum. Cllr Pearce requested the proposal be amended to a delegation to officers, in conjunction with the Finance and Governance Committee (F&G), to determine if the schedule needed to be moved to the third or fourth Tuesday of the month, depending on feedback from Committee members. The amendment was accepted and a vote was held with all in favour.

20.2. To note the appointment of Cllrs Blowers and Ray as substitute members of the Committee – This was noted.

21. Budget and Loan:

21.1. To monitor the budget for 2024 – 2025, including delegated Committee and Sub-Committee budgets – There were no comments.

21.2. To note any bank reconciliations – May 2024 reconciliations were with Cllr Page for review and June 2024 reconciliations were underway.

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10:00 on 16 July 2024

22. To consider a recommendation to Full Council on whether to reinstate the Standing Orders and Policies Working Group as a Sub-Committee

Cllr Brooks proposed the working group be reinstated as a Sub-Committee to give the group more status with regularly scheduled meetings and official minutes. The proposal was not seconded.

Cllr Page entered the chamber at 10:27

It was noted that should it be made a Sub-Committee it would then be subject to rules of quorum, which may impede the group from conducting business.

Cllr Pearce proposed at the next meeting of the working group its members decide if it would like to change to a Sub-Committee and make that recommendation to F&G; seconded by Cllr Begum; all in favour.

23. Payments and Receipts:

23.1. To note the income and expenditure reports for June 2024 and July 2024 to date, including payments made under delegated authority (see schedules) – There were no comments.

23.2. To consider any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were no payments for approval.

24. Grants and Sponsorships

24.1. To note the received grant applications and consider whether they require urgent consideration:

24.1a. F.I.S.H - £1,500 – Cllr Rappensberger proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

24.1b. Lowestoft Town Tennis & Pickleball Club - £1,144 – Cllr Begum proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

24.1c. The Parochial Church Council of St Peter & St John - £2,000 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval. Cllr Pearce requested the proposal be amended with the food element to be allocated from the Food and Social Relief budget and the lockable storage be allocated from the Grants budget. Cllr Brooks accepted the amendment; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

24.1d. Footprints Pantry - £1,500 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval subject to receiving a signed constitution; seconded by Cllr Begum; all in favour.

24.1e. Pakefield Community Group - £1,200 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

24.1f. Friends of Fen Park - £100 – Cllr Brooks proposed approval and recommended the group consider using recyclable paper and engaging a local printer, as Lowestoft Town Council had declared a climate emergency; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

24.2. To consider the received grant application feedback form:

24.2a. Disability Advice North East Suffolk – This was noted.

25. To consider the following recommendations from the Standing Orders Working Group and consider a recommendation to Full Council:

25.1. If Committees rather than Full Council will elect their own chairs from May 2025 – Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation be made for Committees to choose their own chair; seconded by Cllr Page; two votes in favour; two votes against and one abstention. The Chair used his casting vote against the proposal.

Cllr Begum proposed to continue with the election of chairs at the Annual General Meeting of Lowestoft Town Council; seconded by Cllr Pearce; three votes in favour; two

Lowestoft Town Council

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votes against. It was requested this item be referred to Full Council.

- 25.2. If the Mayor should make an application statement before the vote from May 2025 – Cllr Brooks proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council for the Mayor to submit an application statement before the vote for Mayor as it would be good practice and more transparent; seconded by Cllr Page; two votes in favour, two votes against and one abstention. The Chair used his casting vote against the proposal. It was requested this item be referred to Full Council.
- 25.3. If the Mayor and Deputy Mayor should divide responsibilities, including public engagements and workload such as writing press articles for Journal – It was agreed to leave the decisions on workload and responsibilities to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and officers.

26. Other financial and governance matters, including:

- 26.1. To consider the internal audit report for the year ending 31 March 2024 and any matters arising – Officers were reviewing the recommended actions and would provide them to this Committee for consideration.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the chamber at 11:11

Cllr Brooks returned to the chamber at 11:12

- 26.2. To consider adoption of the updated financial regulations – The Acting Town Clerk suggested a one-off working group meeting be arranged to review the draft and make a recommendation to Full Council in July. Cllr Pearce proposed to endorse the Acting Town Clerk's recommendation and arrange a one-session working group meeting with a delegation to officers, in conjunction with members of F&G, to make a recommendation to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.
- 26.3. To consider ring-fencing an additional £10,000 food and social relief funding for the 2024-2025 financial year, in anticipation of both increased need and loss of funding elsewhere – Lowestoft Rising, the key organisation for food funding, has ceased operation and their responsibilities have moved to Community Action Suffolk. Furthermore, it is expected that the central government financial aid to local charities, including the Bloodmoor operation, would cease in September 2024. In light of these closures, the LTC Food and Social Relief budget has been reviewed to consider how to manage the possible influx of food and social relief funding requests. It was suggested to ring-fence an additional £10,000 in the budget to help offset the loss of central government funding. Cllr Brooks proposed to approve ring-fencing an extra £10,000 in the budget; seconded by Cllr Begum; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation be made to Full Council to contact the local MP and request they make representation in government on food relief, or ask if government would consider deferring the immediate withdrawal of central government food relief funding this September before an adequate replacement is decided, to ensure it does not trigger a local crisis; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

The Finance and Information Officer temporarily left the chamber at 11:27

- 26.4. To consider a request to the Budget & Loan Sub-Committee to consider setting the LTC Food and Social Relief budget at a minimum of £25,000 in the 2025-2026 budget to be recommended to Full Council – Cllr Begum proposed the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee be asked to consider increasing Lowestoft Town Council's annual budget on food and social relief, acknowledging that the situation was fluid and there may be changes in the central government position that may change the need for these considerations; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

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The Finance and Information Officer returned to the chamber at 11:30

- 26.5. To consider a maximum budget for CCTV provision – It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting and receive quotes on CCTV provision to Fen Park.
- 26.6. To consider the budget allocation for the first year of sponsorship for the International Boatbuilding Training College – The first-year cost of £17,950 had not been expressly budgeted for this year. Cllr Pearce proposed the £17,950 be funded with £10,000 from the Events budget (originally ring-fenced for Heritage Open Days who would not require a grant from the Events budget this year), and the remaining £7,950 be split equally between the Grants budget, Community Engagement budget and the Arts and Heritage Reserve (as the funds would support education of traditional skills); seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.
- 26.7. To consider options and costs for a temporary heating solution for the Marina Theatre from October 2024 – April 2025 – Officers were seeking further information and if received in time would be provided to Full Council in July.
- 26.8. To consider a maximum budget for potential works on a Lowestoft Town Council building asset (confidential) – To be discussed in confidential session.
- 26.9. To consider matters relating to office rental charges (confidential) – To be discussed in confidential session.

27. Date of the next meeting

The meeting would provisionally remain scheduled for the 13th August 10:30, unless the polls on availability indicated a need to move to a different Tuesday. Cllr Begum tendered her apologies for the meeting should it proceed on 13th August.

28. Items for the next agenda and close

No items were requested for the next agenda.

29. 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:

- 29.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required – Cllr Begum 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 11:35

- 26.8. To consider a maximum budget for potential works on a Lowestoft Town Council building asset (confidential) – A maximum budget for an assets was discussed and a confidential proposal was made by Cllr Pearce; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.
- 26.9. To consider matters relating to office rental charges (confidential) – An update on matters relating to officer rental charges was discussed.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11:57

Signed:

13 August 2024