

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
19:00 on 20 August 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Robert Breakspear, Wendy Brooks, Christine Moore, Andy Pearce, Bernadette Rappensberger (Deputy Chair), Deborah Ray and Elise Youngman (Chair)

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

34. Welcome

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

35. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Coleby, Murray and Pitts with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

36. Declarations of Interests and Dispensations

36.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllrs Brooks and Ray declared they were members of Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Cllr Breakspear declared he was Chair of the Friends of Kensington Gardens.

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

37. To consider the draft minutes of the meetings on 16 July 2024

Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

38. 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.

39. To monitor expenditure by this Sub-Committee from its delegated budget

There were no items of expenditure from the last meeting. An item was requested for the next Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee to agree expenditure for annual bulb planting and consider if any delegations were required.

40. To receive an update on the order of bike racks, benches and parks signs

The ordering of bike racks, benches and park signs had been agreed in 2023 and it was queried why there had been a delay in ordering the products. The Project and Committee Clerk confirmed the bike racks had been ordered and the benches and park signs would be ordered and installed when the Grounds Maintenance team had availability in their schedule, and there was a lack of storage space for these items, which restricted how far in advance of the installation works they could be ordered. The Sub-Committee requested if there was an issue of officer availability to install the products then it should be brought back to the appropriate committee to address.

Kensington Gardens was not on the list of bike racks and it was queried if they had been approved. Officers confirmed it had not been approved when the locations for the bike had been agreed at the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 18 April 2023.

Lowestoft Town Council

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Cllr Breakspear proposed Kensington Gardens be added to the list; seconded by Cllr Brooks. Cllr Breakspear amended his proposal to specify there be two bike racks installed by the café and another set of two bike racks installed by the entrance near the boating lake; Cllr Brooks seconded the amendment; all in favour.

An item was requested on the next agenda to receive an update on the St Margaret's play area sign.

41. To consider the installation of a duck food dispenser in Kensington Gardens

Cllr Brooks suggested Cllr Breakspear not be involved in this debate due to his interest as the Chair of Friends of Kensington Gardens. Cllr Breakspear assured the Sub-Committee he would only provide them context on the situation and explained the group had been approached by a company who provide these dispensers.

Issues were raised on feeding the ducks, noting that Suffolk Wildlife Trust advised people to not feed ducks as it affects the ecology of the pond. It was also suggested that the requirement of payment to use may discourage people from using the facility. It was confirmed there would be no charge to the council.

Cllr Brooks requested it be recorded that it was inappropriate for Cllr Breakspear, as the Chair of Friends of Kensington Gardens, to be involved in this discussion.

Cllr Brooks proposed to not support the installation of the dispenser as it was against the sentiments of Lowestoft Town Council's Pond Policy which, when being formed, had discussed the desire to discourage the feeding of wildlife. Cllr Pearce noted that was not in the Pond Policy and therefore the installation of the dispenser would not be a breach. The proposal was not seconded.

Officers had contacted Norwich City Council for feedback on the food dispenser they had installed, though no response had been received at the time of the meeting.

Cllr Rappensberger proposed this item be deferred until feedback has been received from Norwich City Council; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

42. To consider the inclusion of 'Happy to Chat' benches in parks to reduce loneliness and improve mental health

The Sub-Committee confirmed a 'Happy to Chat' bench had been installed in Kensington Gardens by East Suffolk Council (ESC), who officers could approach for feedback on the success of the bench.

Rather than buying new benches, 'Happy to Chat' signs could be added to existing benches. It was suggested to have one in each park.

It was agreed to defer this item until further research has been undertaken and feedback has been received from ESC.

43. Date of the next meeting

43.1. To consider scheduling an extraordinary meeting in September due to officer availability – It was agreed to re-arrange the meeting as an extraordinary meeting and the 10th September 2024 was suggested. The Sub-Committee requested a poll be sent out to all members to agree on a date.

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44. Items for the next Agenda and Close

To consider setting up a new working group to support the new Sports Development Officer in developing sports in Lowestoft. Alternatively, this could be included in the remit of this Sub-Committee.

45. 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

There were no resolutions.

The Chair closed the meeting at 19:40

Signed:

17 September 2024