

# Lowestoft Town Council Report for 2023/24

Lowestoft Town Council currently has 19 councillors with elections for the vacancy in Kirkley Ward taking place on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024.

2023/24 has been a busy year with the Town Council taking grounds maintenance in-house and the continuation of major projects such as the Town Hall Regeneration and Marina Theatre Improvements.

## **Caring for our Environment and Improving Health**

Lowestoft Town Council is very proud of its parks and open spaces. In 2023 Lowestoft Town Council took its grounds maintenance services in-house. In this time, the grounds and buildings maintenance team has grown from two staff members to twelve who have enabled the Town Council to maintain and enhance its many assets.

The Town Council is continuing its work to address the climate and ecological emergencies. This includes raising awareness of the effects of climate change in Lowestoft and through changes in how it works to ensure sustainability is at its core.

In 2023, the Town Council began a new “bulky waste scheme” to help to reduce fly-tipping and restore pride in the town. The scheme, run in partnership with Ace Clearance, offers free-to-access collection of bulky waste items that would normally be fly-tipped and aims to recycle or reuse as many of the items as they can. The scheme has been running since November 2023 and has been fully booked each month.

## **Investing in Lowestoft**

Bringing the Town Hall back into community use has been a major ongoing project for the Town Council since its inception in 2017. In September 2023, the project was awarded £3,257,512 in second stage funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund which, alongside other funding and a public works loan, has enabled the project to move into the delivery stage. Following the granting of planning permission in November 2023, work on the building is expected to start later in 2024.

The past twelve months has also seen major investment in our parks with new play equipment opened in Sparrows Nest Gardens, Rosedale Park, Normanston Park and Cotman Close. In the future, improvements to other play areas and parks have been budgeted for plans agreed for Thirlmere Walk and Pakefield Green. The Town Council has also invested in refurbishing public toilets with the facilities at Pakefield Street and Fen Park. The facilities at Triangle Market are also being refurbished as part of our ongoing work to improve the Triangle Market area.

The Town Council continues to provide free access to its sports facilities. This includes the use of its tennis courts, putting green and bowling greens. The tennis courts in Denes Oval, Kensington Gardens and Normanston Park have been part of a national programme of parks tennis upgrades, in partnership with the LTA. These improvement works will ensure that the residents and visitors to Lowestoft will be able to have free access to high-quality facilities. Work on these improvements should be completed by mid-May when a new online booking system will be made active. We hope that this significant investment in local facilities by both the Town Council and the LTA will be enjoyed by all.

Despite all the investment and provision of facilities, it is disappointing to report on continued vandalism several in park. Repairing the damage from these acts of vandalism take resources away from making improvements elsewhere.

## **Bringing People Together**

Over the year, Lowestoft Town Council has been responsible for organising many successful free-to-access events in the town. 2023 saw Lowestoft’s first ever “Pride” event, Britain’s Most-Easterly Pride, alongside the Town Council’s most successful Black History Month Art & Writing Competition to date. Both events, which aim to champion different communities within the Town, will be hoping to be successful when they return in 2024.

The Town Council also joined with the national celebrations of the Coronation of King Charles III with a “Coronation Concert” in Sparrows Nest Gardens. Future national celebrations and commemorations include the D-Day 80 Anniversary event in June 2024.

Lowestoft Town Council is also responsible for many memorial events throughout the year. These include the annual commemorations of Remembrance Sunday and Holocaust Memorial Day; both being very well attended.

Lowestoft Town Council would like to thank everyone who has been involved in organising and contributing to events over the past year.

### **Supporting and Engaging with the Community**

Lowestoft Town Council aims to listen to the needs of the community it serves, supporting important causes and events. Through our grant awarding scheme, the Town Council has supported a wide range of events and initiatives that bring some benefit to the people of Lowestoft with nearly £60,000 in grant funding awarded to 30 different organisations.

Engaging with the community is an important part of the Town Council’s remit. Over the year, the Town Council has asked for public comments on a range of topics – from the Neighbourhood Development Plan proposals to future ideas for improving sports provision within the town. There are many opportunities for members of the public to engage with and contribute to the work of the Town Council. If you would like to contribute your views or ideas for consideration, please contact the Town Council via email or telephone.