

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
12:30pm on Tuesday 22 November 2022

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Wendy Brooks (Deputy Chair), Alan Green (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce and Sonia Barker

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Town Clerk), James Cox (Finance and Information Officer) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

122. Welcome.

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

123. Approval of apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Youngman for absence or lateness, with reasons provided. Cllr Parker proposed acceptance; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

124. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

124.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda
Cllr Parker declared he is Deputy Chair of the Gunton Residents Association.

124.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted
None were received.

Cllrs Pearce and Brooks arrived in the chamber at 12:33PM

125. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 24 October 2022, 1 November 2022, 8 November, 15 November and 18 November.

It was confirmed 24 October and 1 November were received. Cllr Brooks proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

126. 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 comments were received.

127. To review the 2022 – 2023 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves (some aspects may be confidential).

To be discussed in confidential session.

128. To review the 2023 – 2024 Lowestoft Town Council Budget and reserves including the following (some aspects may be confidential).

To be discussed in confidential session

129. Date of the next meeting

29 November 12:30

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130. **Items for the next Agenda and Close.**

131. **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.**

Cllr Pearce proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 12:39

The Town Clerk temporarily left the chamber at 12:48

The Town Clerk returned to the chamber at 12:49

Horticulture: It was noted on the old template this year's budget of £13,600 plus RPI was split as £1,000 plus RPI for mulching and £12,600 plus RPI for planting and watering. It was suggested the latter could be split and have a specific watering budget going forward – particularly with the climate emergency and cost of utilities considered. It was requested for this year the £15,409 be split between planting and mulching and for the mulch reimbursement to be removed from this year's mulching budget and be allocated specifically against mulching. It was confirmed the total Horticulture budget for this year is £14,008 with £6,200 spent. Of the anticipated year-end underspend of £7,718.27, it was suggested, since there would be less horticulture work to do from January to March, £5,000 be offset against the 2023-2024 budget.

Play Areas: It was confirmed the anticipated year-end underspend for Play Areas and CIL is £73,000 and £16,000 respectively. It was noted the Play Areas proposal recommended using the Play Areas and CIL underspend for the refurbishments. It was suggested to use £89,000 for the first two park refurbishments in 2022-2023 rather than 2023-2024, provided it doesn't exceed the £89,000. It was acknowledged a discussion was needed regarding the other four parks in 2024-2025 and if they can be brought forward to 2023-2024.

Regarding the request for a Play Area Repair budget of £108,000 (calculated as an average per site, multiplied by the number of sites with multi-use games areas and gyms treated as separate sites), it was confirmed quotes were being sorted and once received can be factored into the Play Areas or Consultancy budget. It was noted the total budget would be spent according to the needs of each site, with the average per site calculated as £400 per site per quarter for routine and minor repairs, and a minimum of £5,000 per annum per site for major repairs. It was remarked that the document required clarifying with the costs refined, including the external costs.

Cllr Pearce suggested the Sub-Committee agree to allow an annual repair bill, however a specific amount should not be approved at November Full Council. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee and F&G Committee will then review this and create a proposal as part of the budget recommendation to Full Council in December with the budget allocation.

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It was confirmed the Repair and Maintenance budget currently covers Play Areas.

It was suggested restoring or renovating park equipment be part of the Repairs and Maintenance and the Town Clerk confirmed this was considered in the prioritising of parks for refurbishment. It was recommended more information should be gathered on costs to re-paint play areas, put new matting in and it was requested the Sub-Committee be provided further details on this before the next meeting.

It was queried if the Council paid to upgrade the software and maintenance of the equipment on the adult gym equipment at Whitton Green and Normanston Park, and where the funding was allocated. It was requested the Town Clerk check the cost.

It was confirmed there are twenty-four total sites. It was commented the Sub-Committee may reconsider the £6,600 per site figure as the total would be £158,400.

Cllr Pearce proposed, at the Full Council meeting, to approve the re-prioritisation of the refurbishment order and approve the first two (Normanston Park and Cotmon Close) scheduled for 2023-2024 be brought forward to 2022-2023 and use the £89,000 underspend. Then discuss further in December if the other four refurbishments scheduled for 2024-2025 can be recommended to bring forward to 2023-2024, whether they can be funded, agree which year they are refurbished and budget accordingly. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed the repair bill be accepted in principal, with figures subject to revision by staff, and decide in December the budget allocation to form part of the final budget recommendation to Full Council in December; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

It was noted there was a recommendation in the report to have an annual Training budget for play inspections of £1,000 to accumulate each year. Cllr Pearce queried if there should be a ring fenced amount in the Training budget for play areas and have it started off with £1,000 for 2023-2024. The Town Clerk confirmed costs for contractors should be received for December and Cllr Pearce suggested, once the external consultant contractor costs are received, they be factored in as explicit costs rather than taken from the Refurbishment and Maintenance budget.

Belle Vue Park: Cllr Pearce proposed offsetting the 2023-2024 budget with the year-end underspend, less rental income; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

Sparrows Nest: Cllr Pearce proposed the £20,000 for drainage be reallocated against Parks and Open Spaces Earmarked Reserve (EMR); seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

It was confirmed all grounds maintenance costs would be addressed in December

Kensington Gardens: It was agreed to leave the underspend of £1,800 and build up a reserve.

Fen Park: It was remarked the only cost is grounds maintenance and Cllr Pearce suggested to leave the year-end reserve. It was confirmed £21,000 was budgeted in the grounds maintenance in anticipation of operational toilets for 2023-2024.

Community Halls: It was previously decided to put money aside for capital works and there is currently £25,000 and the same would be budgeted next year as a provisional figure. Cllr

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Pearce proposed a budget of £12,500 for the Capital EMR for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

The Town Clerk confirmed from an earlier point raised, that the rose bed in Belle Vue Park was been planted and the James Paget will liaise with the Council on an opening event. It was noted this will be on an update rather than an agenda.

The Town Clerk left the chamber at 13:58

The Chair closed the meeting at 14:05

Signed:

9 January 2023

