

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
15:00 on 19 October 2022

MINUTES

94. Welcome

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

95. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Page and Green. Approval of acceptance was proposed by Cllr Parker, seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

96. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

96.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda

Cllr Barker declared an interest as a member of the Town Hall Project Board, Marina Theatre quarterly meeting and, as Chair of the Personnel Committee, agenda items 101.1 and 102.2

Cllr Parker declared an interest as Vice Chair of the Gunton Residents Association

Cllr Pearce declared an interest as a member of the Town Hall Project Board, Marina Theatre quarterly meeting, and as Chair of the Gunton Residents Association.

96.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and note dispensations granted

There were none.

97. To consider the draft minutes and appended confidential notes of the meetings on 26 September, 10 October and 11 October 2022

It was proposed by Cllr Brooks; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour to approve the minutes of 26 September and the confidential note. Approval of the minutes of 10 and 11 October 2022 were deferred to the next meeting.

98. Public forum

There were no members of the public present and no comments had been provided.

99. Grants

99.1. To consider a time-sensitive grant application from the YMCA Trinity Group for £500 – it was noted that this item had been withdrawn by the applicant.

100. Town Hall

100.1. To consider the income shortfall for the Town Hall development (confidential)

Cllr Pearce provided information on the three funding stream currently available for the project and how the Town Council had agreed, in principle, to meet budget shortfall through a public works loan board loan. Given the construction costs and inflation had increased there was now a project shortfall and this would need to be considered. This information was provided for information only and Full Council would consider further and a detailed paper was being provided to Full Council from the Town Hall Project Manager.

100.2. To assess and consider the Town Hall capital funding requirements during 2023 – 2024, including project expenditure not covered by grant funding (confidential)

It was agreed to defer this item to the November meeting as consideration was currently being given by the Budget and Loan Sub Committee.

101. Marina Theatre

101.1. To consider any unbudgeted capital funding requirements for the current financial year
Safety issues around heating and ventilation were understood not to be relevant to the current financial year and would be taken from 2023/24 if it was agreed to proceed. Quotes for the lighting upgrade (staging and auditorium) had been considered in terms of energy efficiency and moving lighting to LED. It was understood that the estimated cost of lighting for this December would be four times higher than this time last year. The combined cost of both works was £40k but had not been accommodated in this year's budget. The capital budget had been earmarked for the first tranche of the flying rig. If lighting improvements were to proceed these works were to proceed the funds would need to be taken from reserves and recovered. It was understood that the new lighting would bring both energy

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and cost savings for the theatre. Cllr Brooks proposed support of the capital expenditure due to the savings raised in both of the above points, seconded by Cllr Barker. Cllr Pearce asked if the proposal was approved by Full Council it should then be delegated to Budget and Loan and to consider and for November meeting of this committee to approval budget allocation. All were in favour.

- 101.2. To consider capital funding requirements during 2023 – 2024 (some aspects may be confidential)

Cllr Pearce proposed that this item should be examined in detail by Budget and Loan, seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

- 101.3. To receive an update on progress with the new lease (some aspects may be confidential)

The Clerk reported that a draft was expected for consideration at Full Council on 24 October. Cllr Brooks relayed that wishes of the Marina Theatre Trust to also view the draft before full Council but it was felt this may not be possible due to time constraints. Cllr Pearce proposed, in principle, and assuming the lease was received before Full Council, that Full Council was asked for a delegation to the Clerk, in conjunction with members of this committee to consider lease with Marina Theatre Trust and agree final text of lease. Seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

102. Other financial and governance matters, including:

- 102.1. To consider the budgetary allocation for any further recruitment

The Clerk was keen to progress the recruitment of the Asset Management role within the salary scale range of £30,984 to £39,571 plus the additional on cost of employment. Cllr Brooks asked if some media were more effective than others for recruitment advertising and suggested that the advertisement should be placed in industry magazines to obtain national coverage. Cllr Pearce, subject to recruitment being approved by Full Council, proposed an advertising budget of £4,500 to be managed via the Personnel Committee, seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. Cllr Pearce noted that due to impending contractual changes in grounds maintenance any pro rata savings in 2023/24 may be used to offset the additional salary cost of Asset Manager and that once Personnel Committee and Full Council had considered these matters.

At 2.36 there was a short break in the meeting and Cllr Brooks left the meeting.

When the meeting resumed, Cllr Pearce suggested that Budget and Loan sub-committee should examine the full implications of the cost of recruitment to the staffing bill and Cllr Pearce suggested a 10% contingency allowance may be required. Proposed by Cllr Pearce, seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

- 102.2. To receive an update on appointing an HR consultant

The Clerk reported they had sourced two providers but was still investigating the implications of use of this service with the council's main insurance provider. The Clerk would be putting a recommendation to Personnel Committee to endorse. The Clerk suggested the cost may be less than £5k per year or there were also 'pay as you go' options.

- 102.3. To consider if and how to budget for replenishment based on life expectancy of recent capital upgrades and anticipated replacement dates

Cllr Pearce suggested that due to the Council's investment in new assets over the last few years (new playgrounds etc.) data should be compiled to assist with financial planning for future replenishment (replacement). A spreadsheet of; the asset that has been replaced/year installed/value/life expectancy/ should be prepared. Cllr Parker suggested a physical plan for the next 20 years and a financial plan that mirrors it and then split the cost year by year so enough funds are accumulated and Cllr Pearce agreed with this. Cllr Brooks was not convinced that a replenishment fund was needed, but it would be useful to know rough life expectancy, and did not want additional pockets of money put aside when earmarked reserves are already there. Cllr Pearce responded that the replenishment fund would sit in an earmarked reserve and have targets which would not be exceeded. Cllr Pearce proposed that once the data set had been produced it should be taken to Budget and Loan Sub Committee to study with recommendations being made by AID and Finance and

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- Governance to Full Council for the 2023/24 budget. Seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 102.4. To consider making a recommendation to Full Council to make a representation to national Government via the local Member of Parliament, the local Food Network and other local outlets as required regarding concerns about the need for Local Councils to provide support previously available through central Government
Cllr Pearce was concerned that whilst the council had through its grant programme supported initiatives such as food banks and community fridges, it shouldn't have to do this as funding should be coming from central government and not be a burden on local councils. It was agreed to make a recommendation to Full Council to make initial representation to NALC, via SALC and to the MP to ask them to raise the issue of providing relief and support at a local level and whilst local councils may be willing and able to do it is placing a burden of logistical and financial demands on local councils. As part of the recommendation, there would be a delegation to officers on the choice of wording which should not be politically driven. Proposed by Cllr Pearce, seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.
- 102.5. To receive an update regarding the recent email outage, and to review associated communication from the Council's IT provider
The Chair informed all that after the initial 10 day outage when no emails could be accessed there were now residual issue with sending email to certain domains and this appears to have worsened in the last week or so. Cllr Brooks was deeply concerned about damage to the reputation the Town Council and questioned the messages to the public that had been issued during this period. It was proposed by Cllr Pearce to seek a formal explanation from the Town Council's IT provider on what had caused the outage, what was causing the current issues and what was the prognosis to get back to normal with a fully functioning email facility. Seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.
- 102.6. To review the protocol that was followed during the official period of mourning following the death of Her Majesty The Queen, and understand what is statutory requirement and what is discretionary
The Chair explained that during the period of national mourning it was understood that local councils could not issue agendas and summons for meetings and this was backed legislation and by advice received from SALC and SLCC during period of mourning. However, an alternative legal stance had been written by a KC and this had been followed by East Suffolk Council who had met during the national period of mourning. This had caused ambiguity and meetings proceeding or not had depended on interpretation of legislation. Cllr Barker asked if practice was being reviewed at government level before event occurs again based on feedback they may have received from local councils Cllr Brooks asked for make a formal point that the Parks and Open Spaces meeting which was due to have taken place on Tuesday 20 September should not have been cancelled. It was confirmed that the council had taken the correct action, as all of the statutory notice period for this meeting would have fallen within the period of national mourning which finished on Monday 19 September. It was proposed by Cllr Pearce to ask SALC how any feedback was being taken forward and how the issuing of conflicting advice was being dealt with, seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.
- 102.7. To consider the leaseback provisions in the Waveney District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2017 (confidential)
This item would be discussed in confidential session.
At 15.56 it was proposed by Cllr Pearce, seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour to suspend Standing Orders for 30 minutes.
- 102.8. To consider the IT services contract, including any transitional costs (confidential)
This item would be discussed in confidential session.
- 102.9. To receive an update on progressing the lease for the workshop/storage premises (confidential)
This item would be discussed in confidential session.
- 102.10. To receive an update on non-payment of rent by a tenant and to consider next steps (confidential)

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This item would be discussed in confidential session.

102.11. To consider the purchase of an item of Lowestoft Porcelain (confidential)

This item was discussed in confidential session.

102.12. To consider the cost of progressing intrusive geo-environmental surveys for land at Britten Road (confidential)

This item would be discussed in confidential session.

103. To consider lease and licence arrangements for the following (some aspects may be confidential):

103.1. Royal Naval Patrol Service Association Museum

103.2. Martello and Giardino

103.3. Moviemakers Theatre

103.4. Maritime Museum

103.5. Gunton Estate Residents' Meeting Hall

All of the items at 103 were deferred for consideration at the next meeting. Cllr Pearce requested that any documents relating to item 103.3 that had not been provided should be sent to members.

104. Date of the next meeting

14 November 2022 15:00

105. Items for the next agenda and close

Cllr Pearce suggested that members email in items for the next agenda.

106. 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:

106.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required

Proposed by Cllr Brooks, seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

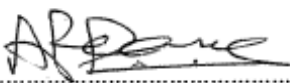
102.11 To consider the purchase of an item of Lowestoft Porcelain (confidential)

An amount, as detailed in the confidential paper, was proposed by Cllr Parker, seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

At 16.06 Cllr Brooks left the meeting and returned at 16.12. As the meeting was inquorate during this period no discussion took place.

Details of all other items discussed in closed session are recorded in the confidential note to accompany these minutes.

Meeting closed 16.40



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