

Lowestoft Town Council

Annual Meeting

First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE

18:30 on 16 May 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker (Mayor), Nasima Begum, Wendy Brooks, Janet Craig, Alan Green, Jen Jones, Christian Newsome, Paul Page, Graham Parker, Keith Patience, Andy Pearce, John Pitts and Elise Youngman

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Project and Committee Clerk)

Public: There was one member of the public in attendance (in person)

1. Electing the Mayor

Cllr Green thanked officers and Councillors for their support during his time as Mayor. Cllr Green invited nominations and Cllr Parker nominated Cllr Barker; seconded by Cllr Page. Cllr Pitts nominated Cllr Green, but Cllr Green declined. There were no further nominations. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour. Cllr Barker duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. Appointing the Deputy Mayor

Cllr Green nominated Cllr Begum; seconded by Cllr Barker. Cllr Youngman nominated herself; seconded by Cllr Pitts. The vote was taken and nine Councillors voted in favour of Cllr Begum, which was an absolute majority.

3. Mayor's Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained, and the meeting was welcomed. Photographs were taken of former Mayor Cllr Green presenting the Chain of Office to the new Mayor Cllr Barker. Cllr Barker offered her thanks to Cllr Green for fulfilling the Mayoral duties for the past three years, and thanked her fellow Councillors for electing her.

Cllr Barker proposed moving item 13 to the end of the agenda and bringing forward item 19 to be considered now; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

19. Noting Lowestoft Town Council's eligibility to exercise the General Power of Competence, all expenditure between the years 2019 – 2023 has been made under the General Power of Competence, and to consider adoption of the General Power of Competence

The Clerk advised that the Council has adopted and has been using the General Power of Competence for some time now, and explained its meaning. The General Power of Competence enables uncapped expenditure on a broader range of items, and makes expenditure easier to account for. If the Council did not adopt it, it would need to use Section 137 instead. In order to declare itself a General Power of Competence Authority, the Council would need to have two thirds of its total membership elected and a qualified Clerk, both of which the Town Council has. Cllr Green proposed declaring Lowestoft Town Council eligible to exercise the General Power of Competence and to adopt the General Power of Competence; seconded by Cllr Begum; all in favour.

4. Noting the Councillor vacancies for the Elmtree, Harbour and Normanston, Kirkley and Pakefield Wards and the process for co-option

The Clerk advised that co-options will take place at the next Full Council meeting. The Town Council has adopted a Co-option Policy. The vacancies have been advertised and several applications have been received. All written submissions will be made available for Councillors to review ahead of the meeting. Cllr Pearce advised that the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee had been discussing a different method of voting, to the benefit of

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candidates, which would involve individually asking each Councillor for their choice of candidate for each Ward. Cllr Pearce queried whether a candidate could request consideration of their application for another Ward if their application for their first choice of Ward was not successful. The Clerk understood there was no legal impediment preventing this, but questioned the fairness of this process. Cllr Brooks proposed allowing candidates the option of transferring their application to another Ward if their application is not successful in the Ward they have applied for; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Cllr Begum enquired whether it would be possible to ask candidates to leave the room when Councillors are casting their votes. The Clerk advised there is no right to exclude the public without having a reason to do so, and even asking candidates if they would prefer to step outside the room during the voting process could be putting pressure on them to leave, which is not a process the Clerk would be comfortable with. In response to a query from Cllr Brooks, the Clerk advised that the candidates are still members of the public. Cllr Patience enquired whether the candidates who are co-opted first could vote on the other positions. The co-opted Councillors would need to sign their Declarations of Acceptance of Office before being able to participate in the meeting but the Clerk will check the position on this. Cllr Barker suggested asking candidates at the meeting whether or not they would wish to leave the room during the vote.

5. **Approval of apologies for absence from any Councillors not in attendance**

No apologies had been received.

6. **Declarations of Interests and dispensations**

6.1 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – There were none.

6.2 Written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – There were none.

Cllr Barker noted that the thirteen Councillors in attendance at the meeting had duly signed their Declarations of Acceptance of Office, which had been witnessed by the Clerk. The Clerk understood that the Councillor not in attendance may be intending on not signing their Declaration but this was unclear. Cllr Page proposed waiting until the next Full Council meeting to see whether the signed Declaration is received; seconded by Cllr Jones; twelve Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

7. **The draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 25 April 2023**

Due to updates with IT, Councillors had not been connected with their email accounts. Meeting documents had been uploaded to the website but not seen by all Councillors. Cllr Pearce proposed deferring items 7 and 8 to the next meeting; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour. Cllr Barker reminded all Councillors that they should still have access to the Members' Area of the website to access meeting documents.

8. **Receiving the minutes from the following Committees and noting that any recommendations will be considered at the Full Council meeting on 23 May 2023:**

8.1 Finance and Governance Committee Extraordinary Meeting 26 April 2023

8.2 Planning Committee Meeting 2 May 2023

9. **Public forum**

There were no advance comments and no one in attendance on the webinar. The member of the public in attendance in person did not wish to speak.

10. **Reviewing and adopting the Council's policies and procedures, including Standing Orders**

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and Financial Regulations

Cllr Pearce advised all policies and procedures had been reviewed throughout the year by the Standing Orders Sub-Committee, the Finance and Governance Committee and Full Council. Cllr Brooks advised that Councillors and officers had put a lot of effort into reviewing and amending the documents as required and urged all Councillors to familiarise themselves with the policies, particularly those relevant to any Committees they intended to join. Cllr Pearce proposed adopting all of the Town Council's policies and procedures; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

11. Reviewing and adopting delegated authority and Committee arrangements

11.1 Committees, including the following:

11.1a Reviewing and considering adoption of the Terms of Reference – Cllr Pearce proposed making the Community Safety Committee a Sub-Committee of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee, given its limited brief, particularly regarding the CCTV service, meaning agendas are primarily focussed on park security currently. Cllr Parker seconded the proposal but requested review of the position in six months' time. The vote was taken and all Councillors voted in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed to adopt the Terms of Reference for all other Committees; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

11.1b Composition, including non-Councillor members of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee – The Clerk clarified that if someone were to be appointed as a non-Councillor member to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee, then was subsequently co-opted, the vacant non-Councillor position would then be advertised again. One of the non-Councillor members from the previous year had submitted an application and officers would advertise the positions again. The Clerk advised that up to three non-Councillor members could be appointed. Cllr Pearce proposed to appoint the non-Councillor member who had submitted the application for a further year and re-advertise the other positions; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour.

Councillor membership to the Committees was agreed as follows:

Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee – Cllrs Brooks, Jones, Newsome, Pearce, Pitts and E Youngman requested to join the Committee. Cllr Barker proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Newsome; all in favour.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee – Cllrs Barker, Brooks, Craig, Page, Parker and Pearce requested to join the Committee. Cllr Barker proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Finance and Governance Committee – Cllrs Begum, Brooks, Green, Page, Parker and Pearce requested to join the Committee. Cllr Barker proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Personnel Committee – Cllrs Barker, Brooks, Green, Jones, Newsome, Parker, Pearce and E Youngman requested to join the Committee. Cllr Barker proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

Planning Committee – Cllrs Brooks, Newsome and Pearce requested to join. Cllr Green queried whether being a member of East Suffolk Council as well would be a conflict of interest, but was advised this would not be an issue as recommendations would be made in the context of the Council the applications are being considered before, and Cllr Green is aware to declare any relevant interests. Cllr Patience also observed that Cllr Green is an East Suffolk Councillor

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for Kessingland. Cllr Green requested to join the Planning Committee. As the Committee required at least five members in order to meet, Cllr Pearce asked Cllr Barker if she would be prepared to join, at least until the co-options have taken place, to which Cllr Barker agreed. Cllr Barker proposed approval of the membership of the Planning Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

11.1c Reviewing any delegations (officer, Committee and Sub-Committee) – Cllr Pearce proposed to renew all delegations for a further twelve months as they stand, with the exception of the Town Hall Project, where the current delegations will only remain in place until the end of the development phase. New delegations would be required should the application for funding be successful and the project moves to delivery phase. Cllr Barker seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

11.1d Appointing Chairs – Committee Chairs were appointed as follows:

Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee – Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr E Youngman; seconded by Cllr Patience. Cllr Pitts nominated Cllr Brooks; seconded by Cllr Page. Cllr E Youngman received eleven votes, which was an absolute majority and she was duly appointed Chair of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee – Cllr Pearce nominated Cllr Page; seconded by Cllr Begum. There were no further nominations. All Councillors voted in favour of Cllr Page.

Finance and Governance Committee – Cllr Page nominated Cllr Pearce; seconded by Cllr Parker. There were no further nominations. All Councillors voted in favour of Cllr Pearce.

Personnel Committee – Cllr Barker nominated Cllr Green; seconded by Cllr Page. There were no further nominations. All Councillors voted in favour of Cllr Green.

Planning Committee – Cllr Brooks nominated herself but was not seconded. Cllr Patience suggested deferring a decision following the co-options. The Clerk advised the Committee would need to appoint a Committee member to preside over its next meeting. The Deputy Clerk also has a delegation to make recommendations on applications, in conjunction with Committee members. Cllr Barker reminded Committee members that they must undertake planning training within three months of today's date in order to carry out their duties effectively. Cllr Green proposed making this training available to all Councillors; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

11.2 Other officer delegations and signatory delegations, including the Town Hall Project Board – Membership to the Project Board had previously been linked to certain positions rather than named individuals. Cllr Pearce suggested it should be named individuals going forward, but those wishing to join must be able to commit to attending the meetings.

Cllr Pearce proposed approval for the existing delegations to continue, and for the existing membership and delegations to continue to the end of the development phase; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed for all other officer and signatory delegations to continue as they are for the next twelve months; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

12. Authorising submission of the bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Town Hall

Cllr Pearce advised an arrangement was already in place for documents to be proof read within the pre-existing framework for the bid. Any proposed changes to the framework

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would have to be agreed by Full Council. Cllr Pearce proposed, subject to any changes to the framework not covered by delegation coming back to the Full Council meeting on 23 May, to approve submission of the bid; seconded by Cllr Green. Cllr Brooks advised she had not completely read through the document and would need more time to review it prior to approval. Cllr Pearce encouraged as many Councillors as possible to read the documents and anything which falls outside of the pre-approved framework for inclusion in the bid will need to be considered by Full Council. All Councillors voted in favour.

13. Reviewing and appointing representatives of the Council on other bodies

It had been agreed to move this item to the end of the meeting.

14. Reviewing and agreeing the Full Council and Committee meeting schedule for 2023 – 2024, and noting the planned schedule for Sub-Committees

Cllr Pearce advised that co-opted Councillors may wish to join Committees and Sub-Committees and request amendments to the meeting schedule. Cllr Pearce therefore proposed provisionally approving the schedule as it is, noting that changes may be requested. Cllr E Youngman requested that meetings of the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee take place at 19:00, rather than 18:00. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of this request; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. Cllr Patience seconded Cllr Pearce's first proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

15. Receipt of summons to meetings electronically

Cllr Green proposed approval for summons to be received electronically; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

16. Reviewing the register of land and assets including building and office equipment

The Clerk advised the asset register had been reviewed previously but this item had been carried forward to allow Councillors more time to consider it.

Cllrs Jones and Patience temporarily left the meeting 19:45

Cllr Pearce had made specific requests previously, which the Clerk confirmed had been addressed. Cllr Pearce proposed approving the asset register as it is, noting that the requests made previously had been addressed and that further assets may be added throughout the year; seconded by Cllr E Youngman; all in favour.

17. Confirming the arrangements for insurance cover

The Clerk advised that the Council still has the same insurer, as part of a deal which was secured over a period of time. Arrangements remain unchanged and had been reviewed by the Finance and Governance Committee, which was satisfied with the current situation.

Cllr Patience returned 19:46

Officers are in close contact with the insurance provider as things change frequently, with new equipment, new risk factors and new staff, etc.

Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the current insurance arrangements and asked officers to monitor for such things as adverse claims experience and any new assets the Council takes on which may inflate the premium above RPI, to feed into budgeting.

Cllr Jones returned 19:47

The Clerk understood this to be approximately five percent this year. Cllr Green seconded the proposal; twelve Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

18. Reviewing subscriptions to other bodies

Cllr Green proposed approval of the subscriptions to other bodies; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. The Clerk clarified that the Purple Guide relates to events.

19. Noting Lowestoft Town Council's eligibility to exercise the General Power of Competence,

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all expenditure between the years 2019 – 2023 has been made under the General Power of Competence, and to consider adoption of the General Power of Competence

This item had been considered earlier in the meeting.

20. Considering the following financial matters for 2023 - 2024:

20.1 Confirming the bank signatories – It was confirmed that Cllrs Begum, Green and Pearce were the current signatories. Cllr Barker advised she would be happy to be added as a signatory. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of Cllrs Barker, Begum, Green and Pearce as the bank signatories, who would also be the signatories for the Arnold's Bequest bank account; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

20.2 Confirming bank reconciliation signatories – Cllrs Brooks and Page advised they were both happy to continue in their roles as bank reconciliation signatories. Cllr Barker proposed approval; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

20.3 Confirming internal controllers and substitute – Given that the Town Council has significant internal controls, the Clerk recommended that the Council appoints an internal controller plus two substitutes. The Clerk advised the internal controller would need to be available the following Monday to complete the internal controls. Cllr E Youngman advised she would be happy to do this. The Clerk explained the responsibilities attached to the role. Cllr Pearce proposed to appoint Cllr E Youngman as the internal controller; seconded by Cllr Page; all in favour. Cllr Jones advised she would be happy to be appointed as a substitute. Cllr Green proposed to appoint Cllr Jones as substitute internal controller; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. It was agreed to add an item to the next Full Council agenda to seek an additional substitute.

20.4 Reviewing internal control arrangements – The Clerk advised that the checklist and associated risk assessment had been reviewed previously by the Council. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the current arrangements, provided officers are satisfied it remains current and robust; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

20.5 Confirming fees and charges will remain at 2022 – 2023 rates, pending review if necessary by the Finance and Governance Committee – Cllr Pearce proposed approval of this; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

A comfort break was taken 19:57 and the meeting resumed 20:05

13. Reviewing and appointing representatives of the Council on other bodies

Cllr Pearce proposed deferring this item to the next Full Council meeting, to give co-opted Councillors the opportunity to participate.

Cllr E Youngman returned 20:07

Cllr Begum seconded the proposal and all Councillors voted in favour.

21. Date of the next meeting

23 May 2023 at 18:30

22. Items for the next Agenda

Items deferred from this meeting would be added to the next agenda.

There were no confidential items for consideration and the meeting was closed at 20:08.

23. Resolution to close the meeting to the public



Signed:

27 June 2023