

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 19 September 2023

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Robert Breakspear (Chair), Wendy Brooks (Deputy Chair), Andy Pearce, John Pitts, Bernadette Rappensberger, David Youngman and Elise Youngman

In Attendance: Shona Bendix (Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

82. Welcome

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

83. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Newsome, Smith and Webb with reasons provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; all in favour.

Cllr Coleby was absent with no apologies received.

84. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

84.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda – Cllr Brooks declared she requested item 94 as she had been approached by a member of the public on the topic. Cllr Breakspear declared he was Chair of Friends of Kensington Gardens. Cllr Pearce declared he was Chair of Gunton Residents Association.

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

85. To consider the draft minutes of the meeting on 15 August 2023

Cllr Brooks requested her comment on the late reporting of damage to the Kensington Gardens bowling green, instead of being reported after the damage was found at the end of the First Light Festival, be included in the minutes. The Clerk advised if Councillors wanted specific comments recorded then they should request it as the minutes are a record of decisions made. Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes subject to the verification and inclusion of her comment; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

86. 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 – There were no members of the public in attendance and no advanced comments had been received.

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

One invoice of £6,000 had been received for the Tree Survey and a second invoice was pending. A recent bulb order had been made per the delegated £3,900 to the Project and Committee Clerk, with payment details to follow and be reflected in the budget.

88. To consider review and implementation of the five year plans in line with budgeting, noting Councillors' comments regarding the following:

88.1 Normanston Park

88.2 Rosedale Park

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88.3 Kensington Gardens

88.4 Gunton Community Park

88.5 Great Eastern Linear Park

88.6 Sparrows Nest

88.7 Fen Park

88.8 Belle Vue Park

88.9 Denes Oval

88.10 Cotman Close

88.11 Britten Road Play Area

88.12 Clarkes Lane

88.13 Pakefield Green Play Area (Wellington Road)

88.14 The Ness – Cllr Brooks raised the competition for the sea wall mural and suggested it be aimed at professional artists. No budget or date had been set for the competition and it had not been factored into the five-year plans. It was suggested to hold the competition and monitor the uptake whilst simultaneously investigating the methods for transferring the mural to the sea wall, with funding to be allocated from the Events budget. The Committee Clerk informed the Sub-Committee that both the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee (AID) and the Events and Communications Sub-Committee had deferred a decision on the sea wall competition and requested The Ness Working Group consider the competition. The Ness Working Group was due to meet in October 2023 to formulate the action plan and make recommendations to the relevant committees.

88.15 Ness Point

88.16 St Margaret's Plain Play Area

88.17 Bentley Drive Play Area

88.18 Gainsborough Drive Pond

88.19 North Denes

88.20 Links Road Car Park

88.21 Triangle Market

88.22 Town Green

88.23 Land at Upland's Road North (including pond)

A recent zoom meeting had concluded that the Sub-Committee needed to consider the priorities and timescales and make recommendations so that the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee (B&L) can budget accordingly.

As the sports survey would provide feedback on residential preferences for sports and recreational facilities in the parks and could inform the priorities, it was queried whether the final decisions on the project priorities should be made after the response to the survey has been received.

Cllr Brooks proposed the discussions at the recent zoom meeting be accepted and the priorities be decided after the sport survey results have been received to inform the recommended priority order; seconded by Cllr Pearce who noted that the recommendations needed to be ready by December to be included in the budget preparations; all in favour.

89. To consider the development of pink and white beds, and a snowdrop planting plan for Belle Vue Park, in line with the five-year plans

The choice of pink and white for the flowers was queried as it was felt to be too restrictive. It was noted that these proposals had been approved some years ago and the Sub-Committee were seeking to progress the plans. As there were no costs at the time of the meeting, Cllr

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Pearce proposed these plans be recommended to the AID meeting in October to consider favourably, subject to Cllr Coleby, as the author of the plans, providing reasoning for the pink and white colour choice and subject to officers coordinating with Cllr Coleby for the total costs of the pink and white beds and the first year costs for the ten year snowdrop planting plan. Cllr Brooks requested input also be received from the grounds maintenance officers on the planting plans. Cllr Breakspear seconded the proposal, and a vote was held with all in favour.

90. To consider the purchase of winter bedding plants for 2023-2024

A list of winter bedding plants had been suggested by one of the grounds maintenance officers. Initial concerns were raised on the high number of pansies and violas, which were not hardy plants and would be high maintenance. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the plan in principle, with a delegation to officers to purchase and implement the plan within the remaining budget, with the location and species of plants to be considered in conjunction with Councillors, but officers have the final decision based on what can be purchased and planted within the time constraints. Officers requested any input from Councillors be received by the end of this week. Cllr Pitts seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed when the next five-year plans meeting is held after the sports provision survey, a standing annual review process be implemented to consider planting plans and requests to suppliers to grow plants for the following year; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour.

91. To consider the watering methods for the bowling greens

Cllr Pearce proposed officers review the positive and negative aspects of a sprinkler system, liaising with Cllr Newsome and other interested Councillors for input, with information on different options to be brought to the next meeting.

A suggestion was made to review the current watering schedule and consider watering in the evening as an alternative to sprinkler systems.

Cllr Pitts seconded Cllr Pearce's proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

92. To consider the maintenance and care of trees

Cllr Brooks noted the useful guidelines in the document from Woodland Trust concerning the planting and maintenance of trees and proposed the grounds maintenance officers review the document and take onboard the suggestions; seconded by Cllr E Youngman; all in favour.

93. To consider the development of a splash park

This project would require consideration of the location and possible partners due to the high value of the project. A suggestion was made to await the development of the fountains on South Beach as a planning application on their restoration had been submitted, because a splash park would be a high-cost project and operational only from May to October.

Cllr Pearce proposed the splash park be included on the public sports survey to gauge public interest and receive feedback on ideal locations, gather further information on costs and open dialogue with East Suffolk Council on whether they would be willing to work with the Town Council on the project.

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Cllr Brooks opposed the inclusion of a splash on the survey as it may raise expectation of the public people's expectation and favoured keeping the survey a general overview of the parks.

Cllr E Youngman seconded Cllr Pearce's proposal. The survey would need to be worded to not promise a splash park and be clear that it is a fact-finding survey on public interest. The Committee Clerk notified the Sub-Committee that due to the consideration of a further Regulation 14 Consultation of the Lowestoft Neighbourhood Plan this survey may be delayed until mid-November, which was accepted.

A vote was held on Cllr Pearce's proposal with five in favour, one against and one abstention.

94. To consider the use of the building next to the boating lake at Kensington Gardens

As this may affect a tenanted property, it was agreed to discuss the item in confidential session.

95. To consider works required for Uplands Pond

This item had been requested by B&L for the Sub-Committee to consider and advise on budget requirements.

Cllr Brooks temporarily left the chamber at 20:00

The pond was noted to be in good health, however as the previous year's budget had prioritised the works on Gainsborough Drive Pond and Fen Park Pond, any works required for Uplands Pond needed to be costed and factored into the 2024-2025 budget.

Concerns were raised on the smell discoloured water of Fen Park Pond. The Clerk assured Councillors that this had been reports by the grounds maintenance officers. An item was requested for the AID agenda to consider if the aeration device would resolve the issue, if dredging is required and receive clarification on what affect the water coming through the sluice gate has on the general pond health.

Cllr Brooks returned to the chamber at 20:04

Any tree works near Uplands Pond would be considered after the tree survey report has been received. The current £6,000 Reactive Tree Works and £6,000 Planned Tree Works budgets needed to be reviewed by B&L as were they were deemed to restricted, though it was noted that the £12,000 Tree Survey budget was a one-off cost and could be split between the two tree works budgets for the future. The Grounds Maintenance officers were asked to advise B&L on an adequate tree works budget. The Clerk assured the Sub-Committee that the results of the tree survey would inform B&L on the required budget.

96. To consider miscellaneous preparations and works for the 150th anniversary of Belle Vue Park and the required budget

The Committee Clerk confirmed further costs included permissions for use of photos, commissioning a new aerial photo of the park in 2024 and the request from Cllr Brooks to refurbish the elephant statue. Cost would be collated for the next AID meeting.

As East Coast College had mentioned working opportunities with the Town Council at a recent site visit, officers would check if contact had been made with East Coast College on re-painting

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the Belle Vue porch, which Cllr Breakspear offered to provide a contact for. Community Payback were suggested as an alternative partner if the college is not available.

97. To receive and consider the draft format of the sports provision survey and provide further feedback to the Communications Officer

The Sub-Committee approved the survey, noting the ability to skip sites on the survey, so minimise text, basic survey looks good, noted good that you can skip sites. Cllr Brooks suggested the introduction be shorter. The Communications Officer would update Councillors when the survey is due to be published.

Cllr E Youngman temporarily left the chamber at 20:18

98. To consider the provision of skateboarding lessons at Normanston skate park

The Committee agreed they would not charge the professional providing the lessons as this was not intended to be a commercial outlet and the sessions would be free, instead the professional would be paid for holding sessions on Town Council land and providing a service on behalf of the Town Council.

Cllr E Youngman returned to the chamber at 20:20

The Clerk informed the Committee that a procurement process would be needed with a clear framework, number of sessions and a statement of aims for the project.

Cllr Pearce proposed a delegation to officers to progress the project, including drawing up the procurement document to be signed off by this Sub-Committee, with the project be progressed to a stage where a decision is required from the relevant Committee. Cllr Pitts stated that the intention of the project was to provide lessons to encourage beginners who wanted to skateboard but were anxious due to the advanced level of the current skating park, and give them the opportunity to take up skateboarding. It was noted that the sessions would be held for a short period of time and could be held on Saturday mornings. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

99. To consider making a recommendation on the Council's policy position regarding fishing on Town Council land

The Sub-Committee agreed that whilst there had been historical fishing at the site, there were issues on the safety aspects of fishing in public and many ponds are too small for fishing. As any restocking would be delayed until the health and vitality of the pond has been restored, Cllr Pearce proposed a response be sent to the inquiring member of public informing them of the priority to restore the health of the pond and only then could the Town Council's position be considered; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

100. Date of the next meeting

17 October 2023 19:00

101. Items for the next Agenda and Close

Any items should be emailed to the office a week before the agenda is due to be published.

102. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be

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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 Rappensberger; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 20:33

94. To consider the use of the building next to the boating lake at Kensington Gardens

A member of the public had made contact regarding use of the building and was advised to contact the current tenants.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:41

Signed: 

17 October 2023