

**Lowestoft Town Council**  
**Extraordinary Meeting of the Personnel Committee**  
**First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE**  
**13:00 on 3 August 2023**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Cllrs Sonia Barker, Wendy Brooks, Alan Green (Chair), Jen Jones, Andy Pearce and Elise Youngman

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

**Public:** There were no members of the public in attendance

**20. Welcome**

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

**21. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Christian Newsome, with a reason provided. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

**22. Declarations of Interests and dispensations**

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

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

**23. The draft minutes and confidential note of the meetings on 6 April and 21 June 2023**

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes and confidential notes of the meetings on 6 April and 21 June 2023; seconded by Cllr Barker, who identified a typographical error on the confidential notes of the meeting on 6 April; all in favour.

**24. Public forum**

No advance comments had been received and there were no members of the public in attendance.

**25. Appointing the Deputy Chair of the Personnel Committee**

Cllr Green advised that Cllr Newsome had expressed an interest in this role. Cllr Jones proposed to appoint Cllr Newsome as the Deputy Chair of this Committee; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

**26. An update on the Redundancy Policy**

The Clerk advised she could provide an update in the confidential session.

**27. Signing up to be Disability Confident**

Cllr Pearce supported this initiative and suggested that the Town Council should also consider how to improve the accessibility of the process of becoming a Councillor, to make it more inclusive, and providing support for completing application forms for hiring the Town Council's meeting halls and holding events on Town Council land, for those who may require assistance. Cllr Pearce proposed that the Town Council should sign up to be Disability Confident. Cllr Brooks noted that subtitles were available for the Town Council's YouTube recordings and queried whether its forms could be made available in other formats. The Clerk advised options for this could be explored. The Town Council offices are accessible, and its documents and website have been made accessible in line with regulations. Cllr Barker suggested it should be made clear that the offices are accessible and this should be stated in the summons to meetings if possible. Cllr Green noted that only one person was permitted to use the lift at a time. The Clerk understood this to be a stipulation during the pandemic and will enquire

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whether this is still necessary. Cllr Barker seconded Cllr Pearce's proposal and all Councillors voted in favour. The Clerk noted that the use of YouTube and Zoom/Teams had also made a big difference in terms of accessibility.

**28. An update from the Clerk on any staffing issues (confidential)**

To be discussed during the confidential session.

**29. An update on current and future staffing, recruitment and budgets, including for grounds maintenance (confidential)**

To be discussed during the confidential session.

**30. Staffing expenditure for 2024 – 2025 and to make any recommendations to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee as appropriate (confidential)**

To be discussed during the confidential session.

**31. Date of the next meeting**

7 September 2023 13:00 – It was understood that Wednesdays may be preferable for Cllr Newsome. It was suggested that meetings could either take place on Wednesdays at 13:00 or Thursdays at 19:00. Meetings were currently held every other month. Cllr Pearce proposed to seek Cllr Newsome's preference, then agree the meeting schedule amongst Committee members via email ahead of the next meeting; seconded by Cllr E Youngman; all in favour.

**32. Items for the next agenda and close**

There were no requests for items to be added to the next agenda.

Cllr E Youngman proposed to move the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

**33. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:**

33.1. Any employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including those above as required:

26. An update on the Redundancy Policy – The Clerk provided an update on liaison with the HR provider. Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal following this; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

28. An update from the Clerk on any staffing issues (confidential) The Clerk provided an update on current matters affecting staff. Cllr Barker understood that a confidential helpline for officers had been discussed. Cllr Green queried whether this would be required, as the staff base is small and not far removed from the office. The Clerk can signpost officers to help, and will ensure this is cascaded to other managers. The Committee would like to familiarise themselves with new staff. The Clerk advised it would be difficult to get everybody into the office at the same time, due to availability, but the Clerk displayed a document giving details of each officer and their role, which also fed into the next item.

29. An update on current and future staffing, recruitment and budgets, including for grounds maintenance (confidential) – The Clerk displayed a document giving an overview of the staff, their roles and chain of command. Cllr Brooks expressed a concern at the timescales for some items to be actioned.

*The Project and Committee Clerk left the meeting 13:38*

The Project and Committee Clerk left the room and discussions continued.

The Clerk displayed an organogram and staffing description which included how asset management was being covered. This was discussed and it was noted that the straightforward route to communicate/raise enquiries with staff in an increasingly complex staffing structure was through the admin email. The complexity of asset

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management which included, as only one aspect, compliance, had been applied throughout the structure with the Clerk taking overall responsibility but staff having delegations. The need to have an allocation of staff to the Town Hall and Marina Theatre projects was discussed. The Clerk wanted permission for a new credit system to be embedded in order to give further financial delegations to an increased number of staff with allocated capped limits but with her and the Finance and Information Officer able to live monitor expenditure. It was noted that it was expected that the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer would progress this and take it to Council or Committee if there were insufficient delegations to enable this. The gender balance and diversity within the staff team was noted and the Clerk would discuss this further with HR when relevant. The significant and successful efforts to encourage an inclusive approach within the staff team was discussed. It was noted that the decision on appointing an Asset Management Officer rests with Full Council.

*Cllr Brooks left the room at 14:05*

Cllr Pearce proposed that the Asset Management Officer post was removed from the recruitment provided that Full Council is content with the operational allocations within the middle tier of the staff team; seconded by Cllr E Youngman; all in favour.

*Cllr Brooks returned at 14:09*

The discussions and decision were explained to her and she stated that she was also in favour.

The recognition and support of staff required to ensure the success of this working model of grounds maintenance and asset management was discussed as well as the recognition needed for staff not working in other areas.

There were confidential proposals with all present in favour relating to staff and their terms, each proposed by Cllr Pearce and seconded by Cllr Brooks.

Signed:  .....

7 September 2023