

Lowestoft Town Council
Extraordinary Meeting of the Personnel Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
13:00 on 7 September 2023

MINUTES

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

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

34.Welcome

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

35.To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

No apologies received as all members were in attendance.

36.Declarations of Interests and dispensations

36.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from councillors on items on the agenda – The Clerk declared that some items may be beneficial to officers.

36.2. To consider written requests for dispensations for interests and note dispensations granted – No written requests for dispensations had been received.

37.To consider the draft minutes and confidential note of the meeting on 3 August 2023

Cllr Brooks proposed approval of the minutes, subject to officers confirming whether herself or Cllr Jones made the proposal under item 25; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

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

39.To receive an update from the Clerk on any staffing issues (confidential)

To be discussed in confidential session.

40.To consider staff terms and conditions, including whether to recommend an additional day's leave at Christmas (confidential)

Cllr Pearce proposed approval and recommendation to Full Council that all staff receive an additional day's leave, and if any operational matters result in officers needing to work on that day, then they can arrange when they take their additional day during the holiday period with the Clerk; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

41.To receive and consider an update on the current and future staffing structure, including seasonal contracts, recruitment and budgets (confidential)

To be discussed in confidential session.

42.To consider staffing expenditure for 2024 – 2025 and to make any recommendations to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee as appropriate (confidential)

To be discussed in confidential session.

43.Date of the next meeting

5 October 2023 13:00

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44. Items for the next agenda and close

It was requested that items for the next agenda be sent to the office.

45. 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 or employment matters relating to items on this agenda, including the following:

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

Cllr Newsome proposed the meeting be moved to confidential session; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved into confidential session at 13:07

Cllr Brooks raised an issue of accessing confidential items and asked that the correct password be given to all Councillors. Cllr Green requested in such instances the officer who sent out the password protected document be contacted by anyone having issues with access.

39. To receive an update from the Clerk on any staffing issues (confidential)

The Clerk informed the Committee that 11 September had been set as the date to move into Unit 2, which would be held under tenancy at will and officers were awaiting receipt of a report from the surveyor.

As health and safety advice was vital during the grounds maintenance transition and for the Town Hall project, it was queried if the platinum package for the Health and Safety Consultant was due for review.

Cllr Pearce proposed if the existing Full Council authorisation was time limited for a review, then it be recommended to Full Council to continue the Health and Safety Platinum Package for the duration of bringing the grounds maintenance inhouse and up to year one of the Town Hall opening; seconded by Cllr Brooks. The Clerk noted there was an existing delegation which would be verified with the Finance and Information Officer. The Clerk informed the Committee that the platinum package provided a higher number of days of service.

The recent incident of the Town Hall fire alarm being triggered and not attended to for a considerable amount of time was discussed and the Clerk confirmed this would be followed up with the contractor, who reported that the alarm had been triggered by the safety glass over the alarm. The Clerk was asked to provide the contact number of the contractor to Councillors.

The Clerk would discuss the fit out of Unit 2 with the Grounds Maintenance team and the Health and Safety Consultant, and confirmed there would be branding and Lowestoft Town Council signs to ensure access for officers.

A vote was held on Cllr Pearce' proposal with all in favour.

The Committee Clerk left the chamber at 13:24 for consideration of item 40

40. To consider staff terms and conditions, including whether to recommend an additional day's leave at Christmas (confidential)

There was a confidential discussion about staff annual leave, including about regularising annual leave entitlement where this did not reduce contractual entitlement.

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Cllr Brooks made a confidential proposal relating to annual leave which was not seconded. Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal relating to annual leave which was seconded by Cllr Youngman; majority vote in favour with one against.

It was noted that the decision will be recommended to Full Council in September.

The Committee Clerk returned to the chamber at 13:43

41.To receive and consider an update on the current and future staffing structure, including seasonal contracts, recruitment and budgets (confidential)

The Clerk provided a confidential update on the Grounds Maintenance team, noting that with their calibre they could undertake the 2024 seasonal work. However, a Seasonal Staff budget would still be required and delegated to the Clerk.

A suggestion was made for all staffing costs in the 2024-2025 to be allocated to the Staffing budget, which would include seasonal workers, whilst the Grounds Maintenance budget covered equipment, leases and the cost of delivering services. The Finance and Information Officer was asked to split out the budget so seasonal costs could be viewed separately from the overall grounds maintenance costs.

A query was raised on future work with Community Payback and the Clerk assured they were pleased with the work undertaken by Community Payback and would look to work with them again whilst also increasing the volunteer outings.

The seasonal work period was confirmed to cover 1 April to 31 October.

A confidential discussion took place on the staffing structure and terms and conditions.

Cllr Pearce made a confidential proposal that was recommended to Full Council; seconded by Cllr E Youngman; all in favour.

Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council for approval of the Seasonal budget for 2024-2025 at eight worker days per week for the seasonal period and delegate expenditure within the budget to the Clerk, with a further delegation to the Clerk to advertise the seasonal positions and progress the recruitment. Cllr Brooks seconded the proposal and a vote was held with all in favour.

42.To consider staffing expenditure for 2024 – 2025 and to make any recommendations to the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee as appropriate (confidential)


The Clerk would review the current £15,000 Training budget with the Finance and Information Officer, noting the intention to increase the capacity of officers for specialist tasks, which may require an increase in the budget as the training would be more expensive.

A suggestion was made to consider sign language courses for officers and consider contracting a sign language specialist for the Annual Meetings. The Clerk was asked to research costs for sign language training and engaging a sign language specialist for public meetings. Cllr E Youngman offered to provide contact details for free sign language session to the Clerk. The Clerk confirmed she would also research deaf awareness courses for all staff members to participate in as a group session.

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It was requested that the Finance and Information Office input the new staff terms and conditions in the budget after it has been approved by Full Council in September.

The chair closed the meeting at 14:12

Signed: 
7 December 2023