

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Town Hall Project Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
10:00 on 11 January 2024

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Sonia Barker (Chair), Wendy Brooks, Keith Patience, Andy Pearce, Bernie Rappensberger and Elise Youngman. Non-Councillor members Helen Johnson and Ben Porter (East Suffolk Council Officers)

In Attendance: Sarah Foote (Deputy Town Clerk), Christopher Meek (Events and Administration Officer) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Also in Attendance: Sheila MossKing (Project Manager) and Hana Loftus - Lead of the Design Team of HAT Projects (via zoom)

29. Welcome

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

30. To receive and consider approval of apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

31. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

31.1. To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registerable and Non-Registerable interests from Councillors on items on the agenda – None were declared.

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

32. To consider the draft notes of the meeting on 7 December 2023

Cllr Rappensberger proposed approval of the minutes; seconded by Cllr Brooks; six votes in favour and two abstentions.

33. 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 – The lead of the Design Team of HAT Projects was in attendance via zoom.

Cllr Barker proposed item 36 be brought forward in the meeting and discussed with the architect in attendance on zoom; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

36. To consider methods for fire detection in the Council Chamber

A void space above the council chamber ceiling and below the pitched roof had no means of smoke detection and if a smoke detector was installed it would not be accessible for testing, meaning Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) would have to take on the cost of access to the detector. This had been considered by the relevant consultants who advised the space be exempt from smoke detection. The Design Team recommended this as a solution and requested a decision from the Committee.

The Committee were assured that the void space would be a low risk for fire as no equipment would be generating heat, and the closest smoke alarm is in the council chamber.

Cllr Brooks proposed to accept the recommendation that the void be exempted from smoke detection; seconded by Cllr Rappensberger; seven votes in favour and one abstention.

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34. Finance, budget monitoring and payments (see report):

34.1. To note and consider income and expenditure, including:

34.2. To monitor the budget – Expenditure to date was over £58,000 and £40,000 worth of invoices had been received for December 2023 expenditure. The Project Manager would update the budget document with the recent batch of invoices and adjust the document to display the full budget and pending expenditure, which would be provided to all Committee members.

34.3. To consider any payments for approval – There were no items for approval.

34.4. To consider any reporting and work required for the completion of the Towns Fund Agreement – The Deputy Clerk was due to discuss this further with Ben Porter to agree the drawdown amounts as it was planned to have upfront payments to assist with the cashflow.

35. To consider a report from the Project Manager, including progress with the following:

35.1. An update on the procurement of the Construction Design Manager and Evaluation Consultant – The tender for the Evaluation Consultant was live. The deadline for applications was 9 February 2024 and the job was due to start 19 February 2024. The Construction Design Manager tender was being prepared.

36. To consider methods for fire detection in the Council Chamber

This item was brought forward to the start of the meeting.

37. To receive a list of planned actions from the Project Manager to be authorised for progression

Over the next month the key focus would be the finalisation of requirements for RIBA Stage 4 designs. The Project Manager would also be responding to any queries from The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and a meeting was scheduled with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to review the submission of paperwork for Permission To Start.

The UK Power Networks (UKPN) substation would also be progressed and once there is an agreed approach and location of the substation with ESC an updated quote from UKPN would be requested.

The Asbestos Survey would commence on the 16 and 17 January 2024 and would be an update on the Refurbishment and Demolition Survey that was completed in 2023.

The recruitment of a Heritage Manager would not be progressed until confirmation of the PWLB loan has been received.

Cllr Pearce proposed a delegation be made to officers in conjunction with any member of this Committee to field any future correspondence that may arise to minimise any delay in responses; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

38. To note the updated risk register

A confidential discussion was requested for an item under the register.

The risk register had been updated since the development phase with the relevant risks retained and carried forward. This document ensured the National Lottery Heritage Fund had evidence of risks being acknowledged and mitigated.

External funding for the project - The PWLB loan application was being processed and there were no issues to suggest a risk and therefore had been scored as a two under probability and five under impact.

PWLB loan rates restrict the amount that can be borrowed - The probability had been scored

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as a five as the loan would be drawn down in tranches with interest rates applicable from the draw down, therefore the interest rates may be affected by instability from global conflicts affecting the economy. If the interest rates increase, then the Town Council would have to reduce the amount borrowed to ensure the precept is not increased in order to service the loan.

Capital Project costs are higher than budgeted - This would remain a risk and if the cost plan for RIBA Stage 4 was higher than expected then the best resolution would be to work with the contractors.

A shortage of key skills or staff - This risk had reduced with a full Design Team brought in and a Heritage Project Manager, with prior experience of heritage funds, who could handle the temporary absence of the Project Manager.

Consultation/engagement - key stakeholders/community not supportive - This would remain an ongoing risk and a key focus would be to manage expectations.

Delivery project overruns timetable - The probability of the risk had been scored at 3 and the impact scored at 4 due to risks such as a possible increase in professional fees.

Building is in worse condition than expected - The probability and impact scores had been reduced as the Design Team had a better understanding of the issues with the building.

UKPN substation is delayed - This risk was due to the long timescales on the part of UKPN.

UXOs onsite/risk of UXOs - This was a risk of unexploded bombs in the previous stage and there are measures in place of having UXO mitigation onsite when conducting ground works.

Volunteers become harder to recruit - This risk had been reduced with the Heritage Manager role raised to a full-time position, and if there are further issues then more professionals would be engaged to deliver the works, therefore the project would not be overly reliant on volunteers.

Fire detection above council chamber - The resolution for the area to be exempted from detection would be recorded as part of the fire management plan.

Project steering committee does not endorse recommendations of tender evaluation panel - As this Committee would not be able to approve the evaluation recommendations prior to a meeting as it would be pre-determination, it was suggested to form a temporary Sub-Committee, from the members of the tender evaluation panel, to handle the evaluation and confirm the appointment, provided the requirements concerning quorum and composition were maintained, and then the Sub-Committee would be dissolved upon conclusion of the appointment. The Deputy Clerk confirmed any Committee could form a Sub-Committee under Section 101 of the Local Government Act.

Cllr Pearce proposed Full Council be asked to empower this Committee to create temporary Sub-Committees as required to handle evaluations and make an appointment, subject to meeting the quorum and composition regulations; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour. The non-Councillor members opted to abstain from voting as this was internal LTC business.

Lack of cooperation or coordination between LTC Admin and the Project Team - Any issues the officers and Project Team are unable to resolve between them should be referred to this Committee. There was a suggestion for an officer to be designated the staff liaison with the

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project team.

Registrars do not move into the building - There was no agreement for their occupation of the building and their absence would affect footfall in the town hall and cause financial issues.

Cllr Patience left the chamber at 11:50

Project governance structure delays decision making and result in programme delays and contractual issues - The risk would be reduced with the monthly meetings of this Committee that provide permissions for the Project Team's monthly tasks. Scheduling of extraordinary meetings would also be important to navigate this issue.

At 12:00 Cllr Pearce proposed to suspend standing orders for ten minutes; seconded by Cllr Barker; all in favour.

39. To receive an update on the boundary agreement and the process of registering with the Land Registry

A parcel of land transferred by ESC did not include a three- to four-metre-wide strip. As this strip of land was intended to be used for bicycle storage as part of the project, it needed to be transferred to LTC. The ESC representatives confirmed they were reviewing previous cabinet papers to verify if there was a delegation of authority for the transfer.

40. To receive an update on the Heads of Terms for the Registrars

An update on the progress had been provided to the Committee on 20th December 2023.

41. To consider any recommendations to Full Council

The proposal of a Sub-Committee would be recommended to Full Council.

42. Date of the next meeting

Thursday 15 February 2024 – 10:00.

43. Items for the next agenda and close

To consider future governance arrangements for this Committee.

44. 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 relating to the matters on this agenda:

44.1. To consider any legal issues, including those above as required – Cllr Pearce proposed the meeting be moved into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Brooks; all in favour.

The Chair closed the meeting to the public and moved to confidential session at 12:05

There was a confidential discussion concerning the risk register.

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:12

Signed: 

15 February 2024