

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 March 2016 at 4.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Williton

Present:

Councillor G S Dowding Chairman
Councillor B Heywood Vice-Chairman

Councillor I Aldridge
Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor B Leaker
Councillor B Maitland-Walker
Councillor C Morgan
Councillor J Parbrook
Councillor R Thomas
Councillor A Trollope-Bellew
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor A Behan
Councillor R Clifford
Councillor S Y Goss
Councillor I Jones
Councillor R P Lillis
Councillor K M Mills
Councillor P H Murphy
Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor N Thwaites
Councillor K Turner
Councillor R Woods

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive (P James)
Director of Operations/S151 Officer (S Adams)
Assistant Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer (B Lang)
Deputy Monitoring Officer (R Pinney)
Assistant Director Resources (P Fitzgerald)
Assistant Director Business Development (I Timms)
Parking and Community Safety Manager (T Biss)
CIM Fund Manager (L Redston)
Director of Housing and Communities (J Barra)h
Director of Growth and Development (B Cleere)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

C122 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Archer, T Hall and T Venner.

C123 Minutes

(Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 24 February 2016, circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that subject to correcting the spelling of Councillor Thwaites' surname and the third sentence of paragraph 7 of Minute No. C119 being rewritten to state "...should not be used exclusively to increase reserves, but be partly used to deliver services to the rural areas...", the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 24 February 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

C124 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No.	Member of	Action Taken
Cllr I Aldridge	All	Williton	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Goss	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr B Maitland-Walker	All	Carhampton	Spoke and voted
Cllr C Morgan	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr J Parbrook	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr R Thomas	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr N Thwaites	All	Dulverton	Spoke and voted
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr K Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

C125 Public Participation

Item 9 HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocation of CIM Funding

Peter Branson, Chair of Otterhampton Parish Project Team spoke of the various benefits the project would offer to the local community and thanked the Council for its tremendous support so far and commended the bid for Council's consideration.

C126 Chairman's Announcements

11 March 2016	Accepted an invitation from the Chairman of South Somerset District Council to attend a production of Evita at the Octagon Theatre, Yeovil
13 March 2016	Attended the Legal Service for the installation of the new High Sheriff of Somerset

In addition, the Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development provided an update on the recent West Somerset College Post 16 tour for Councillors which took place on 14 March 2016. Members had the opportunity to ask questions and obtained an insight of the College's situation and outcomes. The College was in the process of carrying out an internal consultation and it was clear that their challenges were significant, and she advised that West Somerset Council would continue to support the College as they moved forward.

C127 **Transfer of Predicted Underspend to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve and Sustainability Reserve**

(Report No. WSC 40/16, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to approve the transfer of funds to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve and Sustainability Reserve as per the recommendation from Cabinet as part of the Financial Monitoring Report 2015/16 (April – December 2015).

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support outlined the details of the report, providing information on the overspends and underspends contained within the revenue budget outturn. She advised that whilst quarter 3 reported an underspend, the position could change at the end of quarter 4. The report also provided a full explanation of the figures pertaining to the underspend (paragraph 4.3 refers).

The Lead Member went on to state that the risk of funding volatility in future remained high and the recommended transfers acknowledged this. Subsequent to the last Cabinet meeting, a briefing note detailing the business rate risk had been circulated to Members.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations of the report which were seconded by Councillor B Maitland-Walker.

Councillor P Murphy was concerned that the wording of paragraph 4.3 created a misleading impression and as a consequence proposed an amendment to include an additional recommendation to be inserted before those detailed in the report, to state "That Council notes the predicted underspend of £145,267 at the end of quarter 3.". The amendment was seconded by Councillor I Aldridge.

On being put to the vote the amendment was LOST.

RESOLVED (1) that the transfer of £50,000 of the projected underspend to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that the transfer of £50,000 of the projected underspend to the Sustainability Reserve be approved.

C128 Dulverton Off-Street Parking Fees and Charges

(Report No. WSC 38/16, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to set out proposals to be considered for the increase in off-street parking fees and permits for WSC car parks located within Dulverton as requested by Dulverton Town Council in the support of traffic management of tourist industry by seeking to influence driver behaviour with the following outcomes:

- Provision of addition short stay parking bays for tourists
- Continue investment in parking assets.

The report also identified the ongoing investment needs to improve the assets, the customer's experience and convenience.

The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth presented the report and proposed the recommendations set out in the report which were duly seconded by Councillor N Thwaites.

RESOLVED (1) that an increase in off-street parking fees be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that an increase to six months and yearly permits be approved.

C129 Tarr Steps Off-Street Parking Fees and Charges

(Report No. WSC 39/16, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to set out a proposal to be considered for the increase in off-street parking fees and charges for Tarr Steps car park as requested by Exmoor National Park Authority to support continued investment in the parking asset.

The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth presented the report and proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor A Hadley.

RESOLVED that the increase to the Tarr Steps car park tariff as requested by the Exmoor National Park Authority be approved.

C130 HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocation of CIM Funding

(Report No. WSC 41/16, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to present the recommendations of the Hinkley Point C Planning Obligations Board and West Somerset Cabinet for the allocation of monies from the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) Fund secured through the Section 106 legal agreement for the Site Preparation Works at Hinkley Point.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report, advising that the Otterhampton Parish Council project was the first project to be funded from the CIM Fund 1st Annual Payment which was a Somerset-wide funding pot.

She stated the Planning Obligations Board (POB) acknowledged that the Watchet Arts Group had submitted a well presented application aiming to regenerate the town, and scored well in relation to partner and community support, however there were concerns around the long-term sustainability and value for money of the project. The Lead Member reiterated the CIM Fund Manager would be able to offer advice to unsuccessful applicants and they had a second opportunity to resubmit a revised application.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations of the report which were seconded by Councillor B Leaker.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Concerns about the Watchet Arts Group project not being a long-term legacy; and it was felt that future funding requests for repairs and repainting may be forthcoming due to the ongoing expense for regular maintenance because of the effects of sea water and weathering.
- The Watchet Arts Project would enhance the town and its tourist industry. The murals were to be painted by a local artist and it was noted that the Watchet Arts Group would update and repaint the wall. The Group were greatly enthusiastic and determined to make the project work.
- The CIM Fund Manager was thanked for providing advice to the representatives of Watchet Arts Group immediately following the March Cabinet meeting.
- The Otterhampton Parish project was a very worthy project and Members were urged to support it, and to bear in mind the disruption and upheaval that the community was experiencing as a result of the Hinkley project.
- The fact that grant funding would only be released following receipt of the final payment of match funding was considered to be an important and useful safeguard.
- Otterhampton parish had their own ring-fenced fund but as this did not start until next year, the POB agreed to allocate funding from the Somerset-wide fund as they regarded the project to be very worthwhile.

RESOLVED (1) that the decision of West Somerset Cabinet to refuse the application for £19,850 from Watchet Arts Group on the basis that it did not sufficiently meet the value for money criteria be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the recommendation of the Hinkley C Planning Obligations Board and West Somerset Cabinet to release £37,820 from the CIM Fund 1st Annual Payment to Otterhampton Parish Council for the Recreation Ground Enhancement Project be endorsed.

C131 Superfast Broadband – Delivery of Phase 2 Rollout

(Report No. WSC 32/16, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to update Members on the procurement process for the delivery of Superfast Broadband phase two (this programme was being delivered through the Connecting Devon and Somerset Partnership (CDS)); to seek necessary authorisations to enable to Council to finalise its commitment to phase two of this project; and to give an outline of the key issues, risks and considerations associated with this decision as they related to the collaboration agreement.

The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth presented the report in detail and asked Council to reaffirm its support for the continuation of phase 2 of the programme. She stated that having access to superfast broadband was vital, being able to transform business and home life. The availability and quality of broadband had a significant impact on economic growth at a local level – tourists were now making holiday choices based on connectivity, and the lack of availability would be detrimental to the whole district.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations of the report which were seconded by Councillor M Dewdney.

Various questions and issues were then raised by Members and the Assistant Director Business Development noted them down for consideration/action.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- Concerns as to the uncertainty about which areas would be covered and who would benefit in phase 2.
- What return would the Council receive on its investment.
- The proposed completion date of phase 2 was confirmed as the end of 2017. The Assistant Director Business Development confirmed it was on target and would be delivered promptly following the completion of the procurement process.
- Superfast broadband would benefit West Somerset in many ways and would help attract more people into the area.

The Lead Member concluded by confirming that the money invested by West Somerset Council would be spent in the locality, would provide significant commercial influence and the programme was value for money.

RESOLVED (1) that the update on the procurement process to deliver phase 2 superfast broadband be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the proposal to grant delegated powers to the Assistant Director for Business Development to sign the collaboration agreement in consultation with the portfolio holder for Economic Development be supported.

C132 Mandate for Development of Transformation Business Case

(Report No. WSC 42/16, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to formally update Members on the current position on Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS). Both West Somerset Council (WSC) and Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) were asked to confirm their continuing commitment to a joint future before work would start on any business case development, and to move forward and develop a high level business case (with variants) that tested the ability to transform for both Councils together or separately.

The Leader presented the report, emphasising that the One Team and JMASS project was an outstanding success which had given the Council a great level of expertise and a balanced budget for this year. As the future of the Council was in the balance there was a need to go forward and prepare the various business cases as set out in the report. The progression of the Hinkley C project was one of the main influencing factors on whether WSC would survive as a sovereign council, and the testing of the three variants would provide evidence to ascertain whether WSC could remain as a separate council or not.

The Leader proposed the recommendations of the report, with an adjustment to the printed wording by deleting the word 'exclusive' from the first line in recommendation 2.1 a/. The reason being it could be misinterpreted that WSC would not cooperate in joint working with other local authorities. The Leader confirmed the Council would continue to do so as was currently happening in respect of the sharing of building control and legal services with Sedgemoor District Council and Mendip District Council respectively. The recommendations, as amended, were seconded by Councillor B Maitland-Walker.

The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the closedown reports attached as appendices to the report and advised that the transformation stage would build on the successes already achieved, namely additional resilience and access to skills, the delivery of phase 1 ahead of time and on budget, and improvements in asset management performance and financial reporting. There was now a need to pick up the pace of the transformation work as it was important to both councils in terms of their long-term sustainability.

On consideration of the report, the following main points were raised:

- Members praised the very successful partnership working, and strongly expressed their support.
- Very impressed with the improvements made in so many areas and the expertise available across the whole of the organisation.
- In testing the business case the Council would have a much clearer picture as to the the most viable future.
- Pleased to note that the three variants would be developed simultaneously and the results would be reported on in June/July 2016.

- Attention was drawn to the 'Withdrawal, Termination and Exit Strategy' section of the Inter Authority Agreement and the costs associated with this were recognised.
- Members and officers of TDBC were thanked for remaining committed to the process – the partnership had produced huge benefits and WSC Members looked forward to it continuing.
- It was important to look at solutions for improved alignment of services, e.g. IT, to prevent any barriers for future joint working arrangements.

RESOLVED (1) that West Somerset Council confirmed a continued commitment to a core and on-going long-term JMASS partnership between Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in the Inter Authority Agreements dated 15 November 2013.

RESOLVED (2) that the development of high level Transformation Business Case that tests the following sequential options be authorised and prioritised:

- ONE Team supporting two Councils (TDBC and WSC);
- ONE Team supporting a merged Council (TDBC and WSC);
- Two Councils progressing their own transformation agendas.

The meeting closed at 6.05 pm