

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 September 2015 at 4.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Williton

Present:

Councillor G S Dowding Chairman
Councillor B Heywood Vice-Chairman

Councillor I Aldridge	Councillor D Archer
Councillor A Behan	Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor H J W Davies	Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor S Y Goss	Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor T Hall	Councillor I Jones
Councillor R P Lillis	Councillor B Maitland-Walker
Councillor P H Murphy	Councillor J Parbrook
Councillor S J Pugsley	Councillor R Thomas
Councillor N Thwaites	Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor K H Turner	Councillor T Venner
Councillor D J Westcott	Councillor R Woods

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive (P James)
Director of Operations/Section 151 Officer (S Adam)
Assistant Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer (B Lang)
Director Growth and Development (B Cleere)
Assistant Director Energy Infrastructure (A Goodchild)
Assistant Director Resources (P Fitzgerald)
Democratic Services Manager (R Bryant)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

C52 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Clifford, B Leaker, K Mills and C Morgan.

C53 Minutes

(Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 19 August 2015, circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 19 August 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

C54 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 D Archer	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr H J W Davies	All	SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Goss	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr B Maitland-Walker	All	Carhampton	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 T Venner	All	Minehead & SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

C55 **Public Participation**

No members of the public spoke at the meeting on any items on the agenda.

C56 **Chairman's Announcements**

As part of his announcements, the Chairman proposed a motion that West Somerset Council send the following statement to Her Majesty The Queen:

“The people of West Somerset, from Porlock in the West to Hinkley Point in the East, together with Minehead and Watchet in the North, to Dulverton in the South, send our warmest congratulations and loyal greetings to Her Majesty upon reaching and passing Her historic and regal milestone.

We wish Her very many more happy and glorious years to reign over us.

God save the Queen.”

The Leader seconded the motion.

RESOLVED that the above statement be conveyed to Her Majesty The Queen on behalf of full Council.

September 2015	Attended the High Sheriff of Somerset Awards Ceremony
16 September 2015	Attended the Graduation Ceremony at Bridgwater College

The Chairman went on to commend the Chair of Martock Parish Council for his interesting and insightful presentation on how parish and town councils can play a greater part in their communities, which was shown to members of the Watchet, Williton and Quantock Vale Area Panel at its meeting held on 15 September 2015, advising that the presentation would be circulated to Members.

C57 **The Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) and Flood Action Plan – Update Report**

(Report No. WSC 135/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to update Council on the development of the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) since the report to Corporate Policy Advisory Group and Cabinet in November/December 2014. The report detailed progress since that date along with the ongoing discussions for future funding and governance.

The Leader presented the item, stating that flooding issues in West Somerset differed to that of other parts of the county. He acknowledged and thanked the work of the West Somerset Flood Group and, in particular, Dr Teresa Bridgeman who had led the way on flooding matters in the district.

Attention was drawn to the four suggested funding review options contained within the report and the Leader provided an explanation as to why West Somerset Council was recommending Option 1, to create a separate precepting body, as its preferred option.

It was noted that there would be a funding gap during 2016/17 as a result of there not being any primary legislation in place, and the Leader provided assurance that this was currently being addressed.

The Leader proposed the recommendations of the report, with an addition to the wording of recommendation 3.2 printed in the report, to include "...in principle, on the basis that any levy money raised will be allocated via a list of priorities that are different from the existing Environment Agency grant aid funding and will include rural sparsity factors and take account of the cumulative effects of coastal flooding as well as surface water and main river and ordinary water course flooding."

Councillor M Dewdney seconded the recommendations, as amended.

During the discussion, the following main points were raised:

- Need to ensure that there was a fair return and good value for money for residents of West Somerset and a guarantee that a sizeable proportion of the district's contribution is returned to the West Somerset Council area.
- The Leader recognised concerns raised and explained why Sedgemoor residents were proposed to be exempted from the new precept, confirming that Members' comments would be communicated to the SRA Board at the next meeting.

- Various issues and questions were raised regarding the responsibility of riparian owners, who would manage the maintenance of watercourses properly and how the SRA would improve the flooding relief situation.

RESOLVED (1) that the progress to date in the development of the Somerset Rivers Authority and West Somerset Council's position on the way forward, as set out in the report, be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that progress in the delivery of the Levels & Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan (2014) be noted.

RESOLVED (3) that the creation of a separate precepting body as West Somerset Council's preferred funding option be formally approved, noting that the Council's position will be confirmed to the SRA Board meeting in late September in principle, on the basis that any levy money raised will be allocated via a list of priorities that are different from the existing Environment Agency grant aid funding and will include rural sparsity factors and take account of the cumulative effects of coastal flooding as well as surface water and main river and ordinary water course flooding.

C58 HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocations of CIM Funding

(Report No. WSC 134/15, 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 Council 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 item was presented by the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support who reported on the application process, advising that all applications were subject to financial viability checks. A summary of the Coronation Park enhancement project was given and it was noted that extra funding would be levered in. She drew Members' attention to funding allocations from the CIM Fund and took pleasure in highlighting the long list of great projects which had been approved by WSC, many of which would be delivered in the local community.

She went on to propose the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor S Pugsley.

RESOLVED (1) that the decision of West Somerset Cabinet be noted, as follows:

- (i) To release £18,295 from the CIM Fund ring-fenced for projects in Sedgemoor (and in particular Bridgwater) to Bridgwater Education Trust as a contribution to the expansion of their student/employee mentoring project.

- (ii) To not approve the second application for funding from Church House, Crowcombe as the application did not demonstrate how the project would provide community benefits that address impacts of the Hinkley Point C development, or how it would effectively meet the CIM Fund criteria.

RESOLVED (2) that the recommendations of the Hinkley Point C Planning Obligations Board and West Somerset Council be endorsed, as follows:

- (i) To release £200,000 from the CIM Fund ring-fenced for projects in Sedgemoor (and in particular Bridgwater) to Sydenham and Bower Family Health and Wellbeing Group for the enhancement of Coronation Park in Bridgwater noting the significant amount of additional funding the project will attract into the area.

C59 **Transfer of Predicted Underspend to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve**

(Report No. WSC 136/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to ask Members to approve the transfer of funds to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve as per the recommendation from Cabinet as part of the Financial Monitoring Report 2015-16 (April-June 2015).

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and provided background information. She advised that there was a certain amount of risk and area of uncertainty for WSC pertaining to business rates when setting the budget, however, currently the amount of business rates projected to be due this year was lower than expected. It was important to note that there were 150 appeals lodged with the Valuation Office which remained outstanding, and the Lead Member stated that the Council was mindful of the extent of the impact and there was provision set aside to cover the likely cost of the refunds. However, as there was uncertainty concerning repayment timescales, it was prudent to set additional monies aside.

She proposed the recommendation of the report which was duly seconded by Councillor M Dewdney.

In response to questions raised:

- An update on the council's position to challenging central government on the unfairness resulting from the large reduction in rateable value for Hinkley B power station business rate retention was provided and it was advised that discussions with central government were in hand to explore ways on how to get the maximum support possible.
- Members were informed on the progress of the LGA/Bill Roots review - further financial information had been requested and it was envisaged that the report would be available in the next few weeks. The report would also provide the Council with key messages and an approach to lobbying.

- The impact to the Council as well as the possible loss of income and jobs in the area by the potential closure of the Watchet Paper Mill was discussed.

RESOLVED that the transfer of £200,000 to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve be approved.

NOTE: Councillor G S Dowding left the meeting at 5.30 pm and the Vice-chairman, Councillor B Heywood chaired the remainder of the meeting.

C60 **Harbour Operations**

(Report No. WSC 137/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to raise Members' awareness of the statutory Harbour responsibilities, to request that a Harbour Board be created and request appropriate resources to be provided to deliver the statutory requirements.

The Lead Member for Environment presented the item and provided Members with the background information, advising that the report recommended option 3 as the proposed way forward for delivering the Harbour Master role. Members noted an error in the report pertaining to the establishment of a Harbour Board and that the list of non-voting attendees would not include 'Board Members', as stated.

The Lead Member praised the Assistant Director – Operational Delivery for his hard work on addressing the concerns by developing a robust process and suggesting solutions for managing the Minehead and Watchet harbours.

Members were advised that the Scrutiny Committee had considered the report and the Lead Member thanked them for their constructive comments.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor A Trollope-Bellew.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director – Operational Delivery confirmed that the role of Harbour Master did not require specific marine qualifications but competency needed to be evidenced.

It was suggested that the meetings of the Watchet Harbour Advisory Committee and Harbour Board should be held within a couple of weeks of each other so that reports could dovetail from one to the other, and that it would be useful to include the dates on next year's timetable of meetings.

RESOLVED (1) that the creation of the Harbour Board with membership as set out in section 6.16 of the report, as amended by Scrutiny Committee, be supported.

RESOLVED (2) that the roles set out within the report to be identified as accountable in respect of the conditions set out in the Port Marine Safety Code be approved.

RESOLVED (3) that the following increases in funding (revenue funding to be pro rata for 2015/16):

- (i) £26,000 per annum increase in the Harbours budget to support the Harbour Master role
- (ii) £5,000 one off sum to update WSC Port Marine Safety Code.

NOTE: Having regard to the special circumstances pertaining in relation to this item – namely the need for the Council to consider the decision without delay due to health and safety issues – the Chairman was of the opinion that, despite its non-inclusion on the agenda, this item should be considered at this meeting as a matter of urgency.

C61 **Composition of Policy Advisory Groups (PAGs) for 2015/16**

The Council's Constitution states that the core membership of the PAGs will be agreed annually by full Council. In June all Members were encouraged to attend as many PAGs as they wanted and then let the Assistant Chief Executive and their respective Group Leader know if they would like to be considered as a core member of any particular PAG (or PAGs). In the absence of any specific requests being received, and, following consultation with the two group leaders, it was proposed that for the 2015/16 municipal year, the PAGs would operate on the basis of being chaired by the appropriate Lead Member without a specified core membership on the understanding that the position could be reviewed after the next AGM. All Members were entitled to attend any PAG in any case and so this should not cause any issues as long as all PAGs continued to be well attended.

RESOLVED that the position be noted.

C62 **Minutes and Notes for Information**

(Minutes and Notes relating to this item, circulated via the Council's website.)

RESOLVED that the notes of the Watchet Harbour Advisory Committee held on 22 April 2015 be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.45 pm.