

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2014 at 4.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Williton

Present:

Councillor G S Dowding Chairman
Councillor A F Knight..... Vice-Chairman

Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor S Y Goss
Councillor B Heywood
Councillor E May
Councillor K M Mills
Councillor P H Murphy
Councillor D D Ross
Councillor D J Sanders
Councillor M A Smith
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor H J W Davies
Councillor J Freeman
Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor R P Lillis
Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor C Morgan
Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor K J Ross
Councillor L W Smith
Councillor T Taylor
Councillor K H Turner

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (B Lang)
Assistant Director – Resources (P Fitzgerald)
Assistant Director – Operational Delivery (C Hall)
Principal Planning Officer – Policy (T Clempson)
PR and Communications Officer (D Rundle)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

C77 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K V Kravis.

C78 Minutes

(Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 19 November 2014, circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 19 November 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

C79 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 H J W Davies	All	SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Y Goss	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr P H Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr K J Ross	All	Dulverton	Spoke and voted
Cllr L W Smith	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

In addition, the following interest was declared:

Name	Minute No.	Description of interest	Personal or Prejudicial	Action Taken
Cllr A H Trollope-Bellew	C83	Owner of a water supply	Personal	Did not speak or vote

Upon a signed request, the Members present at the Meeting were granted a dispensation relating to a disclosable pecuniary interest in Item 6 – Joint Independent Remuneration Panel – Process to Review Members’ Allowances – due to all being in receipt of allowances.

C80 Public Participation

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

C81 Chairman’s Announcements

11 December 2014	Attended the 10 th Anniversary Tree Planting event at Bridgwater Cannington College
13 December 2014	Visited Taunton Sorting Office to observe the handling of the Christmas mail

C82 Joint Independent Remuneration Panel – Process to Review Members’ Allowances

(Report No. WSC 179/14 circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to advise the Council of the latest position with regard to the membership of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel and seek endorsement for the timetable and process to review the Member Allowances Scheme in light of the May 2015 elections.

The Leader presented the report advising that there would be no increase in the total amount spent on Members’ allowances following the 2015 council elections, and Members were reminded to complete a questionnaire to ascertain their views on the scheme. He proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor C Morgan.

In response to a concern expressed regarding the membership of the Panel, the Monitoring Officer provided clarification on the composition and explained that each partner would receive separate reports and the final decision would be determined by each constituent council.

RESOLVED (1) that the formal expansion of the Panel to include Taunton Deane Borough Council be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the Panel membership including the proposed representatives for Mendip District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council be endorsed.

RESOLVED (3) that the timetable and process from the formal review of the West Somerset Council Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in Section 5 of the report be endorsed.

C83 **Fees and Charges 2015/16**

(Report No. WSC 181/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to approve the proposed fees and charges for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Leader introduced the report. The Assistant Director – Resources provided further information on the background stating that due consideration of the fees and charges had been undertaken by officers who had looked at the cost of services to ensure compliance with relevant regulations and legislation; costs were not being over recovered and had been increased in line with inflation. The process of agreeing fees and charges was a key step towards setting a budget for next year.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor M J Chilcott.

During the debate the following main points were raised:

- A request was made to consider offering a reduced green waste bin charge over a two/three year period, however this would not be possible based on the full cost recovery approach.
- Statutory charges should increase with the rate of inflation unless there was an extremely good reason not to.
- An inaccuracy to the Pleasure Boat Dues figure was highlighted.
- A question was raised regarding the new charges proposed for caravan site licences and clarification was provided during the meeting.

RESOLVED that the proposed Fees and Charges for 2015/16 be approved on the following basis:

The following fees are unchanged:

- Hackney Carriage Licences (Existing)
- Private Hire Licences

- Acupuncture/Tattooing/Skin Piercing/Semi-Permanent Skin-Colouring Licences
- Scrap Metal Dealers Licensing
- Animal Welfare Licences
- Street Trading Licences
- Gambling Licences
- Land Search Fees
- Housing Inspections for Immigration Purposes
- Court Summons and Liability Orders for Council Tax and NNDR
- Building Control Charges

The following changes are proposed:

New charges for:

- Caravan site licences and;
- Various additional hackney carriage licences (see Appendix B to the report)

Increased charges for:

- Harbour Mooring and Slipway Fees increase in line with inflation
- Pleasure Boat Dues increase in line with inflation
- Green Waste Charges various
- Private Water Supplies increase in line with inflation
- Pre-Planning Advice

C84 Updated West Somerset Statement of Community Involvement

(Report No. WSC 180/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to recommend the adoption of an updated Statement of Community Involvement for the Council setting out how it will involve the community and other interested parties in the preparation of planning policy documents and also in the development management process..

The Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing presented the item and provided Members with the background information, confirming that Old Cleeve Parish Council would be included on the list of statutory consultees listed in Appendix A of the report. The Lead Member went on to propose the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor D J Westcott.

In response, it was confirmed that the revised Statement of Community Involvement would have no effect on the Planning Committee in terms of how it decided an application within the prescribed timeline.

Minor amendments were suggested to the Statement of Community Involvement document which included arranging the list of stakeholders in Appendix A into alphabetical order and amending the list at Appendix B to include town councils as well as parish councils.

Following concerns raised regarding the procedure and the responsibilities of ward members to be able to call in applications to the Planning Committee, it was proposed and seconded to include additional wording to the recommendation as follows: "Where two or more councillors request that an application be determined by the Planning Committee, it is expected that the Chair and Vice-Chair will normally allow that application to go to the Committee unless there are very strong reasons not to do so and these reasons should be communicated".

On being put to the vote the amendment was LOST.

There was no further debate and on being put to the vote the substantive motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED that the revised West Somerset Statement of Community Involvement attached at Appendix 1 to the report be adopted, subject to the addition of the following at the end of the first sentence under the heading 'Decisions' on Page 16 of the draft SCI:
"Ward Councillors may request that any application be determined by the Planning Committee. Such requests received within 14 days of validation will be considered by the Chair & Vice Chair of Committee."

C85 **Financial Monitoring Report 2014-15 (April – September 2014)**

(Report No. WSC 157/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with details of the Council's expected financial outturn position in 2014/15 for both revenue and capital budgets, together with information relating to predicted end of year reserve balances.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Leader introduced the report. The Assistant Director – Resources provided further information on the background information and advised that an underspend of around £45,000 was being forecast, although this would be subject to change and monitored. The Leader went on to propose the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor K H Turner.

Clarification was provided on business rate retention and concern was raised regarding the fact that the forecasting was subject to huge variations. Members recognised that despite WSC having spending/financial issues there were good news stories in the report in relation to the forecasted underspend and the predicted general reserves balance.

RESOLVED (1) that the current financial standing of the Council together with the estimated position at the end of the financial year be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that £95,158 be transferred to General Fund Reserves in respect of the following:

- NDR Administration £75,158

- Interest Costs £20,000

RESOLVED (3) that £49,985 be transferred to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve to set aside the updated forecast retained business funding surplus in the year.

RESOLVED (4) that a budget transfer (virement) of £40,000 of in year underspends, to provide funds necessary to support essential asset condition surveys in respect of key compliance matters along with stock condition information that will support the development of a robust asset management plan to assist with future decision making and prioritisation of works, be approved.

C86 **Treasury Management Update – as at 30 September 2014**

(Report No. WSC 183/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to update Full Council on the Treasury Management position as at 30th September 2014 and to provide an update for the 2014-15 Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

The item was introduced by the Leader. The Assistant Director – Resources then went on to describe to Members the half year treasury management position for WSC. He advised that the policy set out rules and ways of working to ensure good stewardship of public funds to keep the Council's financial position safe, and he drew Members' attention to amendments made to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement. The Assistant Director responded to concerns regarding credit default swaps and provided clarification on the matter.

The Leader proposed the recommendations contained within the report which were seconded by Councillor E May.

RESOLVED (1) that the Treasury Management position as at 30 September 2014 be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that the amendments to the 2014-15 Treasury Management Strategy Statement be approved.

C87 **Timetable of Meetings 2015/16**

(Timetable of Meetings for 2015/16 Municipal Year circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to agree a timetable of meetings for the 2015/2016 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that the 2015/16 timetable be approved.

C88 **Standards Advisory Committee**

(Minutes of the Standards Advisory Committee held on 23 September 2014 circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Standards Advisory Committee held on 23 September 2014 be adopted..

C89 **Blue Anchor Coastal Protection Scheme**

(Report No. WSC 184/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to raise awareness of new risks that have been identified in the potential delivery of the Blue Anchor Coastal Protection Scheme.

The Lead Member for Environment - General presented the item and stressed that the reason for the report being presented to Council was due to timetabling and not just because of financial reasons; he then provided Members with the background information and reported on issues such as the amount of officer time spent on the matter, project underwriting and the costs that could be incurred by WSC if work on the bid continued.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation of the report subject to the inclusion of a further recommendation that the £25,000 allocated to the scheme be removed from the Capital Programme, which were seconded by Councillor K M Mills.

In response to a point raised regarding the cost implications of moving the road, the Assistant Director – Operational Delivery confirmed that a value estimate for the road had been obtained. Discussions had been held with Somerset County Council as they had been one of the contributing authorities, and it also was reported that the likely costs to implement the scheme and the financial benefits had been assessed, however they were not found great enough for the value of the scheme. The officer advised that the Council had tried to engage all affected bodies and partners in the project and if Members were supportive of the recommendations the work already carried out could be undertaken by another organisation who was better placed to take the project forward.

Various questions and issues were then raised by Members in regard to coastal protection and how to best manage the risks of flooding and erosion.

RESOLVED (1) that, in light of the new risks identified, Members instruct all work associated with the bid to the Environment Agency to cease.

RESOLVED (2) that the £25,000 allocated to the scheme be removed from the Capital Programme.

C90 **Minutes and Notes for Information**

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

RESOLVED that the notes of the Exmoor Area Panel held on 4 November 2014 be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.20 pm