

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2014 at 4.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Williton

Present:

Councillor G S Dowding Chairman
Councillor B Heywood Vice-Chairman

Councillor A Chick	Councillor H J W Davies
Councillor M O A Dewdney	Councillor J Freeman
Councillor P N Grierson	Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor K V Kravis	Councillor E May
Councillor K M Mills	Councillor C Morgan
Councillor P H Murphy	Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor D D Ross	Councillor K J Ross
Councillor D J Sanders	Councillor L W Smith
Councillor M A Smith	Councillor T Taylor
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew	Councillor K H Turner
Councillor D J Westcott	

Officers in Attendance:

Director of Operations (S Adam)
Assistant Chief Executive (B Lang)
Director – Housing and Communities (J Barrah)
HR Consultant (M Griffin)
Assistant Director – Housing and Community Development (S Lewis)
Assistant Director – Business Development (I Timms)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

Also in Attendance:

Matt Ballard, Somerset County Council (Item 11)

C13 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor B Heywood be appointed Vice-Chairman for the meeting.

C14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M J Chilcott, S Y Goss, R P Lillis, I R Melhuish and A F Knight.

C15 Minutes

(Minutes of the meeting of Annual Council held on 14 May 2014 circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Annual Council held on 14 May 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

C16 **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 P N Grierson	All	Alcombe	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

C17 **Public Participation**

Peter Grandfield and Mike Copleston spoke on Agenda Item 11 – Superfast Broadband Extension – Request for Match Funding.

C18 **Chairman’s Announcements**

7 June 2014	Attended a service for the installation of the new Bishop of Bath and Wells at Wells Cathedral
14 June 2014	Attended the Somerset Schools’ Folk Dance Festival in Wells

The Chairman announced that the Armed Forces Day ceremony would be held on Monday 23 June at 11.00 am at the Council Offices, Williton and hoped as many Members as possible would be able to attend.

C19 **Core Members of Policy Advisory Groups (PAGs)**

RESOLVED that for the 2014/15 municipal year, the core membership of Policy Advisory Groups (PAGs) be approved as follows:

Housing, Health & Wellbeing

*Councillor K H Turner
Councillor D J Westcott
Councillor A M Chick
Councillor B Heywood
Councillor A F Knight
Councillor L W Smith
Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor E May

Environment

*Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
*Councillor C Morgan
Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor S Y Goss
Councillor J Freeman
Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor E May
Councillor M A Smith
Councillor B Heywood
Councillor M O A Dewdney

Community and Customer

*Councillor D J Westcott
Councillor K H Turner
Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor K M Mills
Councillor A F Knight
Councillor L W Smith
Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor E May
Councillor D J Sanders

Performance & Corporate Support

*Councillor T Taylor
*Councillor S J Pugsley
*Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor R P Lillis
Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor J Freeman
Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor D D Ross
Councillor P H Murphy

Regeneration & Economic Growth

*Councillor K M Mills
Councillor R P Lillis
Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor S Y Goss
Councillor A M Chick
Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor K J Ross
Councillor E May
Councillor M A Smith
Councillor D D Ross
Councillor P N Grierson

Hinkley

Councillor C Morgan
Councillor M A Smith
Councillor T Taylor
Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor S Y Goss

C20 **Member Reporting on Membership of Outside Body for information**

(The following reports were circulated with the Agenda:

- Armed Forces Covenant Committee by Councillor G S Dowding
- Police and Crime Committee by Councillor G S Dowding
- Management Committee of Broadlands by Councillor P Grierson
- Somerset Play Forum and Somerset Rural Youth Project by Councillor E May)

The Chairman thanked those Councillors who had submitted reports.

RESOLVED that the reports on membership of outside bodies be noted.

C21 **Dulverton Weir Repair Works**

(Report No. WSC 85/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to update on steps taken to secure a repair to the damaged Weir in Dulverton and to seek consent for a Capital contribution to initiate works. This report and the recommendations have previously been approved by Cabinet.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Environment – General who outlined the details contained therein. He reiterated the Council had a legal obligation to keep water running down the Leat and advised that the emergency work which had been carried out last year had now dispersed due to the severe winter weather conditions. He advised that there were other options to consider in order to address the problem and officers would investigate these, but in the meantime a temporary but robust repair was proposed to be undertaken.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations of the report, which were duly seconded by Councillor E May.

Members congratulated the Director - Housing and Communities for his clear, concise and well written report and expressed support for the proposed repair work. Councillor K J Ross stated that it was essential that once the repairs had been carried out, the Weir be properly maintained thereafter.

RESOLVED (1) that the proposed temporary repair to the Weir be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that an increase to the 2014-15 Capital Programme by £20,000 to support the works be approved.

RESOLVED (3) that the standing orders be agreed to be waived and the Council's preferred contractor be appointed to undertake this work as a matter of urgency.

C22 Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Discretions

(Report No. WSC 84/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to set out some minor wording amendments to the current LGPS Discretions as suggested by the Pensions Manager at Peninsula Pensions; and to set out wording for two new discretions which arise as part of the LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014 and which need to be approved by 30 June 2015.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

RESOLVED (1) that the minor wording amendments to the current discretions as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that the wording for the two new pension discretions as set out in Appendix B to the report be approved.

C23 **WSC's Response to Somerset's Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

(Report No. WSC 88/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek approval for West Somerset Council's (WSC) response to Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2018.

The report was presented in detail by the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing who expressed a wish for health and wellbeing to be, in the future, one of the Council's corporate priorities as he felt that the Council had a vital role to play and a greater responsibility for health and wellbeing for residents in the district. He drew Members' attention to the Better Care Fund and highlighted that WSC was regularly working with local partnerships to make better use of resources.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations contained within the report which were duly seconded by Councillor D J Westcott.

Various questions and issues were then raised by Members on matters which included the underutilisation of Minehead Hospital; the importance of education and training on health and wellbeing within schools; understanding that there was a need for more resources but not at the cost of reducing acute services; and the future of Williton Hospital.

RESOLVED (1) that the WSC response to the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that it be agreed that the Joint Management Team adopt and monitor delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

RESOLVED (3) that future budget decisions in line with the delivery of the action plan be considered.

C24 **Superfast Broadband Extension – Request for Match Funding**

(Report No. WSC 86/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to update Council on the proposal to extend the superfast broadband rollout project to increase the coverage in the district; and to outline the requirement for match funding and request that Council determine whether to agree in principle to commit £240,000 to secure the extended coverage.

The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth presented the report in detail, highlighting the following:

- The number of additional properties who would access superfast broadband as a result of the extension was approximately 2,410.

- The project was crucial, giving WSC access to significant match funding, and was also a new opportunity which would ensure the Council had a say in the new contract on how it best served the residents and businesses in the district.
- Recent studies have shown that the overall number of homeworkers has increased significantly and more than a quarter of workers in West Somerset work from home.
- The lack of superfast broadband was one of the key prohibitors to moving into the area.
- If, following the procurement process, the Council considered that the coverage did not provide value for money there would be an opportunity to withdraw from the scheme.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations contained in the report which were duly seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

There were differing views from Members about the proposal. A lengthy debate ensued and the following main points were raised:

- The Council did not have the capital resources available to support the project.
- The money should be spent on improving the quality of basic services within the district.
- West Somerset desperately needed superfast broadband and it was crucial to the district's future.
- It was reiterated that this was a brand new procurement exercise and not a further rollout of the Devon and Somerset Broadband project, and there would be opportunities to look at alternative technologies.
- Concern with the difficulties in acquiring future funding for the aspirational capital programme if all the Council's money was spent on this project.
- The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support stated that the decision had huge financial impacts and expressed concern about committing that amount of money, however she strongly felt that people of West Somerset could not be denied this opportunity.
- The Council was being penalised for being rural.
- Who would assess whether the Council was getting value for money.
- It was the duty of councils to invest in infrastructure and broadband.
- The report did not make it clear where the money would come from and what the implications would be of using capital receipts.
- The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee reported that the committee would want to look at the future of the capital programme in more detail to gain reassurance that value for money was being achieved.
- The project would improve a lot of people's lives.

The Assistant Director – Business Development reassured Members that the procurement would be supported by technical and financial experts and confirmed that a report would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee on how value for money was judged as part of the exercise.

On being put to the vote there were 17 votes for, 4 against and 1 abstention and the recommendations contained in the report were CARRIED.

RESOLVED (1) that, subject to the issues set out in the report, the sum of £240,000 for the SEP Broadband Project, underwritten by West Somerset Council in the following manner, be approved, pending the outcome of bids for external funding:

- £109,000 of unallocated capital resources, plus
- £131,000 from 2014/15 expected capital receipts. Should capital receipts not be forthcoming, then this will be funded from General Fund Reserves.

RESOLVED (2) that the Assistant Director Business Development be requested to urgently progress bids for external funding to cover the costs underwritten by West Somerset Council on the SEP Broadband project. An update report on progress would be shared with the Corporate Policy Advisory Group in six months.

RESOLVED (3) that the Assistant Director Business Development be nominated to be the Council's representative throughout the procurement process.

The meeting closed at 6.34 pm