

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 November 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 M J Chilcott
Councillor R Clifford	Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor S Y Goss	Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor T Hall	Councillor I Jones
Councillor B Leaker	Councillor R P Lillis
Councillor B Maitland-Walker	Councillor K M Mills
Councillor P H Murphy	Councillor J Parbrook
Councillor S J Pugsley	Councillor T Venner
Councillor D J Westcott	Councillor R Woods

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer (B Lang)
Assistant Director Energy Infrastructure (A Goodchild)
Senior Accountant and Deputy Section 151 (J Nacey)
Interim Assistant Director Property and Development (T May)
Assistant Director Planning and Environment (T Burton)
Media and Communications Officer (D Rundle)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Chairman requested a minute's silence in memory of ex-councillor Sybil Pearce who had recently passed away. In addition, sincere condolences were expressed to those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks in Paris.

C73 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Archer, A Behan, H Davies, T Hall, C Morgan, R Thomas, N Thwaites, A Trollope-Bellew and K Turner.

C74 Minutes

(Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 21 October 2015, circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 21 October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

C75 **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 P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr J Parbrook	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr T Venner	All	Minehead & SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

C76 **Public Participation**

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

C77 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman attended the following events:

22 October 2015 – SCC Chairman's Awards Ceremony – the Chairman congratulated the nine West Somerset residents who had received awards
3 November 2015 – Freemason's Charity Awards, Taunton
5 November 2015 – Fireworks Display at Butlins
15 November 2015 – SCC Chairman's Civic Service at Crowcombe Church

The Vice-Chairman attended the following events:

25 October 2015 – Bath and North East Somerset Chairman's Annual Civic Celebration in Bath
8 November 2015 – Minehead British Legion Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service

C78 **Review of the Council's Constitution**

(Report No. WSC 165/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to update the Council on progress regarding reviewing the Constitution through the making of minor detailed changes and to request specific approval of one more significant proposed change to the Scheme of Delegation.

The Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy presented the item and detailed the proposed change to the Scheme of Delegation in relation to delegated powers relating to the determination of planning applications, which was set out in Appendix A to the report, with the current arrangements detailed in Appendix B of the report. He advised that the proposed arrangements would be very similar to those currently operated by Taunton Deane Borough Council, providing consistency for the planning officers working within the Oneteam, as well as being more flexible for Members and parish and town councils to influence matters being brought forward to the Planning Committee.

He drew attention to one variation as it was proposed not to require four or more additional representations if there were conflicting views on a planning application, in addition to the parish/town council or ward member. It was felt that this would be more appropriate in West Somerset where there were very strong and effective parish and town councils and ward members who could fully represent the views of the community. In light of officer concerns with regards to the possibility of slowing down the planning process as a result of this, the Lead Member confirmed that these changes would be kept under review.

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

During the discussion, the following main points were raised:

- Members underlined how important it was to listen to the views of the town and parish councils.
- It would be helpful if planning training could be provided to parish and town councils in order for them to gain a better understanding on how to raise an objection on planning reasons.
- The Monitoring Officer confirmed that planning training for district councillors had been arranged for 26 November 2015 at 1.30 pm, and that training would be tailored for parishes to be undertaken in due course.

RESOLVED (1) that various detailed housekeeping changes had been made to the Scheme of Delegation section of the Constitution, the majority of which related to referring to up-to-date officer designations, be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the proposed change to the delegated powers relating to the determination of applications for planning permission, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

C79

Budget Savings 2015/16 and Earmarked Reserves Review

(Report No. WSC 163/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek Council approval of a recommendation from Cabinet to transfer identified current year budget savings and uncommitted earmarked reserve balances to general reserves, as part of the Council's agreed Budget Strategy.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report in detail emphasising the key issues contained within the report. She advised that the outcome of the in-year savings and earmarked reserves reviews had generated the projected general reserves balance to above the recommended minimum amount, but there were still a lot of savings to be made.

The Lead Member went on to propose the recommendations set out in the report which were duly seconded by Councillor S Pugsley.

Members congratulated officers and appreciated the work undertaken. A point was raised that in light of the significant savings to be delivered and the risks involved, Members needed to be fully committed in making these decisions.

In reply to a question as to what impact the Hinkley Housing Fund would have on the Council's financial standing, the Assistant Director Energy Infrastructure agreed to provide Members with a written explanation.

RESOLVED (1) that the transfer of in year revenue budget savings of £212,092 to general reserves be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that the transfer of £156,119 from earmarked reserves to general reserves be approved.

RESOLVED (3) that the reclassification of the £105,000 Hinkley Section 106 funded 'Low cost starter homes' scheme from capital to revenue budget in lieu of redistribution of existing loans pool be approved.

C80

WSC Asset Property Portfolio Compliance Status Report

(Report No. WSC 166/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Council with a position statement of its statutory and regulatory compliance responsibilities related to its land and property asset portfolio; and to secure authorisation and additional funding for undertaking condition surveys, inspections and testings to mitigate high risk non-compliance and attainment of missing key information to (a) be compliant, (b) enable informed decisions on the future use and investment of its land and property asset portfolio.

The Lead Member for Environment presented the report and advised that a huge amount of work had been undertaken to develop a comprehensive asset database in terms of maintenance, compliance and financial liabilities which identified the main areas of work which required immediate attention.

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

On consideration of the report the following points were made:

- The asset team were thanked for their hard work in compiling the information - it was a significant piece of work and would help in making informed choices.
- Concern was expressed regarding the ongoing compliance budget as it had not been a priority in the past, and it was questioned how this would be managed in light of other budget cuts.
- A lot of work could be achieved through partnership working with parish and town councils regarding the maintenance of assets going forward.
- An issue was raised regarding a litter bin on The Esplanade in Watchet.
- Assurance was given that there would be a proper maintenance and inspection programme in place on council owned buildings.
- It was agreed that the asset register be emailed to all Members so the list could be checked for any omissions.

RESOLVED (1) that the compliance status report as a baseline in understanding the level of compliance of the Council's land and property asset portfolio be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that a Supplementary Estimate for the 2015/16 Revenue Budget of £80,000, funded from reserves, to undertake the necessary condition surveys, inspections and testing be approved.

RESOLVED (3) that the creation of an ongoing annual compliance budget of £50,000 to be incorporated into the 2016/17 budget estimates and Medium Term Financial Plan, requiring savings needed to fund this increase to be identified through the budget setting process, be supported.

C81 **HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocations of CIM Funding**

(Report No. WSC 167/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to present the recommendations of the Hinkley Point C Planning Obligations Board (POB) and 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. She provided an explanation as to why Cabinet proposed to include an additional recommendation, drawing Members' attention to the POB's comments which stated that match funding for projects should be achieved wherever possible in order to maximise the CIM funding to deliver a greater number of projects for the wider community. The Lead Member described Cannington Village Hall's rationale for not seeking additional funding and went on to add that the application contained a strong business plan and there was a huge amount of community engagement and support in relation to this project. A robust conversation had also been held with the Village Hall Committee on the subject of match funding.

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

It was noted that a report by the Scrutiny task and finish group on the CIM fund allocations would be presented to Members at the December Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Members expressed support and stated it was a worthy, well-researched project. The concerns of the POB were shared with regards to the failure on the part of the Village Hall Committee to secure match funding, although it was pointed out that they were under no obligation to do so. It was hoped that the letter would contain advice on the best way of utilising the CIM funding.

The Digital Inclusion and Job Club project was deemed to be very creative and worthwhile.

RESOLVED (1) that the decision of Cabinet to release £14,524 from the CIM Fund ring-fenced for Sedgemoor (and in particular Bridgwater) to the Victoria Park Community Centre for the delivery of the Digital Inclusion and Job Club project be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the recommendations of the Hinkley C Planning Obligations Board and Cabinet, including the additional recommendation (b) of Cabinet, be endorsed, as follows:

- (a) The release of £186,186 from the CIM Fund ring-fenced for Sedgemoor (and in particular Cannington) to Cannington Village Hall Committee for the Cannington Village Hall improvement project.
- (b) That a letter be written to both Cannington Village Hall Committee and Cannington Parish Council setting out West Somerset Council's expectation that any further applications proposing to utilise the CIM Fund ring-fenced for Sedgemoor (and in particular Cannington) do make every effort to draw in match funding from other sources, to ensure that the CIM Fund is used to maximum effect.

C82 **Minutes and Notes for Information**

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

RESOLVED that the notes of the Dunster Area Panel held on 6 October 2015 be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.45 pm