

**WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 February 2014 at 4.30 pm**

**in the Council Chamber, Williton**

**Present:**

Councillor A F Knight..... In the Chair  
Councillor B Heywood ..... Vice-Chairman

Councillor A M Chick	Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor S Y Goss	Councillor P N Grierson
Councillor A P Hadley	Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor E May	Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor K M Mills	Councillor C Morgan
Councillor P H Murphy	Councillor D D Ross
Councillor K J Ross	Councillor D J Sanders
Councillor L W 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)  
Interim Executive Director (A Dyer)  
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)  
Principal Benefits Officer (P Lamb)  
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

At the start of the meeting it was announced that this would be the last council meeting to be attended by the Section 151 Officer, Sharon Campbell. She was praised on how she had got to grips, at very short notice, with West Somerset Council's financial pressures and sincere thanks were expressed for the fantastic work she had undertaken.

Sharon responded by stating she had thoroughly enjoyed working for WSC during this challenging time and conveyed how impressed she was with the excellent dedication shown by both staff and Members.

**C117 Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

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

**C118 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M J Chilcott, H J W Davies, G S Dowding, J Freeman, R P Lillis, S J Pugsley and M Smith.

**C119**      **Minutes**

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 12 November 2013 be approved.

**RESOLVED (2)** that, subject to amending the third line of Minute No. C105 to read "... who was made a Dame Commander of the Royal Victorian Order..." and correcting the spelling of Alyn Jones referred to in Minute No. C111, the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 22 January 2014 be approved.

**C120**      **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 S Y Goss	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr P N Grierson	All	Minehead	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	C123	Owner of a private water supply	Prejudicial	Left Chamber

**C121**      **Public Participation**

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

**C122**      **Chairman's Announcements**

It was announced that the Chief Executive, Penny James had represented the Council and attended a reception for the community/organisations affected by the flooding on the Somerset Levels, which was also attended by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

**C123**      **Fees and Charges 2014/15**

(Report No. WSC 31/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to propose levels of fees and charges for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 (in some cases fees increases

would be implemented earlier, as stated in the relevant sections of the report).

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and highlighted that if Members approved the recommendations contained within Item 12 – Dulverton Car Parks Management Arrangements, there would be a change to the Dulverton car park fees.

She proposed the recommendations in the report which were seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the following fees be unchanged:

- Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Licences
- Private Water Supplies
- Acupuncture/Tattooing/Skin Piercing/Semi-Permanent Skin Colouring Licences
- Land Search Fees
- Animal Welfare Licences
- Street Trading Licences
- Environmental Health Charges
- Housing Inspections for Immigration Purposes
- Gambling Licences
- Car Park Fees
- Court Summons and Liability Orders for Council Tax and NNDR
- Building Control Charges

**RESOLVED (2)** that the following changes to fees be made:

- New charges implemented for Scrap Metal Dealers Licencing
- Harbour Mooring Fees increase in line with inflation
- Green Waste Charges increase from £45 per year to £46.50 per year
- Pre-Planning Advice, VAT to be added to the fees

**RESOLVED (3)** that a full review of Fees and Charges Policy be completed by the end of October 2014.

**C124**     **2015/16 Council Tax Rebate Scheme Consultation**

(Report No. WSC 5/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to inform Council of the options modelled to incentivise work and encourage people to remain in employment, and seek their decision with regards to which should be used as a basis of consultation with the public.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer presented the report and provided details on the background information relating to the scheme and the various options which could be consulted on.

He went on to propose the recommendations in the report and that Option 5 be consulted on as an alternative to the existing scheme. This was duly seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

Members expressed support to consult on Option 5.

The Principal Benefits Officer provided an explanation of the difference between Option 1 and Option 5 and apologised for the oversight of not including in the report the comments and recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the consultation for the period 24 February 2014 to 23 May 2014 on possible change to the 2015/16 Council Tax Rebate Scheme be approved.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the residents of West Somerset should be consulted on Option 5 as an alternative to continuing with the existing scheme.

**C125**     **Revision of Discretionary Housing Payments and Additional Council Tax Rebate Policies**

(Report No. WSC 26/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to obtain Council's agreement to revise the policy for awards of Discretionary Housing Payments and Additional Council Tax Rebate.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer presented the report advising that the Government provided a grant to the Council for awards of Discretionary Housing Payment and any unspent contribution would have to be returned to the Government at the end of the financial year. He brought to Members' attention the proposed changes to the revised policies and that any revisions would be backdated to 1 April 2013. The Lead Member also advised that Government had confirmed that it would continue to make a grant contribution and would award £173,291 in 2014/15.

He proposed the recommendations in the report, subject to the inclusion of a further recommendation that Council continue to help people affected by the spare room subsidy restrictions by extending the sub-scheme approved at September Council for 2014/15. These were seconded by Councillor E May.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were raised:

- Members acknowledged the extra work which would need to be undertaken to retrospectively amend any applications already made and recalculate entitlement.
- Further promotion of the awards scheme was vitally needed to ensure that local residents were fully aware of the opportunity to apply for further assistance with housing costs.

- An explanation was provided on the avenues of where people could seek further assistance in completing application forms and gaining further information on the schemes.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy agreed in Minute No. C123 and the Additional Council Tax Rebate agreed in Minute No. C122 be revised.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the revision be effective from 1 April 2013.

**RESOLVED (3)** that officers be authorised to re-assess previous applications to check for increased entitlement.

**RESOLVED (4)** that Council would continue to help people affected by the spare room subsidy restrictions by extending the sub-scheme approved at September Council for 2014/15.

**C126**     **West Somerset Council Employee Code of Conduct**

(Report No. 22/14, circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to enable the Council to endorse proposed enhancements to the existing Employee's Code of Conduct for West Somerset Council staff.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and advised that the changes to the Code related to the tightening up of guidelines and the protection of employees. She then went on to propose the recommendation in the report which was duly seconded by Councillor E May.

In response to a question as to what extent was WSC's Employee Code of Conduct similar to that of Taunton Deane's, the Assistant Chief Executive explained that the two councils shared an HR Advisor and this had been beneficial in highlighting any differences between the two policies, and to assist in addressing any disparities.

**RESOLVED** that the proposed enhancements to the existing Code of Conduct for Employees of West Somerset Council staff, as set in Appendices A, B, C and D to the report, be endorsed.

**C127**     **Review of the Policy and Procedure for Confidential Reporting of Concerns ("Whistleblowing")**

(Report No. WSC 21/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was for Council to approve the changes to the Whistleblowing Policy.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor D J Sanders.

**RESOLVED** that the changes to the Whistleblowing Policy, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

**C128**     **Appointment of Deputy Monitoring Officers**

In accordance with Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the authority is required to appoint a Deputy Monitoring Officer(s).

The Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer reported that at its meeting held on 15 November 2011, Ian Timms, Group Manager for Housing and Community, was appointed to this role. Given the new joint management arrangements it was recommended that Roy Pinney, the Legal Services Manager, and Richard Bryant, the Democratic Services Manager, be appointed as Deputy Monitoring Officers with immediate effect. For clarity, the Deputy Monitoring Officer role was outside the supply of legal advice which is currently provided by Mendip District Council.

There was a request for the contact details of the two newly appointed Deputy Monitoring Officers and it was confirmed that this would be circulated following the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that Roy Pinney, the Legal Services Manager, and Richard Bryant, the Democratic Services Manager, be appointed as Deputy Monitoring Officers with immediate effect.

**C129**     **Dulverton Car Parks – Management Arrangements**

(Report No. WSC 20/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek Member approval of the proposed arrangements that would enable Dulverton Town Council to manage and to operate three car parks in Dulverton owned by West Somerset Council.

The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth presented the report and gave a brief summary of the report highlighting that Dulverton Town Council had already been successfully managing the operation of the three Dulverton car parks for many years, but had requested a meeting to discuss the current arrangements. Following this meeting a number of changes had been proposed and these were underlined in the report.

It was noted that parking using a permit would be allowed in the Lion Yard Car Park and that Dulverton Town Council had their own parking enforcement arrangements.

The Lead Member then proposed the recommendations in the report, with an amendment to be made to recommendation 3.1 to include 'subject to Dulverton Town Council paying the reasonable legal costs incurred by the Council in drafting the new lease'. These were duly seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the revised management arrangements, as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of the report, be approved and implemented from 1 April 2014, subject to Dulverton Town Council paying the reasonable legal costs incurred by the Council in drafting the new lease.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the new car parking charges, as detailed in paragraph 5.5.2 of the report, be approved and implemented on 1 April 2014.

**C130**     **Minutes and Notes for Information**

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

**RESOLVED (1)** that the draft notes of the Watchet, Williton and Quantocks Area Panel held on 3 December 2013 be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the draft notes of the Minehead Area Panel held on 11 December 2013 be noted.

**RESOLVED (3)** that the draft notes of Exmoor Area Panel held on 23 January 2014 be noted.

**RESOLVED (4)** that the draft notes of the Dunster Area Panel held on 27 January 2014 be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.35 pm.