

**WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 November 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 P N Grierson	Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor B Heywood	Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor E May	Councillor I R Melhuish
Councillor K M Mills	Councillor C Morgan
Councillor P H Murphy	Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor D D Ross	Councillor L W Smith
Councillor M A Smith	Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor K H Turner	Councillor D J Westcott

**Officers in Attendance:**

Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (B Lang)  
Director of Operations (S Adam)  
New Nuclear Programme Manager (A Goodchild)  
Revenues and Benefits Manager (H Tiso)  
Major Projects Manager (J Holbrook)  
Housing Initiatives Implementation Officer (A Devine)  
PR and Communications Officer (D Rundle)  
Community and Client Manager (S Weetch)  
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

**C63      Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H J W Davies, J Freeman, S Y Goss, K J Ross, D J Sanders and T Taylor.

**C64      Minutes**

(Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 22 October 2014, circulated with the Agenda.)

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 22 October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

**C65      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:

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Member of</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Cllr P N Grierson	All	Alcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr P H Murphy	All	Watchet	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 interests were declared:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Description of interest</b>	<b>Personal or Prejudicial</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Cllr M Dewdney	C69	Trustee of Zoological Society of Somerset	Prejudicial	Left the Chamber
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	C73	Private landlord	Prejudicial	Left the Chamber
Cllr K Turner	C73	Private landlord	Prejudicial	Left the Chamber
Cllr D Westcott	C73	Private landlord	Prejudicial	Left the Chamber
Cllr S Pugsley	C73	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr D Ross	C73	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K Kravis	C73	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Pugsley	C73	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Grierson	C73	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr M Chilcott	C73	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted

**C66 Public Participation**

Chris Moiser from Tropiquaria spoke on Agenda Item 6 – HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocations of CIM Funding. In light of the additional information which was circulated prior to the meeting regarding the link to the relocation of the animal enclosure and the relocation of the existing play equipment, Mr Moiser asked Members to reconsider the matter.

**C67 Chairman's Announcements**

November 2014	Attended the SCC Chairman's Award Ceremony at Taunton Rugby Club
5 November 2014	Attended the Fireworks Display at Butlins
6 November 2014	Firewalking charity event with Cllr E May
7 November 2014	Attended the 20 <sup>th</sup> Birthday Party of HMS Somerset at Avonmouth Docks
Remembrance Sunday	Attended two church services at Bicknoller and Williton
13 November 2014	Attended the Avon and Somerset Police Awards Dinner

**C68 Request for Letter of Support in respect of School Pastors**

(Report No. WSC 168/14 circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to request a letter of support to aid an application to the Ascension Trust to recognise and train school pastors for deployment at West Somerset College.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer presented the report and provided background information on the proposals for a permanent system of college pastors for West Somerset. He proposed the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

**RESOLVED** that a letter be sent to Rev Thorogood in support of his application to the Ascension Trust for training and recognition by the school pastors programme.

**NOTE:** Having regard to the special circumstances pertaining in relation to this item – namely the need for the Council to make a decision before the next scheduled meeting – 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.

**C69**      **HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocations of CIM Funding**

(Report No. WSC 158/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to present the recommendations of the Hinkley Point C Planning Obligations Board and Cabinet, for the allocation of monies secured through the Section 106 legal agreement for the Site Preparation Works at Hinkley Point. The relevant fund is the “Community Impact Mitigation (CIM)” Fund.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support who advised that the details of the nine applications considered by the Planning Obligations Board (POB) were contained within the report, of which the majority were refused with the reasons given. It was important to note that all applicants had a second chance to resubmit to the Board providing proof of community benefit and the links to the Hinkley Point C project.

The Lead Member went on to provide further detail on the Tropiquaria project and due to the imminent roundabout work at Washford Cross she advised that there was a time limit and no other monies were available that could be used to help mitigate the impact of the roundabout being built. The original application sought approval for monies to relocate the primate enclosures but there was now a request to include the part of the bid concerning the relocation of the play area as one could not be relocated without the other.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation in the report subject to the inclusion of a further recommendation that, in light of the further information which had been provided since the Cabinet meeting, having noted the in-principle support of the Planning Obligations Board, and subject to:

- the consideration of any discussion and any additional observations at the Planning Obligations Board meeting on 2 December;
  - the receipt of three competitive quotes regarding the cost of the relocation of the play area;
  - confirmation that the Zoo is continuing to progress towards achieving charitable status; and
  - the grant of Planning Permission for the relocated play area
- Council approve a maximum allocation of £37,350 towards the cost of replacing the play area at Tropiquaria as part of the works to relocate the primate enclosures at the zoo.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor M J Chilcott.

Members were fully supportive of the Tropiquaria project and during the debate the following main points were raised:

- Concern was expressed as to whether the Council's decision would still stand if the POB objected and in response confirmation was provided that WSC could release the money on its own accord.
- Concerns raised about some of the recommendations emanating from the POB when determining applications.
- It was felt that the proposal should have been funded as part of travel planning.
- The Council had a moral duty to put the matter right as Tropiquaria was a valuable asset and a major attraction, and time was of the essence.
- The CIM fund needed to be promoted further to support local communities and Members' acknowledged that it was still a learning process.
- In response to criticisms raised regarding the refusal of many of the applications submitted to POB, it was pointed out that the applications needed to show evidence to link the proposals to the Hinkley Point C project.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support concluded by acknowledging Members' concerns relating to the Planning Obligations Board's decisions and provided assurance that the issues would become clearer. She went on to thank Members and the New Nuclear Programme Manager for the practical approach being taken to support the community.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the release of funds for one project, which consists of £40,000 (excluding VAT) for Tropiquaria towards the relocation of primates adversely affected by the works at Washford Cross roundabout, from the £3,500,000 that has been paid by EDF to West Somerset Council for the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) Fund be approved.

**RESOLVED (2)** that, in light of the further information which had been provided since the Cabinet meeting, having noted the in-principle support of the Planning Obligations Board, and subject to:

- the consideration of any discussion and any additional observations at the Planning Obligations Board meeting on 2 December;

- the receipt of three competitive quotes regarding the cost of the relocation of the play area;
  - confirmation that the Zoo is continuing to progress towards achieving charitable status; and
  - the grant of Planning Permission for the relocated play area
- a maximum allocation of £37,350 towards the cost of replacing the play area at Tropiquaria as part of the works to relocate the primate enclosures at the zoo be approved.

**C70**      **Council Tax Rebate Scheme Review for 2015/16**

(Report No. WSC 159/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was provide Council with information on the Council Tax Rebate scheme in 2013/14; to advise Council of the changes and impact of funding arrangements on Council Tax Rebate; and to advise Council of the Cabinet's recommendations on the Council Tax Rebate scheme and grant funding for Parish/Town Councils for 2015/16.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer presented the item and provided Members with the background information relating to the Council Tax Rebate scheme. He advised that it was proposed to keep the scheme on the same basis for next year because to alter the scheme a public consultation would have to be undertaken, however this did not apply to the level of grant funding given to parish and town councils. He informed that Cabinet were supportive of reducing the level of funding passed through to parishes by 100% thereby reducing grant funding by approximately £87,600 to nil.

The Lead Member went on to propose the recommendations in the report which were duly seconded by Councillor K V Kravis.

A lengthy debate ensued and the following specific issues were raised:

- It was recognised that difficult decisions needed to be made with regards to funding and in view of the Council's significant financial pressures savings had to be attained in certain areas.
- The proportion of how much each parish/town would have to increase their council tax precept by depended on how many CTR claimants were in that particular parish/town.
- In light of the Council being committed to preventing child poverty, a request was made that when the CTR scheme was next reviewed child maintenance payments be discounted as income.
- Clarification was provided that there was no limit as to how much parish/town councils could increase their precept by due to there being no legislation in place that prescribed a referendum trigger.
- The grant should be passed on to town and parish councils.
- Concern was expressed regarding the detrimental effect this matter was having on WSC's relationship with Minehead Town Council and it was noted that no background information or explanation about how the decision was reached on the reduction of grant funding had been received by the town council.

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- Government spending policies need to be simplified and more information about precepts was required to be sent to the parish and town councils.
- Resilience would increase by working closer with towns and parishes.
- It was the District Councillor's role and responsibility to review issues as they arose in order to disseminate the information to parish and town councils.

It was requested that a named vote take place and the recommendations contained in the report were put to the vote separately.

On being put to the vote, recommendation 3.1 was declared CARRIED.

Councillor M J Chilcott	For	Councillor M O A Dewdney	For
Councillor G S Dowding	For	Councillor P N Grierson	Against
Councillor A P Hadley	For	Councillor B Heywood	For
Councillor A F Knight	For	Councillor K V Kravis	For
Councillor E May	Against	Councillor I R Melhuish	For
Councillor K M Mills	For	Councillor C Morgan	For
Councillor P H Murphy	For	Councillor S J Pugsley	For
Councillor D D Ross	For	Councillor L W Smith	Against
Councillor M A Smith	For	Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew	For
Councillor K H Turner	For	Councillor D J Westcott	For

On being put to the vote, recommendation 3.2 was declared CARRIED.

Councillor M J Chilcott	For	Councillor M O A Dewdney	For
Councillor G S Dowding	For	Councillor P N Grierson	Against
Councillor A P Hadley	For	Councillor B Heywood	For
Councillor A F Knight	For	Councillor K V Kravis	For
Councillor E May	For	Councillor I R Melhuish	For
Councillor K M Mills	For	Councillor C Morgan	For
Councillor P H Murphy	For	Councillor S J Pugsley	For
Councillor D D Ross	For	Councillor L W Smith	Against
Councillor M A Smith	For	Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew	For
Councillor K H Turner	For	Councillor D J Westcott	For

**RESOLVED (1)** that the recommendation from Cabinet that the 2014/15 Council Tax Rebate scheme should be retained for 2015/16 be agreed.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the recommendation from Cabinet on its preferred option for Council Tax Rebate grant funding to be passed on to Parish/Town Councils in 2015/16 be agreed.

**C71 Earmarked Reserves Review**

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

The purpose of the report was to review earmarked reserves to ensure they are still required.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support who proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor E May.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the surplus uncommitted funds amounting to £107,581 be returned to the General Reserve balance.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the recommendation by Cabinet to consider the possibility of a supplementary estimate should there be a requirement to fund Disabled Facilities Grants in the future, over and above the grant allocated to West Somerset, be noted.

**C72**      **Hinkley Tourism Action Plan – Allocation**

(Report No. WSC 156/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to consult with Council on a suggested approach for commissioning Tourism Monitoring Surveys.

The item was presented by the Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth who provided background information and drew Members' attention to the scope of the work undertaken as part of the monitoring survey. She provided assurance that the money allocated would produce a very professional, credible survey in order to develop a strategy going forward. The Lead Member also advised that clarification would be sought as to whether telephone interviewing would be undertaken.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation contained within the report which was seconded by Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew.

**RESOLVED** that the allocation of up to a maximum of £40,000 of the Phase 2 (Part One) Section 106 Tourism mitigation funds for the commissioning of two calendar years of visitor monitoring surveys be approved.

**C73**      **Proposed Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol**

(Report No. WSC 160/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was for the Council to consider adopting a Social Media Policy and Recording of Meetings Protocol.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy who proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the social media guidelines and policy documents as set out in Appendices A, B and C to the report be adopted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the recording of meetings protocol as set out in Appendix E to the report be adopted.

**C74**      **Hinkley Point C Update**

(Report No. WSC 161/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The main purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update of activity and the latest position regarding the Hinkley Point C project and to seek Member approval for the Council to register its interest in the newly formed New Nuclear Watch Europe interest group.

The Lead Member for Environment - Hinkley provided an update on the project's activity and reported that still no announcement had been made regarding the final investment decision and this was holding up development; also the Cannington bypass was well underway.

The Lead Member drew Council's attention to the stated aims of the New Nuclear Watch Europe group and advised that at the moment there was not a great deal of clarity about the group. He advised that due to not wanting to double up on officer time and resources, the meeting agendas of the New Nuclear Watch Europe group would be monitored to determine how/if it affected WSC.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations contained within the report which were seconded by Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the latest position regarding the Hinkley Point C project be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the Council register its interest in the newly formed New Nuclear Watch Europe interest group.

**C75**      **EDF Housing Funding Strategy**

(Report No. WSC 160/14 circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to present to Members the recommendations of the Hinkley Point Planning Obligations Board (POB) and to ask Council to approve the Housing Funding Strategy. Four associated bids pursuant to the Housing Funding Strategy were also presented and Council was asked to approve the allocations.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and proposed the recommendation of the report which was duly seconded by Councillor K M Mills.

On consideration of the report the following points were made:

- Housing was crucial to people's health and wellbeing and the initiative was welcomed as there was no doubt that the HPC project would create a strain on the housing market, although the impact on the demand for housing in the future would be difficult to estimate.
- The schemes were imaginative and provided a lot of detail.



- The amount of work that officers undertook to coordinate voluntary organisations and statutory groups was commended and should continue to be supported in the future.
- Concern was expressed about the possible surplus of accommodation and empty properties at the end of the project period.
- Concern that lower paid income families may be affected due to potential rental increases.
- In response to Section 151 Officer comments, the question was raised as to how the fund would be measured and reported to Full Council. The New Nuclear Programme Manager advised that the housing bids and the delivery of bed spaces would be monitored on a quarterly basis, and these targets would be incorporated within service plans
- It was advised that empty property data was received from council tax records.
- How people operated would be hard to measure and EDF were required to provide information to the Council on where workers were staying.

**RESOLVED** that the Housing Funding Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the report, and the four initial bids contained in the Housing Funding Strategy and outlined in Section 6 of the report, be approved.

**C76**      **Minutes and Notes for Information**

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

**RESOLVED (1)** that the notes of the Exmoor Area Panel held on 2 September 2014 be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the notes of the Watchet, Williton and Quantock Vale Area Panel held on 16 September 2014 be noted.

**RESOLVED (3)** that the notes of the Dunster Area Panel held on 13 October 2014 be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm