

**WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 October 2013 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 J Freeman  
Councillor A P Hadley  
Councillor K V Kravis  
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 M O A Dewdney  
Councillor S Y Goss  
Councillor B Heywood  
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:**

Corporate Director (B Lang)  
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)  
Corporate Manager, Housing, Welfare & Economy (I Timms) – Items 9 and 10  
Planning Manager (A Goodchild)  
Climate Change & Community Liaison Manager (A Lamplough) – Item 6  
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

**Also in Attendance:**

Nick Millard, Bruton Knowles

**C63      Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H J W Davies and P N Grierson.

**C64      Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 18 September 2013 be approved.

**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:

| <b>Name</b>       | <b>Minute No.</b> | <b>Member of</b> | <b>Action Taken</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Cllr S Y Goss     | All               | Stogursey        | Spoke and voted     |
| Cllr C Morgan     | 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               | Brendon Hills    | 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 K Ross     | C68               | Treasurer for Artlife                            | Personal                       | Spoke and voted     |
| Cllr M Chilcott | C68               | Audits accounts for Artlife                      | Personal                       | Spoke and voted     |
| Cllr A Hadley   | C74               | Retailer in Minehead                             | Personal                       | Spoke and voted     |
| Cllr A Knight   | C74               | Interest in a business establishment in Minehead | Personal                       | Spoke and voted     |

Members also indicated that they had been lobbied by the Minehead Chamber of Trade in relation to Agenda Item 12 – Disposal of Council Owned Assets – former Aquasplash site and a site (known as leisure land) along Seaward Way, Minehead.

**C66      Public Participation**

Peter Wellstood, chairman of Pro-Active Lifestyle and Swimming Water Activities Club, spoke in relation to Agenda Item 12 – Disposal of Council Owned Assets – former Aquasplash site and a site (known as leisure land) along Seaward Way, Minehead. He was supportive of the provision of a much needed swimming pool in Minehead which he hoped would be run for and by the community, attracting and encouraging people into the area.

**C67      Chairman's Announcements**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 18 September 2013 | Attended an event at Hestercombe Gardens in aid of Star and the National Autistic Society |
| 21 September 2013 | Attended the Beating of Retreat by The Rifles and Ghurkhas at Taunton Castle              |
| 22 September 2013 | Mid Devon Civic Service   |
| 6 October 2013    | Harvest Festival at Wells Cathedral with the Somerset Young Farmers                       |
| 13 October 2013   | Bath and North East Somerset Civic Service  |

The Leader provided a brief update on meetings he had recently attended surrounding the announcement that the government had reached an agreement with EDF Energy on the strike price for the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station. He also informed Members of a meeting held that morning in London with MPs Brandon Lewis and Eric Pickles on issues affecting the future of West Somerset Council and the joint management and services project with Taunton Deane Borough Council as central government wanted this progressed as a matter of urgency. The Leader confirmed and reassured MPs that the Council was 'bedding down' the project with Taunton Deane whilst looking at wider sharing options in Somerset.

**C68**      **Request for Allocation of Planning Obligations Funding**

(Report No. WSC 130/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to make a proposal for the allocation of monies secured through planning obligations to individual schemes.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and drew Members' attention to Appendix A of the report which provided a vast amount of detail on the project, linking West Somerset with the romantic poets and making the most of the Coleridge Way. The project would target the area affected by the Hinkley Point C project and the Lead Member was satisfied that this was a good use of spending Section 106 monies.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

Councillor S Y Goss expressed great concern and disappointment on behalf of Stogursey Parish Council that no proper consultation had been undertaken with the parish council about the project and therefore had no opportunity for any input. As host community for Hinkley Point C the parish council felt it should have had some say in what was proposed in the area around Hinkley. Stogursey Parish Council really wanted to participate in the project and would have liked their ideas taken on board and acted upon, and Councillor Goss hoped that the door was still open for this to happen even at this late stage.

The Lead Member reassured Members that consultation was extremely important to West Somerset Council and as part of the arrangements to allocate monies secured through Section 106 monies she wanted to ensure that all affected parties were consulted; she was dismayed that the situation with Stogursey Parish Council was still an issue. In light of this, and not to delay the project, the Lead Member confirmed that consultation would be held with Stogursey Parish Council and suggested the matter be discussed at the next Planning Obligations Group meeting with the results fed back into the next quarterly report to be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet and Council.

**RESOLVED** that the use of £53,000 of the Hinkley Point C Site Preparation Works landscape art funding to deliver phase two of the project attached as Appendix A to the report be agreed.

**C69**      **West Somerset Council's Response to National Grid Stage 4 Consultation**

(Report No. WSC 137/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to outline proposals to use the fit to work funding contribution provided as an element of the Skills and Training part of the Hinkley Point C site preparation works Section 106 agreement; and in line with the requirements of the Section 106 agreement to seek the approval of West Somerset Council for its allocation.

The Lead Member for Environment – Hinkley Point presented the report and went on to propose the recommendation in the report which was duly seconded by Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew.

**RESOLVED** that the key points set out at paragraph 4.6 of the report be endorsed and delegated powers be granted to the Planning Manager to finalise and submit the response on behalf of the Council by 29 October 2013 in response to the current consultation.

**C70**      **Classification of Earmarked Reserves**

(Report No. WSC 135/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek Council approval for a supplementary estimate.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report advising that due to an oversight when setting the budget the contractual payment to the Homes Improvement Agency was not included. She proposed the recommendation in the report which was duly seconded by Councillor E May.

**RESOLVED** that a supplementary estimate of £62,030 in respect of the Council's 2013/14 contractual payment to the Homes Improvement Agency be approved, and that this is funded by a transfer from the New Homes Bonus Reserve to the General Fund.

**C71**      **Somerset Homeless Strategy**

(Report No. WSC 119/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to outline the Somerset Homeless Strategy and the associated action plan and to request that Council agree to the request from Cabinet to adopt the Strategy.

The Lead Member for Housing, Health and Welfare presented the item and proposed the recommendation in the report which was duly seconded by Councillor M J Chilcott.

**RESOLVED** that the Somerset Homeless Strategy 2013-2016 be adopted.

**C72**      **Homefinder Somerset Common Allocations Policy**

(Report No. WSC 120/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to advise Members of the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy resulting from the changes in legislation and government policy.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Welfare who proposed the recommendations in the report which were seconded by Councillor D J Westcott.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the changes to the Policy, attached as Appendix A to the report, be agreed.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the findings of the equality impact assessment, attached as Appendix C to the report, be noted.

**C73**      **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 Exmoor Area Panel held on 3 September 2013 be noted.

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

**RESOLVED (3)** that the draft notes of the Watchet, Williton and Quantocks Area Panel held on 17 September 2013 be noted.

**C74**      **Disposal of Council Owned Assets – Former Aquasplash site and a site (known as leisure land) along Seaward Way, Minehead**

(Report No. WSC 117/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to request that Council approve the preferred developers, as recommended by Cabinet, for the sale of two parcels of Council owned land. This would enable further autonomous negotiations to continue with a single developer in respect of each site.

The Chairman welcomed Nick Millard from Bruton Knowles to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report in detail, providing Members with the background information and reporting on the timetable of events since Bruton Knowles had been appointed as property consultants. She reassured Members that independent advice on the value of the two sites would be sought from the District Valuer.

The Lead Member thanked and commended Mr Wellstood for keeping the desire for a swimming pool alive in West Somerset by submitting a community bid.

She then drew Members' attention to the implications of not selling the two sites and stressed upon the financial pressures that the Council was under. She advised that it was imperative to sell these assets in order to pay off any outstanding debt and to stop further cuts to services which would ultimately impact on tourism and the residents of West Somerset.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations in the report, with an alteration to be made to recommendation 3.2 to read "The nominated preferred bidder for the sale of the land referred to as the leisure site is Jones Lang LaSalle, acting for Whitbread.". These were duly seconded by Councillor I R Melhuish.

Councillor D J Westcott, as Community and Customer Portfolio Holder, explained that West Somerset currently had nine swimming pools which the general public had access to, albeit some with limited use, and he drew attention to the results and conclusions of a feasibility study undertaken by the Council regarding the possible future provision of a swimming pool in Minehead. He stated that more information should be provided on what was available to the public regarding the accessibility and opening times of the swimming pools in the district.

The Leader of Council spoke on the wider implications of providing a swimming pool as the Council could not afford to build or run a pool, and if assets were not sold it would be the people of West Somerset that would suffer due to the loss of service provision. He pointed out that Councillors represented the people of West Somerset and therefore had a duty to act responsibly on their behalf.

In order for Members to discuss commercially sensitive material contained in Appendix B to the report, it was

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the confidential Appendix B to the report of Item C74 on the grounds that, if the press and public were present during that item, there would be likely to be a disclosure to them of exempt information of the class specified in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

The document contained information that could release confidential information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information). It was therefore proposed that after consideration of all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Members of the press and public left the Council Chamber.

Once Members confirmed that no more questions were to be raised on matters relating to the confidential appendix, the Chairman proposed that the press and the public return to the Council Chamber.

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support summarised that the reason for amending recommendation 3.2 of the report was for tourism economic benefits and advised that the Whitbread bid had a greater emphasis on hotel development than the Marston's bid.

Members commented that it was fantastic news for West Somerset that national companies were looking to locate in Minehead showing a confidence in the economy and providing much need employment

It was noted that the West Somerset Free Press online poll indicated that currently 63.2% of West Somerset residents were in favour of a Lidl store.

The recommendations contained in the report, as amended, were put to the vote and were CARRIED.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the nominated preferred bidder for the sale of the former Aquasplash site is Lidl.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the nominated preferred bidder for the sale of the land referred to as the leisure site is Jones Lang LaSalle, acting for Whitbread.

**RESOLVED (3)** that a report detailing the negotiated terms and conditions of each disposal is presented to Council as soon as such negotiations are completed.

The meeting closed at 6.36 pm.