

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 April 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 S Y Goss	Councillor P N Grierson
Councillor A P Hadley	Councillor B Heywood
Councillor K V Kravis	Councillor E May
Councillor K M Mills	Councillor P H Murphy
Councillor S J Pugsley	Councillor D D Ross
Councillor K J Ross	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:

Chief Executive (P James)
Director of Operations/Section 151 Officer (S Adam)
Assistant Chief Executive (B Lang)
New Nuclear Programme Manager (A Goodchild)
Housing Initiatives Implementation Officer (A Devine) – Item 6
Assistant Director Property and Development (Interim) (T Gillham) – Item 13
Community Liaison and Climate Change Manager (A Lamplough)
Principal Planning Officer (Policy) (T Clempson) – Item 8
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

C150 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A M Chick, H J W Davies, J Freeman, R P Lillis, I R Melhuish, C Morgan and D J Sanders.

C150A Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 26 March 2014 be approved.

C151 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 P N Grierson	All	Alcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Y Goss	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	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

C152 Public Participation

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

C153 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised that the Chairman's Chain of Office had run out of links to engrave names on and urged Members to respond to his email on the various options available in order to gain a consensus of opinion as to what action to take.

C154 Somerset Strategic Housing Framework and West Somerset Action Plan

(Report No. WSC 4/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with the final proposed West Somerset Action Plan which supports the Somerset Strategic Housing Framework 2013 – 2016 as already formally adopted by Council on 22.1.2014. At that meeting Council also resolved that Cabinet's endorsement of the principles of the West Somerset Action Plan, which supports the Somerset Strategic Housing Framework, and which will be submitted to a future Council meeting following further consultation, be noted. Further consultation and refinement has now been made and this is the finalised comprehensive West Somerset Action Plan.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Welfare who proposed the recommendation of the report, which was duly seconded by Councillor M O A Dewdney.

During the course of the debate the following points were raised:

- The action plan should contain proposals on how to get more social housing as there was a strong need for more of this type of housing in West Somerset; as well as investigating opportunities for cooperative housing.
- Members looked forward to receiving information on the key area of focus pertaining to identifying innovative options for strategic sites to best meet affordable housing needs.
- Concern was expressed as to who would work with landlords and owners of empty properties to return them back into use following the deletion of the Empty Homes Officer post.
- There was a need to start looking at Council owned land as a valuable asset for affordable housing.

RESOLVED that the Somerset Strategic Housing Framework – West Somerset Action Plan be formally adopted.

C155 **Volunteer Policy**

(Report No. WSC 79/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to establish a Volunteering Policy for the Council.

The Lead Member for Customer and Community presented the report emphasising that the Policy focused on the authority's activities with volunteers and related purely to West Somerset Council's volunteer process. He explained the purpose of the agreement was to provide volunteers with clear guidance and information about their role as a volunteer, what they could expect from the council and what was expected of them, and he drew attention to the consultation undertaken and the subsequent alterations to the policy as a result. He also informed that a contact email address would be included in the Volunteer Registration Form.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor M J Chilcott.

Following concerns, the Lead Member for Customer and Community and the Community Liaison and Climate Change Manager advised that the aim of the Policy was to encapsulate all of the authority's services and they reassured Members that if volunteers were required to work within the IT department they would be under supervision, given the appropriate training and would go through the necessary checks before being able to access the Council's ICT system.

It was noted that within the second paragraph of the Introduction to the Volunteering Policy the word 'Council' should be inserted before 'services' in the second line.

Members applauded and acknowledged the importance of the volunteer work currently being carried out in the local community, and recognised the value and benefits that volunteers would bring to the authority.

RESOLVED that the Volunteer Policy, as presented in Appendix A to the report, be adopted, as amended.

C156 **Proposal for the Designation of a Stogumber Neighbourhood Area**

(Report No. WSC 74/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to consider the designation of a Neighbourhood Area for Stogumber in order to facilitate the preparation of the Stogumber Neighbourhood Plan.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing who provided background information and stated that it was the Council's statutory duty to assist Stogumber Parish Council with the Neighbourhood Plan. There were significant financial and resource implications in this course of action and monetary support was available from central government up to a maximum of £30,000 per plan; any extra costs would have to be funded by WSC. He then proposed the recommendation, which was duly seconded by Councillor K J Ross.

Concern was expressed that assisting with the preparation of neighbourhood plans could cause a delay in the publication of the Local Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer (Policy) responded to questions relating to the consultation process and explained that the first round of consultation gave the community the area to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan within; the substantial consultation exercise would be carried out by Stogumber Parish Council as it prepared the Plan. WSC would then carry out a formal consultation before the Neighbourhood Plan reached the Examination stage.

RESOLVED that the Stogumber Neighbourhood Area be designated as shown on the plan at Appendix 1 to the report.

C157 Hinkley Point C – Project Governance

(Report No. 81/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the creation of a Nuclear Policy Advisory Group (PAG).

The Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy presented the report and proposed the recommendation, which was duly seconded by Councillor E May.

Members noted the core membership detailed in the report and the amendment to one of the bullet points which should read "Member for Quantock Vale Ward".

It was confirmed that dates would be fixed in the Meetings Timetable but due to the nature of the project a few meetings of the Nuclear PAG may have to be convened at short notice.

RESOLVED that the creation of a Nuclear PAG be approved, the Core Membership of which would be agreed annually, in accordance with the details contained in the report.

C158 Meetings Timetable 2014-2015

(Report No. WSC 76/14 and Meeting Timetable for the 2014/15 Municipal Year, circulated with the Agenda.)

The item was presented by the Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy who reported that Members' preferences had been incorporated into the timetable attached to the report. He advised that a general principle had been adopted by WSC about the reasonable start time of the main committees and Full Council to offer the best balance for attendance by Councillors, the public and officers, and this was 4.30 pm. It was noted that Audit Committee dealt with more specialised matters and often called on external advice and the start time of 2.30 pm was deemed appropriate.

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

An in-depth discussion ensued about the day and start time of the Scrutiny Committee and on being put to the vote there were 13 votes for the recommendation and 8 votes against to confirm the arrangements as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that the Timetable of Meetings for the 2014/15 Municipal Year, as attached to the report, be approved.

C159 **Corporate Plan 2014-16**

(Report No. WSC 82/14, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to consider approving the Corporate Plan for 2014-16.

The Leader presented the report and drew Members' attention to the overall vision for West Somerset and the two key priorities. He reported that the work with Taunton Deane Borough Council on local democracy was underway but the sharing of services was still in a formative stage. He went on to propose the recommendation of the report which was seconded by Councillor E May.

Clarification was sought on the wording of the Key Tasks within Objective 5 and it was confirmed by the Assistant Chief Executive that accurate dates and up to date figures would be incorporated into the final document.

Councillor D Ross expressed his concern and felt the corporate priorities fell short of encompassing the vision and hoped in the future, by working in partnership with TDBC, the Council would have a much wider and more ambitious corporate plan. It was hoped that the priorities be expanded to include environmental, climate change and health and wellbeing issues.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support responded by stating that although the joint partnership working would go some way in addressing the viability of WSC, the Council would still need to find savings. She advised that the priorities should not be expanded upon until a refreshed look at the budgetary situation and transformation was undertaken.

RESOLVED that the West Somerset Council Corporate Plan 2014-16, included as Appendix A to the report, be approved.

C160 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of C161 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 as follows:

The item contained information that could release confidential information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that 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.

C161 **Development of the East Wharf, Watchet**

(Report No. WSC 52/14, circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to bring to Members' attention the circumstances and details of a claim for financial compensation being made against the Council by Urban Splash Developments Limited.

The report was presented by the Leader of Council who introduced Tom Gillham, Assistant Director Property and Development (Interim) to the meeting. The Leader advised that the cabinet member referred to in recommendation 3.2 was the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support.

The Leader proposed the recommendations of the report which were seconded by Councillor D J Westcott.

Various questions and issues were then raised by Members and the Assistant Director Property and Development noted them down for consideration/action.

RESOLVED (1) that, subject to resolution(2) below, a maximum contingent cost limit of £70,000, to be funded from any capital receipt from the future disposal of the site, as set out in the proposal of a settlement with Urban Splash be approved. In doing so the Council approves the addition of £70,000 to the Capital Programme for the East Wharf scheme for this purpose, as a further cost of disposal. Any expenditure in excess of this sum that is deemed necessary would be subject to further Council approval.

RESOLVED (2) that whilst the proposal to settle matters, as outlined in the proposal set out in section 7.1 of the report be agreed in principle, recognising that adequate time is required to enable clarification of legal points set out in the deed of termination, the final sign-off is delegated to the Leader of Council and the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support.

C162 **Minutes and Notes for Information**

(Minutes and Notes 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 4 March 2014 be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the draft notes of the Exmoor Area Panel held on 6 March 2014 be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.