

CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2012

AT 4.30 PM

IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON

Present:

Councillor T Taylor Leader

Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor K H Turner

Councillor C Morgan
Councillor D J Sanders
Councillor D J Westcott

Members in Attendance:

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor A F Knight
Councillor E May
Councillor D D Ross
Councillor M A Smith

Councillor J Freeman
Councillor B Heywood
Councillor R P Lillis
Councillor P H Murphy
Councillor K J Ross
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive (A Dyer)
Corporate Director (B Lang)
Group Manager - Housing and Community (I Timms)
Group Manager - Environment and Services (S Watts)
Principal Accountant (S Plenty)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

CAB100 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

CAB101 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 January 2012

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 11 January 2012 – an amended copy circulated at the meeting).

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendments to the second and third paragraph of Minute No. CAB 88, as circulated at the meeting, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 11 January 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

CAB102 **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
Councillor K Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Councillor D Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Councillor P H Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke
Councillor K J Ross	All	Dulverton	Spoke
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe and Stogumber	Spoke

In addition,

- Councillor K J Ross declared a personal interest relating to Agenda Item 7 – Annual Budget and Council Tax Set 2012-13, as his wife was the Chairman of CLOWNS;
- Councillor E May declared a personal interest relating to Item 7 – Annual Budget and Council Tax Set 2012-13, as he was Vice-Chairman of CLOWNS; and
- Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew declared a prejudicial interest relating to Item 8 – Discretionary Business Rate Relief on account of him being a financial beneficiary of the discretionary relief scheme and took no part in this item.

CAB103 **Public Participation**

No member of the public had requested to speak.

CAB104 **Forward Plan**

The purpose of this item was to approve Forward Plan No. 9 – March 2012 to March 2013.

RESOLVED that, subject to the following amendments, Forward Plan No. 9 – March 2012 to March 2013, be approved.

- (1) West Somerset Council's Pay Policy be inserted for March 2012.
- (2) Portfolio Holder names be deleted from June 2012 onwards.

CAB105 **Cabinet Action Plan**

(Copy of the Action Plan, circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED (1) that the following items be deleted as actioned:

- (i) CAB77 – Hinkley Point C Development – Section 106 Update
- (ii) CAB90 – Revenue Budget Savings 2012/13 and 2013/14

RESOLVED (2) that the action relating to CAB92 – Into Somerset be carried forward subject to Members receiving a comprehensive update report at the next meeting of Cabinet in March 2012.

CAB106 Annual Budget and Council Tax Set 2012-13

(Report No. WSC 29/12, circulated with the Agenda and an amended budget setting paper 2012/13 Appendix A, B, C, D and E circulated at the meeting).

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with all the information required for Council to approve the revenue budget and capital programme for 2012/13 for recommendation to Council.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support who drew attention to the amended budget setting paper which had been circulated at the start of the meeting. She advised that the reason for the late amendments to the papers was due to changes to the income and expenditure figures relating to Hinkley Point as a result of the late signing of the Section 106 Agreement. Also, recent advice received from the District Auditor meant that it was unlikely that the Council would, under accountancy rules, be permitted to allocate any 'contribution to overheads' monies received under the Section 106 Agreement until the duties under that Agreement had been fulfilled. This could take up to five years and that whilst the 2012/13 budget would not be affected, it would affect the allocation of reserves which was going to support the revenue budget to help ease the budget deficit that the Council would be faced with in coming years.

The Lead Member advised that Cabinet had proposed not to increase the council tax charge in 2012/13 and would be accepting the offer from central Government of a one-year government grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase in council tax. It was acknowledged that the Council may have to call a referendum in 2013/14 if it wished to raise council tax over the government's current threshold of a 3.5% increase.

The Lead Member then reported on additional amendments contained within the budget setting report, which would be reflected in the report prepared for full Council, and included:

- 1) The following words should be added onto the end of the 6th bullet point in the first paragraph in section 5 – "..... and support the level of revenue reserves in the General Fund."
- 2) Amendments to Table 9 List of proposed savings –
 - (i) Additional income of £3,800 from Watchet Town Council for the grass cutting contract be included.
 - (ii) As the timing of the transfer of Blenheim Gardens was unclear, the saving figure proposed be reduced from £22,500 to £15,000.
 - (iii) Litter collection – proposed saving figure be increased by £5,000 to £12,500.
 - (iv) Community Grants – grant funding to the West Somerset Advice Bureau, HomeStart and Engage CVS would not be cut and CLOWNS grant funding would be cut by 13.98% rather than the proposed 75%.

- (v) The total savings figure be reduced from £170,419 to £159,457, and the £10,962 shortfall would be funded from the New Homes Bonus.
- 3) Amendments to Table 16 Earmarked Revenue Reserves –
 - (i) New Homes Bonus figure be reduced from £80,513 to £69,551.
 - (ii) Total Earmarked Reserves be reduced from £397,451 to £386,498.
 - (iii) £50,000 to be added as an expenditure in 2012/13 to HPC – DCO.
 - (iv) The total figure of earmarked reserves used in 2012/13 be amended from £793,041 to £843,041.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations, subject to the amendments set out above, and these were duly seconded by Councillor C Morgan.

During the debate, Members queried the issues surrounding the council tax freeze grant and suggested that the Council should learn from the past and put up the council tax. Councillor J Freeman drew attention to the justification of capital spending for certain IT projects such as the Microsoft Office upgrade and the Lead Member agreed to facilitate a discussion of the interested parties on this matter before the Council's budget setting meeting.

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommend to Council the following in respect of the 2012/13 budget:

- (1) The acceptance of the tax freeze grant for 2012/13 from central government as explained in Appendix A, Section 6 of the report, and therefore a 0% increase in council tax for 2012/13 as shown in Appendix A, Section of the report.
- (2) The revenue budget for 2012/13 as amended in Appendix B of the report.
- (3) The draft schedule of savings as amended in Appendix B, Section 3 (Table 9) of the report. The actual implementation of those savings initiatives that are highlighted being dependent upon formal consideration by Members of respective Equalities Impact Assessments.
- (4) The capital programme as presented in Appendix C, Section 8 (Table 11) of the report.
- (5) The statement on minimum reserves as shown in Appendix D of the report.
- (6) The revised Medium-Term Financial Plan in Appendix E (Table 19) of the report and the budget gap in future years.
- (7) The supplementary estimate for the use of the New Homes Bonus in 2011/12 up to the maximum of £91,000 as shown in Appendix A, Section 8 (Table 5) of the report.
- (8) That any locally applied council tax discount is maintained at 5%.

CAB107 Discretionary Business Rate Relief

(Report No. WSC 25/12, circulated with the Agenda).

The purpose of the report was to seek Cabinet approval of the list of rural settlements, together with a discretionary relief scheme.

The report was presented by the Resources and Central Support Lead Member who advised Cabinet that although Council had previously resolved to stop the discretionary rate relief scheme in the 2012/13 budget, provision had been made in the budget to retain the existing scheme for another two years. She then proposed the recommendations in the report and these were seconded by Councillor S J Pugsley.

In the absence of the Section 151 Officer, the Chief Executive reported that retaining the budget for the rate relief scheme would offer extremely good value for money.

RESOLVED (1) that Cabinet recommend Council to approve the rural settlements list for 2012/13 as listed in Appendix A to the report.

RESOLVED (2) that Cabinet recommend Council to extend the current discretionary rate relief scheme, as detailed in Appendix C to the report, which expires on 31 March 2012 for twelve months to 31 March 2013.

RESOLVED (3) that Cabinet recommend Council to approve the policy of not granting local discounts.

RESOLVED (4) that Cabinet recommend to Council to undertake a review of the scheme in 2012/13 and to report the results to Cabinet before the end of November 2012.

The meeting closed at 6.39 pm