

**CABINET**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2016**

**AT 4.30 PM**

**IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON**

**Present:**

Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew..... Leader

Councillor M Dewdney  
Councillor S J Pugsley  
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor C Morgan  
Councillor K Turner

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor I Aldridge  
Councillor S Y Goss  
Councillor B Heywood  
Councillor R P Lillis  
Councillor P H Murphy  
Councillor R Woods

Councillor G S Dowding  
Councillor A P Hadley  
Councillor B Leaker  
Councillor B Maitland-Walker  
Councillor N Thwaites

**Officers in Attendance:**

Director of Operations/Section 151 Officer (S Adams)  
Assistant Chief Executive (B Lang)  
Assistant Director – Resources (P Fitzgerald)  
Senior Accountant and Deputy s151 Officer (J Nacey)  
Corporate Strategy and Performance Officer (H Stevenson) – Item 7  
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

**CAB88     Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M Chilcott.

**CAB89     Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 January 2016**

(Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 6 January 2016 - circulated with the Agenda.)

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 6 January 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

**CAB90     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:

**WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL  
CABINET 3.2.16**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Member of</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Councillor C Morgan	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Councillor A Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Councillor K Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Councillor D Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Councillor I Aldridge	All	Williton	Spoke
Councillor S Goss	All	Stogursey	Spoke
Councillor B Maitland-Walker	All	Carhampton	Spoke
Councillor P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke
Councillor N Thwaites	All	Dulverton	Spoke

In addition, the following interest was declared:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Description of interest</b>	<b>Personal or Prejudicial</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
Cllr P Murphy	CAB96	Has a relative on the Board of Artlife	Personal	Spoke

**CAB91      Public Participation**

No member of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

**CAB92      Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Forward Plan for the month of March 2016 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of this item was to approve the Forward Plan.

**RESOLVED** that the Forward Plan for the month of March 2016 be approved.

Administrator's Note: Following the meeting, it was confirmed that the Community Asset Transfer Policy would be deferred by one month to the April meeting.

**CAB93      Cabinet Action Plan**

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

**RESOLVED (1)** that CAB84 – HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocations of CIM Funding be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (2)** that CAB85 – Request for Allocation of Hinkley Point C Planning Obligations Funds be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (3)** that CAB87 – Parking Fees and Charges be deleted as actioned.

**CAB94**     **Draft Corporate Strategy 2016/20**

(Report No. WSC 12/16 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek support for the adoption of the draft Corporate Strategy for 2016/20 prior to its consideration by Council.

The Leader of Council presented the report and provided information on the key elements of the Strategy. He drew Members' attention to the 'Role and Purpose' section and stated that in light of the Council's financial situation the words contained within were very relevant and that a lot of good work could be achieved for West Somerset residents without the need for financing.

The Leader proposed the recommendation of the report with an addition to the printed recommendation to include Scrutiny Committee's suggestion that the reference on page 8 of the Corporate Strategy 'to support improvement of public transport within West Somerset' be moved from falling under Key Theme 3 to Key Theme 1. The recommendation, as amended, was duly seconded by Councillor K Mills.

During discussion of the item, Members thanked the officer team for taking them through the Strategy development process and welcomed the opportunity to attend member workshops and feedback sessions and to be able to discuss the issues with parish and town councils.

**RESOLVED (1)** that it be recommended to Council to support the adoption of the Corporate Strategy, subject to the amendment as set out in paragraph 6.9 of the report.

**CAB95**     **Draft Capital Programme 2016/17**

(Report No. WSC 13/16 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to seek a recommendation to full Council by Cabinet for the Draft Capital Programme 2016/17 including the proposed funding arrangements.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Leader introduced the item and the Assistant Director for Resources presented the report advising that the approach was to focus on only essential spend in view of limited capital resources and to maintain suitable access to resources to support future investment that will be required but not as yet identified. The Assistant Director outlined the contents of the report and highlighted the following:

- It was proposed there be a 'light touch' approach to the capital programme for 2016/17 with only three schemes included, to be funded through the receipt of external grants and capital receipt reserves.
- Work was underway to develop an asset management programme.
- WSC's funding options and the capital reserves position in respect of capital receipts.
- No requirement to support new capital investment through additional borrowing.
- Further guidance was awaited from Government on what was required in terms of governance and content for the adoption of an Efficiency Statement in order to set aside new capital receipts to support initiatives resulting in revenue savings. It was hoped to communicate more information to Members at the full Council meeting on 24 February 2016.
- Capital borrowing and minimum revenue position – due to the cash flow position no external borrowing was required in the short-term, but it was expected in the future and monitoring undertaken on a regular basis.

The Leader proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded.

Members recognised the need for the offsite backup facility as it would produce a revenue saving in the longer term.

In response to a question as to whether the uncommitted balance in capital receipt reserves could be spent on transformation and invest to save schemes, the Assistant Director for Resources advised that this was an option and it would be for Members to decide how the funding for capital projects was prioritised, and encouraged Members to also think longer term.

In response to a further question, Members were advised that it was feasible that future capital receipts could range from £1m to £3m in the next two to four years, subject to the completion/sale of assets.

**RESOLVED (1)** that it be recommended to Council to approve the 2016/17 Capital Programme Budget totalling £258,500, funded through a combination of capital receipts reserves and external grant funding.

**RESOLVED (2)** that it be recommended to Council to delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to approve adjustments to the 2016/17 Disabled Facilities Grant Capital Budget to reflect the grant funding received from the Better Care Fund.

**RESOLVED (3)** that a Supplementary Estimate be approved to increase the 2015/16 Capital Programme by £15,000 to accurately reflect total asset disposal costs of land in Minehead.

**CAB96 Annual Budget and Council Tax Setting 2016/17**

(Report No. WSC 14/16 - circulated with the Agenda. An addendum to the recommendations was tabled at the meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with all information required for Cabinet to recommend its proposed revenue budget for 2016/17 to full Council, and for Cabinet to recommend its proposed Council Tax rate for 2016/17.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Leader introduced the item.

Members noted an error in recommendation 3.7 of the report and that it should read "...adding £1.76 to a Band D tax charge per year.". It was also noted that within paragraph 10.18 "Charitable Lottery Feasibility Support" should be amended to read "Charitable Fundraising Feasibility Support".

The Assistant Director for Resources presented the report and provided Members with the background information. He went on to highlight the key points of the report, which included:

- Scrutiny Committee had considered the report and their comments/recommendations were contained within.
- The importance of the statement by the Section 151 Officer on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of the council's reserves.
- No details had yet been received as to what would be included regarding the acceptance of a four year settlement.
- The forecast on business rates had been completed and the reduction in funding had dropped marginally. The risks were well understood in terms of business rate funding and Members should be mindful that the Council could, in the future, see a further reduction in the funding position.
- The proposed council tax increase of £5 for a Band D – 3.56% on all Tax Bands – was within the Government's referendum trigger limit.
- The Somerset Rivers Authority precept was separate and in addition to the basic council tax increase.
- The draft budget gap for 2016/17 had been closed, however it was noted that the scale of the challenge over the Medium Term Financial Plan remained substantial and serious.
- It was proposed to increase the minimum reserves to £600,000 and an update was provided on the General Fund Reserve position.

The Leader proposed the recommendations, as amended, which were duly seconded by Councillor K Turner.

During the debate the following main points were raised:

- Clarification was given on the recommendation to implement a three year Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) "holiday", and the Section 151 Officer advised that capital money would be used instead of revenue funding.

- It was prudent to set aside a Joint Management and Shared Services (JMASS) Reserve to invest in change and to fund the transformation vision as the cost to deliver this would be significant.
- Concern was expressed with regard to the proposed cuts to voluntary/charitable groups in light of the potential loss of match funded leverage.
- Members needed to strongly support each other in making tough decisions as there would be a need to look at the local community to help the Council achieve financial sustainability.
- Reinforce the message to residents to help them gain a better understanding about what services the Council delivers for just £2.83 per week (for a Band D property), and what could be lost if the Council was not financially viable.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the forecast Medium Term Financial Plan and Reserves position, and the Section 151 Officer's Robustness Statement, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that it be recommended to Council the implementation of a three year MRP "holiday" from 2015/16 to 2017/18, and recommends a transfer of £225,300 from the MRP Budget to General Reserves in 2015/16.

**RESOLVED (3)** that it be recommended to Council to transfer £51,500 to General Reserves in 2015/16 comprising surplus earmarked reserves of £39,384 plus surplus income of £12,116.

**RESOLVED (4)** that it be recommended to Council to transfer £200,000 from General Reserves to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve in 2015/16.

**RESOLVED (5)** that it be recommended to Council to approve the Draft 2016/17 Budget.

**RESOLVED (6)** that it be recommended to Council to approve a 2016/17 Council Tax increase of 3.56%, increasing the Band D basic tax rate by £5 to £145.56 per year.

**RESOLVED (7)** that it be recommended to Council to approve a further 2016/17 one-off Council Tax increase of 1.25% in respect of funding for the Somerset Rivers Authority, adding £1.76 to a Band D tax charge per year.

**RESOLVED (8)** that it be recommended to Council to approve the minimum reserves level at £600,000.

**RESOLVED (9)** that it be recommended to Council to approve the transfer of £166,456 from General Reserves to the JMASS Reserve to set aside funds to support transformation.

**RESOLVED (10)** that it be recommended to Council to delegate a decision to the Leader, Lead Member for Resources and the Section 151 Officer regarding acceptance of a four year settlement provided it is in the Council's interest to do so.

**RESOLVED (11)** that further to resolution (2) it be recommended to Council the setting side of £429,300 of capital receipts as reported in the Draft Capital Programme 2016/17 Report, to prudently mitigate the effect of the 3-year MRP holiday (3 x £143,100).

**RESOLVED (12)** that it be recommended to Council to transfer £50,000 from General Reserves to a Planning Service earmarked reserve.

The meeting closed at 5.35 pm.