

**CABINET**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 APRIL 2016**

**AT 4.30 PM**

**IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON**

**Present:**

Councillor A Trollope-Bellew ..... Leader

Councillor M Chilcott  
Councillor K Mills  
Councillor S Pugsley  
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor M Dewdney  
Councillor C Morgan  
Councillor K Turner

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor I Aldridge  
Councillor A Hadley  
Councillor R Lillis  
Councillor P Murphy  
Councillor T Venner

Councillor G Dowding  
Councillor B Heywood  
Councillor B Maitland-Walker  
Councillor N Thwaites

**Officers in Attendance:**

Chief Executive (P James)  
Director of Operations/Section 151 Officer (S Adams)  
Assistant Director Housing and Community Development (S Lewis)  
Performance and Development Manager (S Doyle)  
Interim Assistant Director Property and Development (T May)  
Assistant Estates Officer (R Mulcaire)  
Principle Estate Surveyor (A Priest)  
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

**Also in Attendance:**

C Trevelyan, Partnership Manager, South West Private Sector Housing Partnership

**CAB108 Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**CAB109 Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 March 2016**

(Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 2 March 2016 - circulated with the Agenda.)

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 2 March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

**CAB110 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>
Councillor A Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Councillor C Morgan	All	Stogursey	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 B Maitland-Walker	All	Carhampton	Spoke
Councillor P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke
Councillor N Thwaites	All	Dulverton	Spoke
Councillor T Venner	All	Minehead / SCC	Spoke

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 Chilcott	CAB114	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Pugsley	CAB114	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	CAB114	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K Turner	CAB114	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr D Westcott	CAB114	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted

**CAB111 Public Participation**

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

**CAB112 Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Forward Plan for the month of May 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 May 2016 be approved.

**CAB113 Cabinet Action Plan**

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

**RESOLVED (1)** that CAB94 – Draft Corporate Strategy 2016/20 be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (2)** that CAB95 – Draft Capital Programme 2016/17 be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (3)** that CAB96 – Annual Budget and Council Tax Setting 2016/17 be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (4)** that CAB103 – Financial Monitoring Quarter 3 2015/16 be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (5)** that CAB104 – HPC Planning Obligations Board Allocation of CIM Funding be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (6)** that CAB106 – Dulverton Off-Street Parking Fees and Charges be deleted as actioned.

**RESOLVED (7)** that CAB107 – Tarr Steps Off-Street Parking Fees and Charges be deleted as actioned.

**CAB114 Empty Homes in West Somerset and the Draft Empty Homes Strategy Review of the Empty Homes Coordinator**

(Report No. WSC 55/16 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to consider the issue of empty homes. Empty homes are a particular concern for West Somerset which has some of the highest levels of long-term empty homes in England. The report sought to quantify this problem and the reasons for it. It then introduced the various initiatives that were seeking to address the problem of bringing empty homes back in to use, namely (1) Empty Homes Strategy (Draft) 2015-2018; and (2) projects that were currently being prepared/delivered to bring empty homes back in to use. The report considered the financial benefits of bringing empty homes back in to use, and also reviewed the effectiveness of the Empty Homes Coordinator post and provided a business case for the continued (temporary) employment of this post (the current contract ends in July 2016).

The Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing presented the item and outlined the contents of the report, drawing attention to the numbers and types of long term empty properties in West Somerset and explained how they had an impact on the New Homes Bonus grant funding the Council received from central government. He drew further attention to the work of the Empty Homes Coordinator, reporting that a £70 penalty had been introduced to support the validation process which would apply if the owner of an empty property failed to complete the necessary review form within 21 days of request.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor D Westcott.

Various comments and issues were raised by Members in regard to:

- the importance of bringing more empty homes back into use and whether there was any additional officer capacity
- the need to publicise and emphasise enforcement action, and acknowledgment that each enforcement case would be assessed on its own merits
- council tax charges and exemptions on empty properties
- performance indicators – a request was made not to make them too complicated as this could detract from the job in hand
- the successful and valuable work already undertaken by the empty homes coordinator

The Assistant Director for Housing and Community Development advised that there was a strong invest to save basis in terms of the New Homes Bonus and the officer resource of 1 day a week for West Somerset was sufficient to carry out the review exercise. Furthermore, the penalty charge would greatly improve the amount of returns completed and returned, as well as reducing officer workload. He reported that support and advice to the Empty Homes Coordinator was provided from a range of partners in order to make it work more effectively.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Draft Empty Homes Strategy be approved.

**RESOLVED (2)** that a two year extension to the contract for the Empty Homes Coordinator on the basis of 3 days per week (i.e. as existing: 1 day for West Somerset and 2 days for Taunton Deane) funded from the surplus Housing Benefit / Council Tax Reduction Admin Grant be approved.

**CAB115 Freehold Transfer of Land at Mill Street, Watchet to Watchet Town Council**

(Report No. WSC 51/16 - circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to consider the transfer of an area of land at Mill Street, Watchet to Watchet Town Council.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and provided Members with the background information, advising that the legal requirements had been fulfilled. She went on to propose the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor C Morgan.

In response to a question, the Lead Member advised that the officer/legal costs associated with asset transfer work was similar regardless of the size of the land in question and the key was to carry out work efficiently and expediently to keep costs down.

Members queried whether £1 was a true valuation of the land. The Lead Member pointed out that for future land transfers it was important to include an overage clause which would be invoked if planning permission was obtained which increased the value of the land as the Council would benefit, and standardised wording was being looked at in this respect.

**RESOLVED (1)** that it be recommended to Council to approve the freehold transfer of an area of land at Mill Street, Watchet for a nominal £1 consideration.

**RESOLVED (2)** that it be recommended to Council that all other terms and conditions of the transfer to be agreed by the Assistant Director for Property and Development in association with the Lead Member.

**CAB116 Planning Obligations Allocation – Mineral Line Poetry Pin**

(Report No. WSC 53/16 - circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to agree the allocation of £3,000 to West Somerset Arts Consortium (ARTLife) for the Mineral Line Poetry Pin.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and advised that the sum of money requested represented the final part of the allocation to the Hinkley Landscape Art Scheme, which had delivered several projects such as the Coleridge Way.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation of the report which was seconded by Councillor K Turner.

Members expressed support for the project.

**RESOLVED** that the allocation of £3,000 to West Somerset Arts Consortium (ARTLife) for the Mineral Line Poetry Pin be agreed.

**CAB117 Hinkley Point C Section 106 Agreement – Allocations of Housing Fund**

(Report No. WSC 54/16 - circulated with the Agenda.)

The Leader reported that as part of the wider discussions between West Somerset, Sedgemoor, Somerset County and EDF Energy on the subject of Housing Enabling – a report on which was expected to be discussed at Annual Council in May – Sedgemoor District Council had agreed to find another way to fund the proposed scheme at Monmouth Street, Bridgwater, and therefore this item was withdrawn.

**CAB118 Community Asset Transfer Policy**

(Report No. WSC 56/16 - circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with details of the recent consultation completed in respect of the Council adopting a Community Asset Transfer Policy.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and provided background information. She reported that the revised Community Asset Transfer Policy was a much improved, useable and suitable version, and emphasised that a thorough consultation exercise had taken place. With regards to the Policy amendments, she pointed out it was useful to include the track changes in the appended document to the report. The officers were thanked for their hard work.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor C Morgan.

The improved version of the Policy provided more flexibility and Members underlined how pleased they were to see detailed in the Initial Expression of Interest Form a whole raft of options for the types of transfer for consideration which would make it far more appealing.

**RESOLVED** that it be recommended to Council to approve the Community Asset Transfer Policy and the Initial Expression of Interest Form.

**CAB119 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded during consideration of Item CAB120 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 is therefore agreed 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.

**CAB120 Freehold Disposal of Barnsclose Industrial Estate, Dulverton**

(Report No. WSC 52/16 - circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to consider the freehold disposal of Barnsclose Industrial Estate at Dulverton.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and provided detailed background information. She explained the advantages of selling at auction and provided details of the overage clause.

Various questions and issues were raised by Members, and particular concerns were raised regarding the requirement for more information to allow Members to make an informed decision.

On consideration of the concerns raised, the Lead Member proposed that the item be withdrawn pending the receipt of a revised report to include further detailed information. This was seconded by Councillor S Pugsley.

**RESOLVED** that the item be withdrawn.

The meeting closed at 6.10 pm.