

**SPECIAL CABINET**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2017**

**AT 4.30 PM**

**IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON**

**Present:**

Councillor A Trollope-Bellew ..... Leader

Councillor M Chilcott  
Councillor A Hadley  
Councillor S Pugsley  
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor M Dewdney  
Councillor C Morgan  
Councillor K Turner

**Members in Attendance:**

Councillor I Aldridge  
Councillor P Pilkington

Councillor P Murphy  
Councillor R Woods

**Officers in Attendance:**

Democratic Services Manager (R Bryant)  
Assistant Director – Corporate Services (P Carter)  
Assistant Director – Operational Delivery (C Hall)  
Economic Regeneration Manager (C Matthews)  
Senior Tourism Officer (R Downes)  
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)  
Media and Communications Officer (D Rundle)

**Also in Attendance:**

Mickey Green, Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership

At the beginning of the meeting the Leader announced it was an auspicious day for the Council as the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had announced he was minded to approve WSC's and TDBC's submission to create a single new Council. The final decision would be made in January 2018, however, he advised the implementation of a new Council could now be progressed.

**CAB41     Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

**CAB42     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 M Chilcott	All	SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr C Morgan	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr K Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Cllr D Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr I Aldridge	All	Williton	Spoke
Cllr P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke
Cllr P Pilkington	All	Timberscombe	Spoke

Councillor P Murphy declared a personal interest in respect of CAB45 Hinkley Tourism Strategy Phase 3 Delivery Plan 2018-2019 as Chair of the Watchet Coastal Community Team.

Councillor A Trollope-Bellew declared a prejudicial interest in respect of CAB47 Fees and Charges 2018-2019 as the owner of a private water supply and advised that if the matter were to be specifically discussed he would leave the Chamber during this item but would otherwise stay and participate fully in the item; he also declared a prejudicial interest in respect of CAB44 SWP Draft Business Plan 2018-2023 and he left the Chamber during the discussion on the Cannington Anaerobic Digestion Plant.

Councillor A Hadley declared a prejudicial interest in respect of CAB47 Fees and Charges 2018-2019 as a premises licence holder and advised that if the matter were to be specifically discussed he would leave the Chamber during this item but would otherwise stay and participate fully in the item.

#### **CAB43 Public Participation**

##### Item 7 Fees and Charges 2018/19

Sally de Renzy-Martin, Chair of the Watchet Harbour Advisory Committee, spoke of concerns at the proposed slipway fee charges imposed on the Watchet Sea Scout Group for the use of Watchet Harbour. It was felt the levy would be an unfortunate additional financial burden on a local, voluntary-run organisation which benefited the local community and believed the group should receive special consideration. With reference to the non-standard shared use of the harbour proposed charge, it was requested that charitable events be excluded from being required to pay any fees.

Chris Mitchell, Chairman of the 1<sup>st</sup> Watchet Sea Scout Group, spoke further on the proposal for future slipway charges at Watchet and how this would impact on the Scout Group financially. He stated the Group was grateful for the help received from the Council in the past, and made reference to a 1948 agreement between the Scout Group and the Council (and supporting letter dated 1994) which granted free use of the harbour to the Watchet Sea Scouts for 100 years.

**CAB44 Somerset Waste Partnership Draft Business Plan 2018-2023**

(Report No. WSC 127/17 – circulated with the Agenda. Scrutiny Committee comments were circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to seek approval of the Somerset Waste Partnership's (SWP) Draft Business Plan 2018-2023.

The Leader introduced Mickey Green, the new Managing Director of SWP, to the meeting.

The Lead Member for Environment presented the item and drew attention to the delay in the implementation of Recycle More. SWP had agreed to bring forward the expiry date of the current collection contract in order to secure a new collection contractor to facilitate the delivery of enhanced recycling collections, reduce landfill and develop an energy-from-waste plant at Avonmouth. He drew attention to the budget implications for the Council and advised the 2018/2019 cost increase would be £70,000.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations of the report which were duly seconded by Councillor C Morgan.

A discussion was held following concerns raised relating to why the anaerobic digester facility at Cannington was not being used to recycle food waste. It was felt that by using this local facility both time and money could be saved, as well as reducing CO2 emissions. It was confirmed that SWP were contracted to use the anaerobic digester plant at Walpole near Bridgwater, however, the SWP Managing Director agreed to pass on the comments raised to Somerset County Council who were responsible for waste planning policy.

It was noted that the SWP was a fantastic example of great partnership working and the forward thinking business plan was well received. The importance of encouraging residents to recycle all their food waste properly in the bins provided was highlighted. Leaflets were proposed to be distributed with next year's Council Tax bills to inform people on existing waste and recycling collection processes.

Clarification was provided that the early expiry of the contract was by mutual agreement, therefore there was no additional cost to the Council as a result.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Somerset Waste Partnership's Draft Business Plan 2018-2023 be approved, in particular the proposed approach to the procurement of a new collection contract.

**RESOLVED (2)** that, in line with their delegated authority and in order to implement Recycle More as requested by partners, it be noted that the Somerset Waste Board had agreed with Kier to bring forward the expiry date of the current collection contract from September 2021 to 27 March 2020.

**RESOLVED (3)** the projected budget for 2018/2019, subject to the finalisation of the figures, be approved.

**CAB45 Hinkley Tourism Strategy Phase 3 Delivery Plan 2018-2019**

(Report No. WSC 128/17 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to inform the Council on what had been achieved in the first three years of delivering the Hinkley Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 under Phase 1 and 2 Action Plans; to consult with Council on the details of a refreshed Strategy and proposals for a new Phase 3 Action Plan for 2018 and 2019; and to request the drawdown of £258,000 from Hinkley Point C (HPC) Section 106 allocations available for tourism, to deliver the Phase 3 Action Plan.

The Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Development presented the report and provided background information. He proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor D Westcott.

The Strategy demonstrated how the HPC funding provided WSC with greater opportunities to promote and protect the tourism industry in the district.

The Leader responded to concerns regarding the detrimental impact of the development on the Stogursey Parish and its tourism and assured Members that the Council was doing everything it could to mitigate the effects.

The monitoring of visitor activity was considered very important and the fact that tourism website hits for West Somerset were on the increase was good news. It was felt that generating positive perceptions, which was one of the key themes within the Strategy, would be a challenge and the emphasis on promoting a positive image was essential. The full impact of the Hinkley development was now being experienced by the local communities and it was underlined how important and valuable it was to sustain industries such as tourism during this time.

A specific question was asked in regard to how much support would be provided to the three local Coastal Community Teams. The benefits to West Somerset of the refresh of the Visit Somerset website were not immediately apparent and it was felt that locally based teams could achieve a lot more in terms of promoting their own area. It was hoped that the Strategy would also support an initiative to look at a new marketing strategy for the coastal strip which was currently being explored by the Coastal Community Teams.

The Senior Tourism Officer advised there were a lot of different types of activity being undertaken within the current funding allocations. He drew attention to the spend against activity during the Phase 3 Action Plan, in particular working with local community groups and information centres to improve and enhance the visitor experience. He confirmed that a lot of communities affected by the HPC development had already received financial support during Phase 2, as well as receiving help and advice provided by officers. He stated that the Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership (HTAP) had agreed to look at the key coastal areas in a more general way; and opportunities for projects to receive match funding were also available through the Strategy. He further advised that by developing visitor experience tools, local community initiatives and marketing strategies to establish a new brand could be supported.

The Senior Tourism Officer recognised the concerns raised regarding the Visit Somerset website and informed Members that by closer partnership working, the promotion of West Somerset and Exmoor would improve. Targets and outputs would also be closely monitored.

In response to points raised in respect of how tourism would be managed in the future and the benefits of using local volunteers, it was reported that HTAP provided support to the two main industry bodies, Visit Exmoor and Visit Somerset, to make improvements in order for them to take the lead in a more efficient way going forward. The Partnership also worked with local groups to identify key issues to help improve the visitor experience and to ensure they became self-sufficient and not be reliant on further funding.

**RESOLVED (1)** that it be recommended to Council to approve the refreshed Hinkley Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 and Phase 3 Action Plan for delivery between January 2018 and September 2019.

**RESOLVED (2)** that it be recommended to Council to approve the request for drawing down £258,000 of Hinkley Point C Section 106 allocations available for tourism to deliver the Phase 3 plan.

**CAB46 Budget Setting Process 2018/2019**

(Report No. WSC 129/17 – circulated with the Agenda. Scrutiny Committee comments were circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Cabinet with an update on budget estimates for 2018/2019 and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) forecasts.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report. It was noted that the Budget Gap, detailed in Table 1 of the report, had been updated and the figure was now £215,000. Ongoing risks and volatility were still present and in view of the Government's 'minded to' decision, the Lead Member advised that the Council would have to become more cost efficient. However, the overall progress in addressing the budget gap had been positive and the Lead Member emphasised that the Council was doing its best to protect its services and staff resources.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor D Westcott.

**RESOLVED** that the latest budget estimates be noted.

**CAB47     Fees and Charges 2018/2019**

(Report No. WSC 130/17 – circulated prior to the Meeting. Scrutiny Committee comments were circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to set out the proposed fees and charges for next financial year, 2018/2019.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and read out the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations, which included a suggested proposal for Cabinet to consider recommending to Council that the proposed charge to the Sea Scouts Group be waived for the next 12 months whilst the legal position regarding a 1948 document between the Sea Scouts Group and the Council's predecessor body was established and clarified.

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

The Lead Member for Environment advised that the Council was required to keep and review documentation, e.g. checking method statements, risk assessments and insurance, from both charities and commercial organisations that used the Harbour and its facilities for the purpose of ensuring protection and safety when operating amongst other users of the Harbour, and it was felt the £100 levy was a reasonable administration charge. He advised the table within Appendix F of the report would be amended for the Full Council meeting so that reference to the Sea Scouts group permit would be listed within the 'Non-standard shared use of the harbour' section, rather than under 'Slipway Fees'.

There were differing views from Members as to whether an administrative charge should be imposed, with some feeling that charges should be waived for charitable and social groups and others agreeing that the Council had a responsibility to cover its costs and should seek to charge and treat all organisations fairly.

The main area of concern was not being able to locate a copy of the Watchet Urban District Council 1948 agreement and until the document could be found and the legal position resolved, it was suggested by the Chairman of Scrutiny to not impose the fee to the Watchet Sea Scout Group for 12 months.

The Assistant Director for Operational Delivery provided further clarification on how the level of fee was identified for charging the Sea Scout organisation for the administration of the process.

**RESOLVED** that it be recommended to Council to approve the Fees and Charges proposals to be added to the 2018/2019 budget, with the new charges for Environmental Health to come into effect from 1 January 2018.

#### **CAB48      Earmarked Reserves Review**

(Report No. WSC 131/17 – circulated prior to the Meeting. Scrutiny Committee comments were circulated prior to the Meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to provide information on the Earmarked Reserves Review for 2017-2018.

The Leader of Council presented the report and drew Member's attention to the fact that earmarked reserves should only be held where there was a clear purpose and commitment to use the funds within a planned timeframe. Surplus earmarked balances would therefore be released to the general reserves when practicable. He proposed the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor C Morgan.

It was noted that an explanation on the Planning Policy Reserve would be provided following the meeting.

In response to a question regarding what would be the balance of the general reserves account following the transfer of earmarked reserves, it was confirmed to be £969,000.

The Assistant Director for Corporate Services updated Members on the annual review of the minimum level of general reserves which would shortly be taking place to look at any potential new risks the Authority might face.

**RESOLVED** that it be recommended to Council to approve the proposals contained within the report.

**CAB49     Business Rates Pool and 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot**

(Report No. WSC 132/17 – circulated prior to the Meeting.)

Following a recent meeting with Group Leaders, the Council had submitted a bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government to become a pilot for 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/2019 with its county-wide district and County neighbours. The purpose of the report was to provide Councillors with the rationale and detail behind the bid.

The Leader of Council presented the report, drawing on the following points:

- The financial implications were based on indicative estimates of future Business Rates income and the financial benefits could be considerable, however this was not without risk. If these were considered to be no longer favourable the pool application could be withdrawn with no pool in place for 2018/2019.
- The Authority should be no worse off than if it were to remain outside the Business Rates Pool and would be exposed to the risk of volatility in its Business Rates income.
- There would be no detriment clause within the funding agreement for new 100% Business Rates Retention pilots for 2018/2019.

The Leader proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor M Chilcott.

Members were fully supportive of the bid.

**RESOLVED (1)** that it be recommended to Council to endorse the urgent decision made by the Leader of the Council and the S151 Officer that the Council participated in the pooling arrangement together with other Somerset authorities (Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, West Somerset Council) under the 50% Business Rates Retention scheme for 2018/2019.

**RESOLVED (2)** that it be recommended to Council to endorse the urgent decision to apply to the Government for the Somerset Business Rates Pool comprising the County and five districts to become a pilot area for 100% Business Rates Retention in the 2018/2019 financial year.

**RESOLVED (3)** that it be recommended to Council to approve delegated authority to the S151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader, to decide whether to remain in the Pool and, if approved by Government, the 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot scheme when the Government's Provisional Settlement details were announced in December 2017.

The meeting closed at 6.43 pm.