

**WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Council held on 23 February 2018 at 10.00 am**

**in the Council Chamber, Williton**

**Present:**

Councillor B Heywood ..... Chairman  
Councillor R Woods ..... Vice-Chairman

Councillor I Aldridge	Councillor B Allen
Councillor A Behan	Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor G S Dowding	Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor R Lillis	Councillor B Maitland-Walker
Councillor K Mills	Councillor P H Murphy
Councillor J Parbrook	Councillor P Pilkington
Councillor S Pugsley	Councillor N Thwaites
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew	Councillor K Turner
Councillor T Venner	Councillor D J Westcott

**Officers in Attendance:**

Director of Growth and Development (B Cleere)  
Assistant Chief Executive (B Lang)  
Section 151 Officer (P Fitzgerald)  
Assistant Director Resources and Support (P Carter)  
Interim Finance Manager (A Stark)  
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

At the start of the meeting the Chairman gave a warm welcome to Councillor Benet Allen, the new ward member for Minehead South.

**C66      Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Clifford, H Davies, M Dewdney, S Goss, I Jones, A Kingston-James, C Morgan and R Thomas.

**C67      Minutes**

(Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 13 December 2017, circulated with the Agenda.)

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 13 December 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

**C68      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>
Cllr I Aldridge	All	Williton	Spoke and voted
Cllr M Chilcott	All	SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr B Maitland-Walker	All	Carhampton	Spoke and voted
Cllr P H Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr J Parbrook	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Pilkington	All	Timberscombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr N Thwaites	All	Dulverton	Spoke and voted
Cllr A H Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Cllr T Venner	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that they all had a prejudicial interest in regard to C74 – Council Tax Setting, but that a specific dispensation exemption existed as referenced in the Code of Conduct to enable the item to be considered and voted upon.

**C69     Public Participation**

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

**C70     Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

**C71     Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and MRP Policy 2018/2019**

(Report No. WSC 15/18, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to inform Members of the recommended strategy for managing the Council's cash resources including the approach to borrowing and investments. It also sought the formal approval of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Annual Investment Strategy and MRP Policy which must be approved by Full Council by 31 March each year in line with regulations.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report, highlighting that a supplementary estimate had been approved in the year in respect of the mixed development proposal at Seaward Way, Minehead amounting to £2.839m and this was proposed to be funded from external borrowing.

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

**RESOLVED (1)** that the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), Annual Investment Strategy and MRP Policy for 2018/2019 as included in the report be approved.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the Prudential Indicators included within the TMSS which include limits for borrowing and investment be approved.

**RESOLVED (3)** that the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy be approved.

**C72**

**Annual Budget and Council Tax 2018/2019**

(Report No. WSC 16/18, circulated with the Agenda. Alternative Budget Proposal report by the West Somerset Opposition Group circulated prior to the meeting.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with the information required to approve the proposed revenue budget for 2018/2019, and to approve its proposed Council Tax rate for 2018/2019.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and highlighted key points from the report. She drew attention to the Final Grant Settlement and the fact that the general grant funding available to deliver services had again reduced significantly in 2018/2019. The Lead Member advised that the business rates position was skewed by the 2017 revaluation of rateable values and that the uplift in the rateable value for the Hinkley B power station was reflected in the financial forecasts.

She confirmed that it was worth noting that the Band D basic tax rate increase of £5 was an annual increase for residents.

She went on to propose the recommendations of the report which were duly seconded by Councillor A Trollope-Bellew.

Councillor P Murphy, Leader of the West Somerset Council Opposition Group, proposed an amendment in respect to recommendation 2.2 and that it be substituted with the following wording, "Full Council approves the 2018/2019 Budget as proposed in Report No. WSC 16/18 subject to increasing the contribution to the Sustainability Reserve from £160,000 to £210,000. The increase is to be met from a £50,000 reduced contribution to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve".

Councillor Murphy drew Members' attention to the impact this amendment had on the Council's budget as well as highlighting the comments made by the Section 151 Officer in his robustness statement. He stressed that what was being proposed would be in the best interest for the Council and the people of West Somerset. He advised the intention was to build capacity to bring projects forward by increasing the monies in the sustainability fund, and would assist in the provision of a one year post to bring projects forward. He believed there to be lots of good ideas for invest to save projects that the Council could adopt with a view to increasing its revenue stream, and should act now rather than wait for transformation to deliver a dedicated officer team.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor M Chilcott.

During the debate on the amendment the following points were made:

- The increase in the sustainability fund was welcomed, however the time it took to prepare projects to a point of bringing them forward was lengthy and this needed to be taken into consideration.
- In response to a question regarding the possibility of the Council accessing 'cheap' financing to invest in land/property in order to recoup an income, the S151 Officer advised that the authority had to look at any business case proposition around acquiring an investment and key factors to consider when making such a decision would be the scale of risk and rate of return on any acquisition, as well as the authority's level of reserves and resilience to large volatility.
- The budget amendment was intended to provide sufficient resources to have the officer capacity to research and make decisions as to what investment projects should be invested in.
- This would make the Council more commercial.
- It was important to start the process now to build up the resources; and the achievements and financial contributions would be carried forward into the future.
- Members were urged to put themselves at the forefront of the 'invest to save' schemes in order to be fully aware of the details and provide support.
- The merits of exploring the possibility of implementing smaller projects to bring in an income, e.g. from advertising on the Council's website; this should not be restricted to just larger projects.
- Managing expectations and engaging in further dialogue was important to deliver what was being proposed.

In accordance with legislation around decision making where matters affecting the Council's budget or Council Tax were considered, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment.

Councillor I Aldridge	For	Councillor B Allen	For
Councillor A Behan	Abstain	Councillor M Chilcott	For
Councillor G S Dowding	For	Councillor A Hadley	For
Councillor B Heywood	For	Councillor R Lillis	For
Councillor B Maitland-Walker	For	Councillor K Mills	For
Councillor P Murphy	For	Councillor J Parbrook	For

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Councillor P Pilkington	For	Councillor S Pugsley	For
Councillor N Thwaites	For	Councillor A Trollope-Bellew	For
Councillor K Turner	For	Councillor T Venner	For
Councillor D Westcott	For	Councillor R Woods	For

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared CARRIED.

There was no further debate and a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations, as amended, contained within the report.

Councillor I Aldridge	For	Councillor B Allen	For
Councillor A Behan	Abstain	Councillor M Chilcott	For
Councillor G S Dowding	For	Councillor A Hadley	For
Councillor B Heywood	For	Councillor R Lillis	For
Councillor B Maitland-Walker	For	Councillor K Mills	For
Councillor P Murphy	For	Councillor J Parbrook	For
Councillor P Pilkington	For	Councillor S Pugsley	For
Councillor N Thwaites	For	Councillor A Trollope-Bellew	For
Councillor K Turner	For	Councillor T Venner	For
Councillor D Westcott	For	Councillor R Woods	For

**RESOLVED (1)** that the forecast Medium Term Financial Plan and Reserves position, and the S151 Officer's Robustness Statement as set out in Appendix A of the report be noted.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the 2018/2019 Budget as proposed in Report No. WSC 16/18 be approved, subject to increasing the contribution to the Sustainability Reserve from £160,000 to £210,000. The increase would be met from a £50,000 reduced contribution to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve.

**RESOLVED (3)** that the 2018/2019 Council Tax increase of 3.32%, increasing the Band D basic tax rate by £5 to £157.32, comprising £155.56 for services and £1.76 on behalf of the Somerset Rivers Authority be approved.

**RESOLVED (4)** that the minimum reserves level at £700,000 be approved.

**C73      Capital Programme 2018/2019**

(Report No. WSC 17/18, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was for Full Council to approve the recommended Capital Programme for 2018/2019 including the proposed funding arrangements.

The Capital Programme only included essential investment in core IT systems of £26,000 and £350,000 for Disabled Facilities Grants which were funded via contributions from the Better Care Fund.

The total recommended 2018/2020 Capital Programme was £376,000.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and proposed the recommendations of the report which were seconded by Councillor K Turner.

**RESOLVED (1)** that the 2018/2019 Capital Programme Budget totalling £376,000, funded through a combination of revenue resources and external grant funding, be approved.

**RESOLVED (2)** that authority be delegated to the S151 Officer to approve adjustments to the 2018/2019 Disabled Facilities Grant Capital Budget to reflect the final grant funding received from the Better Care Fund.

**C74 Council Tax Setting 2018/2019**

(Report No. WSC 18/18, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was for Council to approve the calculation and setting of the Council Tax for 2018/2019.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the report and drew attention to the breakdown of percentage increases in precept levels collected by WSC on behalf of the other authorities.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations of the report which were duly seconded by Councillor R Woods.

Clarification was provided on the SRA precept and why it was collected in two amounts. The Leader advised that until such a time as it would be set up as a separate precepting authority, this was the most practicable way to collect the monies.

An explanation was provided regarding the presentation of the percentage increase figures for Somerset County Council Social Care, and it was agreed to add a footnote to provide further clarification in respect of the 2018/2019 percentages.

In accordance with legislation around decision making where matters affecting the Council's budget or Council Tax were considered, a recorded vote was taken.

Councillor I Aldridge	For	Councillor B Allen	Abstain
Councillor A Behan	For	Councillor M Chilcott	For
Councillor G S Dowding	For	Councillor A Hadley	For
Councillor B Heywood	For	Councillor R Lillis	For
Councillor B Maitland-Walker	For	Councillor K Mills	For
Councillor P Murphy	For	Councillor J Parbrook	For
Councillor P Pilkington	Abstain	Councillor S Pugsley	For
Councillor N Thwaites	For	Councillor A Trollope-Bellew	For
Councillor K Turner	For	Councillor T Venner	For
Councillor D Westcott	For	Councillor R Woods	For

**RESOLVED (1)** that the formal Council Tax Resolution detailed in Appendix A to the report be approved.

**RESOLVED (2)** that the total Band D Council Tax be noted to be as follows:

	2017/18	2018/19	Increase
	£	£	%
West Somerset Council	150.56	155.56	3.32
West Somerset Council - SRA	1.76	1.76	0.00
Somerset County Council	1,069.52	1,103.15	2.99
Somerset County Council – Social Care	42.43	76.17	3.00
Somerset County Council – SRA	12.84	12.84	0.00
Police and Crime Commissioner	181.81	193.81	6.60
Devon & Somerset Fire Authority	81.57	84.01	2.99
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,540.49</b>	<b>1,627.30</b>	<b>5.64</b>
Town and Parish Council (average)	68.76	71.65	4.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,609.25</b>	<b>1,698.95</b>	<b>5.57</b>

**Note:** The Somerset County Council tax is analysed into three lines for general services, social care additional precept and Somerset Rivers Authority additional precept. The total aggregate amount is increased by 5.99% (from £1,124.79 to £1,192.16). The 5.99% increase comprises 2.99% (£33.63) for general services and 3.00% (£33.74) for social care.

The meeting closed at 11.11 am.