WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT 32 WATERLOO STREET
MONDAY 27TH JULY 2026

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm
Meeting Concluded: 8.45 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ciaran Cronnelly (C), Roger Bailey (S), Jemma Coles (S), Peter Crew, Robert Payne and John Standfield.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Helen Morton (Director of Finance & Resources & RFO) and Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Manager).

65	**Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes** Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gill Bute substituted by Roger Bailey, John Crockford-Hawley substituted by Jemma Coles, Mark Canniford, Robert Skeen and Charlie Williams with no substitutions.
66	**Declarations of Interest** Councillor Roger Bailey declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 15 as an Allotment plot holder.
67	**Committee Governance** .1 To note the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair by full Council at its Annual Meeting held on the 28th May 2026 *Note: The Council's Standing Orders would be consulted to confirm that a Councillor can be elected Vice Chair of more than one Committee and reported to Town Council if not.* **RESOLVED:** That the appointment of the Chair (Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly) and Vice Chair (John Crockford-Hawley) by Full Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026 be noted.

	.2 Confirmation of Committee Terms of Reference by Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee Terms of Reference by Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026 be confirmed.
68	**To agree the accuracy of the previous Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 13th April 2026** The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Peter Crew **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was: **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 13th April 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair.
69	**To approve the Notes of the Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on held on 13th May 2026 and DRAFT Notes held on the 1st July 2026** The notes had been previously circulated. The Chair highlighted the recommendations of the Devolution Start and Finish Group requiring Committee approval. During discussion, it was proposed that the recommendation relating to the Alexandra Parade Weighbridge Hut be amended to enable the Devolution Start and Finish Group to further explore the opportunity to retain and repurpose the structure, recognising its heritage value and potential future use. The CEO/Town Clerk advised that North Somerset Council would only consider a 99-year leasehold arrangement, rather than a freehold transfer, which fell outside the agreed devolution framework. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and carried. **RESOLVED:** 1. That the Notes of the DRAFT Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on held on 1st July 2026 be approved. 2. To support carrying on under the expired licenses for 16 play areas the but request new ones be signed as freehold within 12 months. 3. That the Community Engagement Programme be approved and implemented accordingly. 4. To confirm that all safety records for the 3 land parcels be obtained before acquiring and that full maintenance records for each site also needed to be received. 4. To confirm that work package WP7C-Italian Gardens was no longer a priority. 5. To confirm that work package WP7B-Alexandra Parade Gardens was no longer a priority, with the exception of pursuing the Weighbridge Hut through the Devolution Start and Finnish Group.

70 To approve the Minutes of the DRAFT Grants and Governance Sub Committee Meeting held on held on 16th April 2026

The minutes had been previously circulated.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Standfield
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the DRAFT Grants and Governance Sub Committee Meeting held on held on 16th April 2026 be approved.

71 To receive the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in April and May 2026

The notes had been previously circulated.

It was questioned about the replacement of light bulbs within the Museum. The CEO/Town Clerk advised that the heritage light fittings required access by cherry picker and that the uneven flooring presented operational and health and safety challenges.

RESOLVED: That the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in April and May 2026 be received.

72 To approve the Finance and General Purposes Committee Annual Work Programme 2026/27

The covering report of the Democratic Services Manager and CEO/Town Clerk, together with the proposed Annual Work Programme (Appendix A), had been previously circulated.
The Committee noted that the Work Programme:

- provided a structured framework for the Committee's business throughout the municipal year;
- would remain a live document to respond to emerging priorities, legislative changes and referrals from Full Council; and
- would require the provisional August meeting to include the consideration of the 32 Waterloo Street ramp project.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

RESOLVED:

1. That the Finance and General Purposes Committee Annual Work Programme for the 2026/27 municipal year, attached at Appendix A, be approved.
2. That the Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to make minor administrative amendments to the Annual Work Programme during the municipal year, provided such amendments do not alter the Committee's delegated responsibilities or decision-making powers.

FINANCE

73 Standing Financial Reports

The report of the Finance Administration Officer had been previously circulated, requesting the Committee to:

1. Note the Standing Financial Reports for the reporting period to 30 June 2026, including the Budget Monitoring, Virement, Bank Reconciliation, Cash Flow, Investment, Debtors, Creditors and Earmarked & Capital Reserve reports.
2. Approve the Overspend Report and the budget overspends identified within the report.

73.1 Budget & Virement Reports
73.1.1 Income & Expenditure Budget Monitoring Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
The Committee noted:

- future budget monitoring reports would include a breakdown by service area;
- the Weston in Bloom planting budget remained subject to further expenditure during the financial year;
- any future review of Weston in Bloom arrangements or budget responsibilities should be considered by the Grants & Governance and Amenities, Culture & Leisure Committees.

RESOLVED: Noted with no virements.

73.2 Bank Reconciliation Reports
73.2.1 Bank Reconciliation Summary Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
73.2.2 Schedule of Receipted Income Summary at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
73.2.3 Schedule of Payments Summary at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)

RESOLVED: Noted.

73.2.4 Confirmation and Verification of Bank Reconciliations (Non-Signatory) (For Approval)

Councillors Robert Payne and Peter Crew were nominated as the two non-signatories.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: To authorise the signatories for approval of the bank reconciliations at 30 June 2026.

73.3 Cash Flow Forecast Reports (For Noting)

The Committee noted that:

- investments continued to perform well and were being managed in accordance with the Investment Strategy;
- the annual investment income target of £30,000 included £10,000 achieved during Quarter 1; and
- investments continued to be diversified across institutions to mitigate risk, with alternative banking providers also being explored.

RESOLVED: Noted.

73.4 Investment, Interest & Loans Reports
73.4.1 Investment and Interest Summary Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
73.4.2 Loan Balances at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)

RESOLVED: Noted.

73.5 Debtors Reports
73.5.1 Outstanding Balances Summary Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
73.5.2 Write Offs / Bad Debts (Nothing to Report)

RESOLVED: Noted.

73.6 Creditors Reports

73.6.1 Schedule of Direct Debits at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)

Note: The Food Hub account name required updating.

RESOLVED: Noted.

73.6.2 Overspend Report at 30 June 2026 (For Approval)

The Committee noted that:

- recent recruitment activity was beginning to deliver positive benefits; and
- the CPI increase had been incorporated into the budget following the correction of a previous budgeting error (SWHT).

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: That the Overspend Report at 30 June 2026 be approved.

73.7 EMR & Capital Reserve Movement Report
73.7.1 EMR Summary Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting / Approval)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: That £231,986 be allocated to the Future Capital Projects Reserve (Code 901) in recognition of the approved Medium Term Financial Plan and the Council's agreed level of General Reserves.

74 **To appoint nominated Bank Signatories**

Appointment of Nominated Bank Signatories

The report of the Finance Administration Officer had been previously circulated.
The Committee noted that, following the appointment of the Deputy Mayor for 2026/27, an additional member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee was required to maintain four authorised bank signatories in accordance with the Council's banking arrangements.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

A vote was taken and **carried.**

	RESOLVED: To recommend to Council that Councillor John Crockford-Hawley remain as the fourth authorised bank signatory.
	GOVERNANCE
75	**Outside Bodies Reporting Protocol** The report of the Democratic Services Manager had been previously circulated. The Committee supported the proposed protocol and agreed that: • Community Champions should be included within the reporting arrangements; • reports should be circulated with Full Council agendas and included as a standing item for noting, with Members able to raise questions where appropriate; and • a standard reporting template should be developed, with North Somerset Council's arrangements considered as a possible model. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Roger Bailey A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** To recommend to Full Council that: 1. The Outside Bodies Reporting Protocol be amended to include Community Champions. 2. Council representatives and Community Champions submit a report to the relevant Committee at least annually. 3. A standing agenda item entitled "Reports from Council Representatives on Outside Bodies and Community Champions" be included on Full Council agendas for reports to be noted. 4. A standard reporting template be developed to support the reporting process.
76	**To approve the following Policies and covering reports:** **Policies** The Director of Finance & Resources presented the report, previously circulated, setting out revisions to the Council's Data Protection and Records & Retention Policies, together with the introduction of a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy. **76.1 Data Protection Policy** The Committee noted that the revisions reflected legislative changes and Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidance. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** That the revised Data Protection Policy be approved. **76.2 Records & Retention Policy** The Committee noted that: • a minor typographical error would be corrected prior to publication; and

- the policy would continue to be updated to reflect legislative and operational changes.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Standfield
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: That the Records & Retention Policy be approved, subject to the correction of the typographical error.

76.3 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The Committee considered the draft AI Policy and agreed that:

- further clarity was required regarding compliance with ICO guidance, automated decision-making and governance arrangements; and
- Members' comments should be incorporated into a revised draft for further consideration.

The CEO/Town Clerk advised that the policy was based on an industry model and intended to provide an initial framework for the Council's use of AI, supported by secure platforms and appropriate officer oversight.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Jemma Coles

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: That consideration of the Artificial Intelligence Policy be deferred to the August 2026 meeting to allow Members' comments to be incorporated into a revised draft.

77 Digital Transformation Programme – Development of the Business Case

The Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk presented the report, previously circulated, outlining progress on the development of the Business Case for the Council's proposed Digital Transformation Programme.

The Committee noted that:

- the report sought endorsement of the strategic direction while the detailed Business Case continued to be developed; and
- the proposed transition to a Microsoft 365 environment could be supported in principle.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor John Standfield

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations set out within the report be approved.
2. That Councillors John Standfield and Peter Crew be appointed to the one-off Councillor Digital Transformation Project Review Group, with one further Councillor to be nominated by Group Leaders.

In addition it was further proposed:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: That the Council's transition to a Microsoft 365 environment be approved and approximately £10,000 be allocated from the 2026/27 IT Support & Upgrade budget to fund any overspend associated with this work, acknowledging the full IT Business case review would be submitted to the August F & G P Meeting for consideration.

78 Grove Park Pond Restoration

The Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk presented the report, previously circulated, updating the Committee on investigations into the restoration of Grove Park Pond and seeking a strategic direction on the Council's potential involvement.
Members noted that:

- revised restoration costs were approximately £17,100, plus associated plumbing works (£2,000);
- North Somerset Council had identified a contribution of £7,000 and Weston Civic Society had indicated a willingness to provide financial support, with a Town Council commitment required to secure the partnership funding; and
- given the Council's significant investment in Grove Park, discussions with North Somerset Council regarding the future transfer of the park should be brought forward through the Devolution Programme rather than waiting until the anticipated 2028 programme.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED:
1. That a Town Council contribution of up to £10,000 towards the restoration of Grove Park Pond be approved, subject to partnership funding being secured from Weston Civic Society and North Somerset Council.
2. That discussions with North Somerset Council regarding the future transfer of Grove Park be brought forward as part of the Council's Devolution Programme.

79 Allotments – Assignment of Multiple Plots

Councillor Roger Bailey declared an interest in the item and took no part in the vote.
The Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk presented the report, previously circulated, outlining data received from the Allotment Club regarding multiple plot holders.
The Committee noted that:

- 106 plots were held across multiple tenancies and the consolidated waiting list stood at 311 applicants;
- plot sizes varied across sites due to historical subdivision, meaning restrictions would need to recognise existing inconsistencies;

- existing multiple plot holders should be permitted to retain their current plots, but no further entitlement to multiple plots would arise once those plots were surrendered or relinquished; and
- multiple plot holdings should not transfer to family members, with future allocations limited to one plot per household alongside a review of plot sizes to achieve greater consistency.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor John Standfield

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED:
1. That the Allotment Club be requested to amend its current policy, if this had not already been done, to limit future allotment allocations to one plot per household.
2. That existing tenants holding multiple plots be permitted to retain those plots until surrendered or relinquished, after which no further entitlement to multiple plots would arise, nor would such holdings transfer to family members.
3. That the Allotments Community Consultative Group consider the standardisation of plot sizes at its next meeting.

80 **Community Engagement Delivery Programme**

The report of the Senior Development Officer, previously circulated, presented an evaluation of the Council's new Community Engagement Model, including the Armed Forces Day pilot event, and the proposed Community Engagement Delivery Programme for 2026/27.
Members welcomed the programme and requested that a **"Becoming a Councillor"** engagement event be incorporated between September 2026 and January 2027 to promote public awareness and encourage participation ahead of the 2027 local elections.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor John Standfield

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED:
1. That the evaluation of the Armed Forces Day Community Engagement Pilot be noted.
2. That the Community Engagement Delivery Programme for 2026/27 be approved.
3. That a **"Becoming a Councillor"** engagement event be included within the programme between September 2026 and January 2027.

81 **Data Protection Officer Appointment**

The Director of Finance & Resources presented the report, previously circulated, seeking the appointment of an independent Data Protection Officer.
The Committee noted that:
- four quotations had been obtained, three from providers specialising in the local government sector; and
- the Council's volume and complexity of data protection matters varied significantly throughout the year.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Jemma Coles
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: That Naomi Korn Associates be appointed as the Council's independent Data Protection Officer for an initial 12-month term, with an approved overspend of £7,986.75 from the Audit and Accountancy budget for 2026/27.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.45 pm

Signed……………………………………………Dated …………………………
Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE ADDITIONAL DEVOLUTION START AND FINISH GROUP HELD AT 32 WATERLOO STREET ON WEDNESDAY 5TH AUGUST 2026

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm
Meeting Concluded: 8. 45 pm

PRESENT: Ciaran Cronnelly, Peter Crew, Hugh Malyan, Simon Harrison-Morse, Robert Payne, Marcia Pepperall, Caroline Reynolds and John Standfield (S).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (CEO/ Town Clerk), Fay Powell (Director of Community Services/ Deputy Town Clerk), Sarah Jackson (Devolution Programme Manager), Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Officer), Molly Matthews (Senior Development Officer) and Charlotte Jozefowicz (Acting Senior Development Officer).

1	**Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes** Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gill Bute who was substituted by Councillor John Standfield, and Councillor Jemma Coles and Councillor Caroline Reynolds with no substitution.
2	**Declaration of Interest** There were no declarations of interest received.
3	**To receive the Notes from the Devolution, Start & Finish Group held on 1st July 2026** The draft Notes had been previously circulated. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Peter Crew **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Hugh Malyan A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried.** **RESOLVED:** That the notes of the Devolution, Start and Finish Group held on 1st July 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair.

4	**Devolution Programme Update** **4.1 Asset Transfers – April 26 to date** To receive the Work Package and Devolution programme amendments Items for discussion were included as agenda items. **RECOMMENDED:** Noted.
5	**WP7E Alexandra Parade Weighbridge** The previously circulated report of the CEO/Town Clerk updated the Group on the Finance & General Purposes Committee decision of 27 July 2026 regarding Alexandra Parade and the Weighbridge, and the next steps with North Somerset Council (NSC). The CEO/Town Clerk advised that a response from NSC Highways was awaited to clarify the extent of the proposed transfer, whether freehold transfer was possible and, if not, the terms of any leasehold arrangement and associated highway adjustments. The S&FG agreed that the matter was not urgent and to await NSC's response, following which legal advice would be sought from Wellers. **RECOMMENDED:** That the update be noted and officers await NSC's response before progressing the matter.
6	**WP9A Worle Community Library** The S&FG received the previously circulated briefing note from the Devolution Programme Manager, which outlined the background to the Motion Resolution agreed by Council on 29 June and the work undertaken to date. This included meetings with Cllr Gibbons and the resident community lead (13 July) and North Somerset Council (NSC) Library Services (29 July). The CEO/Town Clerk highlighted two key issues: • The original NSC consultation related to the future of the statutory library service, which has now been relocated to the Campus. • Community interest in retaining a library facility had been led by a small but passionate group of residents, and the Town Council needed clarity on whether it wished to pursue a community library or focus on the statutory library service. The S&FG discussed the historic use of Worle Library, the adequacy of alternative library provision, transport links to the Campus, and concerns that the original consultation did not include an option to retain the Worle Library building. It was noted that legislation requires access to a library service within 30 minutes and that services have been redistributed to other locations, including Outreach provision. Concerns were also raised regarding: • The estimated £3 million required to refurbish the existing building. • Uncertainty around mobile library grants and the availability of rotating library stock. • Potential future opportunities linked to the Campus Family Hub and expanded library opening hours.

	A supplementary paper was considered, providing further information on the NSC consultation, press releases, the Town Council's request for information, and a proposed framework to support future planning and consultation. Whilst some Councillors wished to begin consultation immediately on the principle of a community library in Worle, others felt that further information was required, particularly regarding NSC's decisions on Children's Centres and the resources that would be needed to support any proposal. Following discussion, it was agreed that additional investigation and fact finding should be undertaken before consulting the public. The CEO/Town Clerk advised that resource for undertaking a consultation before September would be an issue. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Hugh Malyan **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Simon Harrison-Morse A vote was taken and **carried.** (5for 1ag) **RECOMMENDED:** That consideration of a potential community library be deferred until September to allow further investigation and fact finding. Officers are requested to develop a proposed consultation timeline and prepare details of what a future public consultation would include, in line with the CEO/Town Clerk's recommendations.
7	**WP8C Grove Park – Strategic Consideration of the Whole Park Transfer** The CEO/Town Clerk's report advised that the Town Council already had significant operational responsibilities, legal interests and ongoing investment within Grove Park. This included Grove House and The Lodge, the children's play area, ornamental flower beds, proposals for the restoration of Grove Park Pond and other activities within the park. Members considered that, rather than continuing to progress individual assets and legal arrangements separately, there was merit in exploring the transfer of Grove Park as a single strategic asset. The Council's preferred position was therefore to explore the transfer of the park in its entirety, including the car park, subject to satisfactory due diligence and agreement with North Somerset Council (NSC). The S&FG supported bringing the proposed transfer forward and agreed that officers should continue discussions with NSC to establish whether an earlier transfer of the whole park could be achieved and, importantly, the likely timescale and route for achieving that transfer. Members requested that the work should establish the full extent and curtilage of the proposed transfer and identify all assets, interests, responsibilities, income and expenditure associated with Grove Park. This information would inform the comprehensive business case required before any formal decision on the acquisition of the park was made. The S&FG noted that the existing Full Council resolution relating to the lease of the public conveniences remained in force. However, in the context of bringing forward the transfer of the whole park, officers could explore with NSC whether an Interim Management Agreement for the public conveniences would provide a more practical

	interim arrangement where this would facilitate or avoid delaying the wider transfer. Members emphasised that the public conveniences should be considered as part of the wider Grove Park transfer and were not the principal purpose of the project. Members recognised the potential benefits of bringing the whole park under unified management, including clearer accountability, integrated maintenance and asset planning, operational efficiencies, opportunities for external funding and improved long-term stewardship of Grove Park. **RECOMMENDED –** That: 1. The proposed transfer of the whole of Grove Park be brought forward from the 2027/28 phase of the Devolution Programme into the current 2026/27 programme, and officers continue discussions with NSC regarding the potential earlier transfer of the asset. 2. The Council's preferred position be to explore the transfer of Grove Park in its entirety, including the car park, rather than progressing individual assets within the park through separate arrangements wherever a whole-park transfer can reasonably be achieved. 3. Officers establish with NSC an indicative programme and timescale for the potential transfer, together with the proposed scope, extent and curtilage of the land and assets that would form part of any transfer. 4. Officers undertake the necessary due diligence and develop an initial feasibility study for the potential transfer of Grove Park, including: o the assets and land to be transferred; o existing leases, licences and other legal interests; o existing and potential income associated with the park; o ongoing revenue and maintenance liabilities; o staffing and operational implications; o lifecycle and capital investment requirements; o funding opportunities; o legal implications; o risks; and o the proposed transfer and implementation timescale. 5. Officers explore with NSC whether an Interim Management Agreement for the whole park would assist or facilitate the earlier transfer of Grove Park and what other areas would need to be included within this transfer package. (ie other assets to offset income generation of car park). 6. Officers report back to the Devolution Start & Finish Group and Finance & General Purposes Committee once discussions with NSC have sufficiently progressed, with the comprehensive business case and recommendations required to enable Members to determine whether and on what terms the Town Council should proceed with the transfer of the whole of Grove Park.
8	**WP2C NSC MOU** The CEO/Town Clerk advised that the MOU was agreed in principle, with comments from NSC still awaited. Officers would follow up accordingly. **RECOMMENDED:** That the position be noted.
	Please Note: *Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the information contained within Agenda Item 9, the report and supporting papers will be circulated separately to Members of the Devolution Start & Finish Group. Members are respectfully requested*

to treat the information as confidential pending the completion of the Council's ongoing review.

9 WP6C Glendale Grounds Services Project

The previously circulated report of the CEO/Town Clerk and Director of Community Services provided an update on work undertaken to explore future delivery options for Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services and sought strategic direction from Members on the purpose, scope and phasing of the project to enable officers to undertake detailed operational and financial modelling.

The CEO/Town Clerk advised that the financial information contained within the report was indicative only and that further Member direction was required before meaningful comparative costs could be produced. In particular, Members were asked to determine the outcomes they wished to achieve through the review, the areas of land and services to be included, and the appropriate phasing of any future changes.

The S&FG considered the asset mapping undertaken by officers, the Council's existing operational capacity, potential future service areas and the benchmarking and case studies contained within the report. Members recognised the potential benefits of increased Town Council control over Grounds Maintenance, including improved service quality, accountability and the ability to determine local standards, whilst also recognising the financial, staffing, fleet, depot and mobilisation implications of an expanded in-house service.

Members considered that the current standard of Grounds Maintenance being delivered through the existing Glendale arrangements was not sufficient and agreed that improving the quality, consistency and responsiveness of Grounds Maintenance across Weston-super-Mare should be a principal outcome of the review.
Members agreed that the project should therefore proceed on a phased basis.

Phase 1 – from 1 April 2027

The S&FG agreed that Phase 1 should focus on bringing Grounds Maintenance responsibilities in-house for:

- the six recreation grounds for which the Town Council has made a financial contribution to North Somerset Council since the abolition of Special Expenses in 2013;
- the land at Verbena Way;
- The Rows Green, Worle; and
- Milton Rose Garden.

Members agreed that the Town Council should not continue making its existing financial contribution into the North Somerset Council/Glendale Grounds Maintenance arrangements after 31 March 2027 in respect of the six recreation grounds, with officers therefore required to develop the operational and financial arrangements necessary for the Town Council to assume responsibility from 1 April 2027.

In developing Phase 1, officers were requested to establish the service standards and outcomes Members wished the Town Council to achieve, recognising that simply replicating the existing Glendale specification would not deliver the improvement sought by Members.

Phase 2 – Wider Grounds Maintenance and devolution

The S&FG agreed that, alongside development of Phase 1, officers should commence work with North Somerset Council on a second phase covering the potential future delivery of Grounds Maintenance across the whole Weston-super-Mare Town Council boundary.

This work should:

- consider Grounds Maintenance across the town as a whole rather than individual sites in isolation;
- exclude Street Cleansing from the scope at this stage;
- include relevant elements of public realm located within or associated with grounds maintenance areas;
- explore opportunities for further devolution of Grounds Maintenance responsibilities and associated assets to Weston-super-Mare Town Council where this could improve the overall standard and coordination of service delivery for the town;
- consider how Weston-super-Mare Town Council and North Somerset Council could work collaboratively to achieve improved outcomes; and
- identify the potential reallocation or transfer of assets, financial resources, staffing resources, equipment and other operational resources that may be required to support any future transfer of responsibilities.
-

Members noted that specialist services, including tree works and other activities requiring specialist expertise or equipment, could continue to be externally commissioned where this represented the most appropriate delivery arrangement.
Street Cleansing was discussed separately. Members considered that any future review of Street Cleansing should ultimately consider the whole town boundary rather than the Town Centre in isolation.

However, it was agreed that Street Cleansing would not form part of Phase 1 or the initial Phase 2 Grounds Maintenance work and should be considered at a later stage once the Grounds Maintenance arrangements were further developed.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

A vote was taken and the proposal was CARRIED.

RECOMMENDED: That officers:

1. Develop Phase 1 for implementation from 1 April 2027, comprising the in-house delivery of Grounds Maintenance for the six recreation grounds previously funded by the Town Council following the abolition of Special Expenses in 2013, together with (1) Verbena Way, South Worle (2) Village Green (The Rows), Worle and (3) Rose Garden, Milton
2. Proceed on the basis that the Town Council's existing contribution to the North Somerset Council/Glendale arrangements in respect of the six recreation grounds will cease after 31 March 2027, and develop the staffing, fleet, equipment, depot, financial and mobilisation requirements necessary to enable delivery from 1 April 2027.

	3. Develop clear service standards and outcomes for the Grounds Maintenance review, reflecting Members' objective of improving upon the current standard of service and providing a higher quality, more consistent, locally accountable and responsive service. 4. Commence Phase 2 discussions with North Somerset Council regarding the potential future delivery of Grounds Maintenance across the whole of the Weston-super-Mare Town Council boundary, excluding Street Cleansing at this stage, and including appropriate elements of public realm associated with grounds maintenance areas. 5. As part of Phase 2, explore further devolution opportunities with North Somerset Council where the transfer of Grounds Maintenance responsibilities could improve overall service delivery for the town, including consideration of the transfer or reallocation of the assets, funding, staffing, equipment and other resources required to support delivery. 6. Consider the continued use of external contractors for specialist activities, including specialist tree works, where this provides the most appropriate operational solution. 7. Treat Street Cleansing as a separate future phase, with any subsequent options appraisal considering service delivery across the whole Town Council boundary rather than the Town Centre in isolation. 8. Report back to the September meeting with detailed Phase 1 options, costs, staffing and resource requirements, implementation arrangements and timescales, together with an update on initial discussions with North Somerset Council regarding Phase 2, to enable recommendations to be made to Full Council and incorporated into the Council's budget-setting process. 9. Circulate a briefing paper to all Councillors in advance of the September meeting and invite all Councillors to attend the Devolution Start & Finish Group.
9	**To note Provisional Meeting dates (for inclusion in annual meeting calendar with regard to 26/27)** • 2nd September 2026 • 4th November 2026 • 13th January 2027 • 10th March 2027 • *12th May 2027
	There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.58 pm Signed………………………………………Dated ………………………… Chair of the Devolution Start and Finish Group

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE GRANTS AND GOVERNANCE SUB COMMITTEE HELD AT 32 WATERLOO STREET
THURSDAY 30TH JULY 2026

Meeting Commenced: 11.00 am
Meeting Concluded: 12.20 pm

PRESENT: Councillors John Standfield (C), Alan Peak, Hugh Malyan (VC), Joe Bambridge, Ciaran Cronnelly and Peter Crew.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Helen Morton (Director of Finance & Resources/Responsible Financial Officer, Fiona Gardner (Finance Administration Manager), Alison Garner (Democratic Services Officer), Molly Mathews (Senior Development Officer), Charlotte Jozefowicz (Senior Development Officer (maternity cover)) and Ellie Lloyd (Somewhere to Go Ltd).

82	**Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes** Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mike Bell with no substitutions. It was noted that Councillor James Clayton was not in attendance.
83	**Declarations of Interest** There were none received.
84	**To note the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair by Full Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026** **RESOLVED:** That the appointment of the Chair (John Standfield) and Vice-Chair (Hugh Malyan) by Full Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026 be noted.
85	**Confirmation of Committee Terms of Reference by Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026** **RESOLVED:** That the Committee Terms of Reference by Full Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026 be confirmed.

86 **To note the Grants and Governance Sub Committee Annual Work Programme 2026/27**

RESOLVED: To note that this subcommittee has standard agenda items for the receipt of grant applications received for consideration and it undertakes review of the councils Service Level Agreements no other areas of work are programmed within its Terms of Reference.

87 **To agree the accuracy of the previous Grants and Governance Sub Committee Minutes held on 16th April 2026**

The minutes from the previous meeting had been previously circulated.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Alan Peak
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

A vote was taken and accordingly it was **carried.**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Grants and Governance Sub Committee Meeting-held on 16th April 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair.

At this point in the meeting the Chair brought forward Agenda Item 8 GOVERNANCE in particular Agenda item 8.1.C to allow an in person report.

GOVERNANCE

88 **Service Level Agreements**
To receive quarterly KPI reports and monitor the Council's Service Level Agreements (SLA'S).

88.1 **Community Service Level Agreements;**
Members noted the councils current SLA's with the following organisations, with budget provision values as follows;

<u>Somewhere to Go (Homeless Support Fund Total) (£50,000)</u>

Ellie Lloyd, Head of Charity Services & Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead was invited to present the Q4 report.

- Q1 was a particularly busy and productive period seeing 123 new clients
- During the quarter, the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) was activated on three occasions.
- The level of support delivered throughout Q1 had remained stable when compared with the previous quarter, there had been a clear and notable increase in the overall volume of support provided. This reflected both a rise in the number of individuals accessing the service and an increase in the complexity of presenting needs. This upward trend highlighted the continued and growing demand for our services, reinforcing the importance of maintaining sufficient capacity, staffing, and resources
- The number of individuals with a local connection to North Somerset was a newly introduced KPI, and this was the first reporting period in which we had been asked to gather and analyse this information. Initial findings indicated that approximately 10% of our client group did not have a legally defined local

connection to North Somerset. Within this group, the majority were individuals who had experienced evictions from dry houses.

88.1.C **RESOLVED:** That the report of Somewhere to Go be received and noted.

The Chair thanked Ellie Lloyd who left the meeting at 11.13 am.

Weston Town Centre Partnership (£19,999)

88.1.A **RESOLVED:** That the report of Weston Town Centre Partnership be received and noted.

Citizens Advice North Somerset (CANS) (£25,000)

88.1.B **RESOLVED:** That the report of CANS be received and noted.

YMCA

88.1.D **RESOLVED:** That the report of YMCA be received and noted.

88.2 **Direct Service Level Agreements;**

South West Heritage (Curatorial Services - £85,537)

A discussion ensued regarding the Curatorial Services budget. Members noted that the allocated funding supported the development and delivery of both nationally significant and locally focused exhibitions, ensuring a varied and engaging programme for visitors while maintaining the museum's high curatorial standards.

It was further noted that a representative from the Trust visited the Museum on a monthly basis to undertake routine curatorial oversight. These visits included monitoring environmental conditions, such as temperature controls to ensure the appropriate preservation of the collections, inspecting artefacts for any signs of damage or deterioration, and identifying any maintenance or repair requirements to safeguard the Museum's collections.

88.2.E **RESOLVED:** That the report of South West Heritage be received and noted.

North Somerset Council Community Response (£51,500)

88.2.F **RESOLVED:** That the report of North Somerset Council Community Response be received and noted.

North Somerset Council CCTV Provision (£95,700)

88.2.G **RESOLVED:** That the report of North Somerset Council CCTV be received and noted.

89 *To resolve under the Public Bodies (Admissions of Meeting) Act 1960 to exclude the public and press for the following item by reasons of the confidential nature of the business.*

90 **GRANTS**

The report of the Finance Administration Manager had been previously circulated.

The council's annual budget for Community Event Grants was £12,500 with £1000 committed so far, leaving a £11,500 balance remaining.

Copies of bank statements, evaluation criteria and full applications for the following organisations had been previously circulated.

90.1 Small and Voluntary Grant Applications

<u>Great Western Air Ambulance Charity - £1,000</u>

They were looking for a grant to cover just under half of the cost of one mission, including aviation, medical equipment, fuel and high trained personnel. GWAAC were last awarded £700 in February 2024 which was declined and their last application was in the previous financial year.

- It was noted that the organisation held a healthy bank balance and had a strong track record of successful fundraising.
- Members commented that the Small & Voluntary grants budget was limited and should be prioritised to support new or emerging organisations.
- It was noted that, given the scale of the organisation's finances, the requested grant would have minimal overall impact.
- Members agreed that the application did not align with the objectives of the Small & Voluntary grant scheme.
- It was further noted that a similar application had been considered and refused in the previous year.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

90.1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the Great Western Air Ambulance Charity grant be refused on the basis that they had a strong fundraising capacity and members considered the application did not meet the objectives of the limited Small and Voluntary Grants budget which should prioritise new organisations.

<u>The Reduced Opera Company CIC - £1,000</u>

They were seeking financial assistance of £1,000 to support the delivery of an accessible, English language production of Carmen at the Blakehay Theatre.

- Members sought clarification on whether the productions were upcoming or had already taken place.
- It was noted that there were only a small number of productions, and members suggested that ticket prices could be increased, although the Chair advised that the intention was to keep performances accessible.
- It was noted that ticket prices were approximately one-third of the usual cost.
- Members noted that the organisation was based in Taunton, primarily operate across Somerset, and had recently expanded into Weston-super-Mare.
- Concerns were raised regarding the organisation's limited financial reserves, reliance on external grant funding, and the financial risk associated with its operations. It was also noted that the organisation employed six paid singers.

11.29 Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly joined the meeting.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew
SECONDED BY: Councillor Joe Bambridge

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

90.1.2 **RESOLVED:** That The Reduced Opera Company CIC grant be refused on the basis that they did not fulfil the grant criteria from the Small and Voluntary Grants budget.

<u>Community Scrapstore North Somerset - £5,000</u>

Community Scrapstore North Somerset were seeking financial assistance of £5,000 to support their Rescue and Sustainability Plan, which had been developed to secure the future of the charity following increased operating costs and the risk of closure.

The Grants and Governance Sub Committee did not normally award grants exceeding £1,000. This was communicated to the applicant, who advised that the £5,000 request reflected the exceptional circumstances facing the organisation and stated that, whilst they hoped the panel would consider a one off higher award to help secure the charity's future, they would be extremely grateful for a contribution of £1,000 if that was the maximum amount the Council was able to award.

- Members were referred to an email submitted in addition to this application and a discussion ensued.
- It was noted that this model had been successfully implemented elsewhere and was considered a valuable local initiative and
- That the large grant application fell outside the usual criteria for the Small and Voluntary Grants scheme and the potential for reviewing the scheme's parameters was discussed. It was agreed to award the applicant £1,000 and to consider increasing the grant limit as part of a future review.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

90.1.3 **RESOLVED:**
1) To award Community Scrapstore North Somerset £1,000 from the Small and Voluntary Grants budget.
2) To recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that it considers the request for a further £4,000 of financial support towards Community Scrapstore North Somerset's Rescue and Sustainability Plan.

11.45 am Councillor Cronnelly left the meeting.

<u>Vision North Somerset - £910.80</u>

Vision North Somerset were seeking financial assistance of £910.80 towards the replacement and installation of a ceiling mounted projector used in their community room on Neva Road.

The Chair noted that, following their own enquiries, had received quoted costs significantly lower than the amount of grant funding requested. Members also referred to a previous application submitted in July 2025, although it was acknowledged that it was unrelated to the current application.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan
SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

90.1.4 A vote was taken and **carried.** Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To award Vision North Somerset £500 from the Small and Voluntary Grants budget.

<u>Weston Hospicecare Limited - £1,000</u>

Weston Hospicecare were seeking financial assistance of £1,000 towards the purchase of a specialist bariatric recliner chair for their In-Patient Unit as part of a wider refurbishment project to improve accessibility for patients requiring bariatric care.

Weston Hospicecare previously received grants of £1,000 in November 2022, £1,000 in September 2023 and £250 in January 2025. The applicant had also referenced receiving £9,001.16 through the Big Worle fund; however, these monies were not funded by Weston-super-Mare Town Council. The Town Council acted solely as the Locally Trusted Organisation (LTO) to administer the external funding on behalf of the Big Worle project.

The Chair noted that, following their own enquiries, had received quoted costs significantly lower than the amount of grant funding requested. It was also noted that the organisation had received a substantial amount in funding through the Government's Levelling Up Fund. Members were advised that, as the funding had been received recently, it was not yet reflected within the current financial statements. It was further noted that, based on the availability of these funds, the organisation was in a position to finance the project from its own resources without the need for additional external financial support.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew
SECONDED BY: Councillor Joe Bambridge

90.1.5 A vote was taken and **carried.** Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Weston Hospicecare Limited grant be refused on the basis that the organisation was in a position to finance the project from its own resources without
90.2 the need for additional external financial support.

Grant applications – Weston in Bloom Grants Awarded

Discussion ensued regarding the Weston in Bloom Grants:-

- Members noted that the Weston in Bloom budget had recorded a surplus of approximately £3,000 in the previous financial year.
- It was noted that the surplus in the budget was there in case watering exceeded the allocated amount due to the weather.
- It was observed that the Weston in Bloom displays appeared to be concentrated within the town centre, with limited or no floral displays evident in Worle.

- Members queried whether the available surplus funds could be utilised to support additional planting or related initiatives.
- A suggestion was made that, where the Council was already undertaking watering of its own floral displays, consideration could be given to watering community planting at the same time.
- It was noted that the Council currently funded watering in both Worle and Weston Town Centre and that a budget surplus was available.
- Concern was expressed by some members that the allocation of the two grants was not considered to represent the most appropriate use of available funds. Members also noted there appeared to be some confusion between the Weston in Bloom budget and the Weston in Bloom organisation.
- The Chair recommended that the matter be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Amenities and Leisure Committee for further discussion.
- The Chair requested that the item be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

<u>**Grow Feral CIC**</u>

Members had resolved previously that Weston in Bloom grant applications under £500 could be dealt with by designated Officers. We received a grant from Grow Feral CIC for £250.

90.2.1 The application was awarded by the Director of Finance & Resources in the absence of the Director of Community Services and the CEO/Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: To note that Grow Feral CIC had been awarded £250 from the Small and Voluntary Grants budget.

<u>**Blooming Weston**</u>

Members had resolved previously that Weston in Bloom grant applications under £500 could be dealt with by designated Officers. We received a grant from Blooming Weston for £500.

90.2.2 The application was awarded by the CEO/Town Clerk in the absence of the Director of Community Services.

RESOLVED: To note that Blooming Weston had been awarded £500 from the Small and Voluntary Grants budget.

<u>**Back Street Garden CIC**</u>

Members had resolved previously that Weston in Bloom grant applications under £500 could be dealt with by designated Officers under delegated authority. The Council received a grant from Back Street Garden CIC for £500.

90.2.3 The application was awarded by the Director of Community Services.

RESOLVED: To note that Back Street Garden CIC had been awarded £500 from the
90.3.1 Small and Voluntary Grants budget.

Grant applications – Youth Grants Awarded

<u>**Walliscote Primary School**</u>

Walliscote Primary School PTA sought £1,000 towards improving literacy by purchasing books for the school library, classroom book corners and providing books for Pupil Premium pupils to keep at home.

The Youth Council agreed to award a grant of £250. Members recognised the value of the project but felt the school had already secured, and was actively seeking, funding from a number of other organisations.

90.3.1.1

RESOLVED: To note that Walliscote Primary School had been awarded £250 from the Youth Grants budget.

<u>Elmtree Learning Partnership</u>

Elmtree Learning Partnership applied for £1,000 to support its school holiday programme for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
90.3.1.2 The Youth Council agreed to award a grant of £500**.**

90.4 **RESOLVED:** To note that Elmtree Leaning Partnership had been awarded £500 from the Youth Grants budget.

Community Event Grant Applications

The report of the Senior Development Officer had been previously circulated.

The council's annual budget for Community Event Grants was £60,000, with £4,500 committed so far via grants award. The Senior Development Officer added that £25,000 had been allocated to Weston Wallz as part of the budget setting process, making the remaining balance £30,500.

Copies of bank statements, evaluation criteria and full applications for the following organisations had been previously circulated.

<u>Front Room - £3,262</u>

Front Room applied for £3,262 to create and stage a new family xmas show, engaging local families in a high-quality yet accessible cultural experience at xmas time. Devised with local primary schools and groups through tailored workshops, ensuring the show reflected local young people's stories.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Alan Peake
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

90.4.1 A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To award Front Room £3,262 from the Community Event Grant budget.

<u>Now Hear This Music - £5,800</u>

Now Hear This Music applied for £5,800 to create an inclusive weekly music participation culminating in public events in Weston-super-Mare, supporting participation, audience engagement, and local cultural venues through targeted outreach and accessible delivery.

- Members expressed their support for the aims and potential community benefits of the event and were positive about the proposal in principle.
- However, concern was raised regarding the level of funding requested from the Council. Whilst supportive of the event itself, Members considered the amount applied for to be disproportionate, particularly in light of the substantial funding that had already been secured from other sources.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan
SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

90.4.2 A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To award Now Hear This Music £3,000 from the Community Event Grant budget.

90.5 **Deferred Grant Applications**

<u>In Between Time</u>

In Between Time were asked to confirm where the event would be taking place, as it was not felt to be clear in the application.

The following information had now been received from In Between Time:

Following further consultation and development work, they could now confirm that the event would take place at Marine Lake and the Causeway. They believed this location offered the strongest setting for the artistic vision of the project and provided a unique opportunity to create a memorable cultural experience for residents and visitors alike.

Members expressed their support for the aims and potential community benefits of the event and were positive about the proposal in principle. However, concern was raised regarding the level of funding requested from the Council. Whilst supportive of the event itself, considered the amount applied for to be disproportionate, particularly in light of the sufficient financial resources available.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Joe Bambridge
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

90.5.1 A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To award In Between Time £3,500 from the Community Event Grant budget.

90.6 **Evaluation of previously awarded Community Events Grants**

There were currently four outstanding retained values totalling £1,615 from the 2025/2026 budget, and two retained values totalling £450 from the 2026/2027 budget. 10% of the total grant award is held in retention until we have received evaluation of the events from the organisations. The evaluation is then reviewed by the subcommittee, in order to release the retention.

2025/2026

Theatre Orchard – event not yet taken place
Steepholmers Shanty Band – event happened, have been repeatedly chased for evaluation with no response yet
Evolve Music – event taken place, prompted for evaluation
Growing @ Grove Park – event taken place, evaluation provided (below)

2026/2027

Pride WsM – event taken place, prompted for evaluation
British Bangladeshi Association – event taken place, prompted for evaluation

Growing @ Grove Park

The event attracted approximately 95 attendees, close to the target of 100, and was considered successful despite poor weather, with participants providing positive feedback and plans to seek further funding and sponsorship to make it an annual event.

PROPOSED BY: John Standfield
SECONDED BY: Joe Bambridge

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

90.6.1 **RESOLVED**: To release the retention of £215 to Growing @ Grove Park from the Community Event Grant budget.

A discussion ensued relating to the wording on the Grants form regarding releasing the retention. It was proposed that the grant application form be amended so that the retained portion of any grant would not be released until a satisfactory evaluation report had been received. It was further proposed that, where an evaluation had not been submitted within 12 months of the grant award, the applicant would become ineligible to apply for future grants.

PROPOSED BY: Hugh Malyan
SECONDED BY: Joe Bambridge

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

90.7 **RESOLVED:** That the grant application form be amended so that, a) retained grant funding would only be released upon receipt of a satisfactory evaluation report and b) if no evaluation was submitted within 12 months of the grant award, the retention value would not be paid, and the applicant would become ineligible to apply for future grants.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 12.20pm

Signed……………………………………………………………Dated ………….………………
Chair of the Grants and Governance Sub Committee

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 5.2

Finance & General Purposes Committee 24th August 2026
Community Scrapstore North Somerset – Grant Application
Report from the Finance Administration Manager

1. Purpose and Background of Report

Community Scrapstore North Somerset is a registered charity, established in October 2020, which has operated in Weston-super-Mare for thirteen years. The organisation collects clean and safe waste materials from local businesses and makes these available to individual and group members from its premises in Weston-super-Mare.

The charity supports local organisations, schools, groups and individuals by providing low cost recycled and surplus materials for projects and activities. It has supported organisations including Super Culture and Weston College and has assisted at events such as Whirligig. Workshops and classes are held at the Scrapstore premises and its meeting room is available for hire by local individuals and groups. The charity's objectives include protecting and preserving the environment through education and promotion of reuse and recycling, and advancing arts and crafts through the use of recycled, scrap and surplus materials.

The organisation currently has over 300 individual members living in Weston-super-Mare, a further 200 members in North Somerset and beyond, and supports 35 groups and schools in Weston-super-Mare and 37 in North Somerset and the wider South West area.

Community Scrapstore North Somerset applied for a grant of £5,000 towards its Rescue and Sustainability Plan. The organisation has advised that increased operating costs and the need to increase revenue in a controlled and sustainable way have placed the charity at risk of closure.

The Rescue and Sustainability Plan includes applications for grant funding, local business and resident supporter schemes, increased membership and membership renewal activity, recruitment of volunteers, and increased use of its meeting room.

The Grants and Governance Sub-Committee considered the application and noted that the requested £5,000 was outside the usual level for the Small and Voluntary Grants scheme. The applicant advised that, while a one off higher award would assist its rescue efforts, it would be extremely grateful for a contribution of £1,000 if that was the maximum amount the Council could award.

The Sub-Committee resolved to award Community Scrapstore North Somerset £1,000 from the Small and Voluntary Grants budget and recommended that the

Finance and General Purposes Committee consider supporting the remaining £4,000 requested.

2. Options for Council

Option 1 – Approve the additional £4,000 requested, resulting in total Town Council grant support of £5000.

Option 2 – Approve a different level of additional financial assistance.

Option 3 – Do not approve any further financial assistance beyond the £1,000 already awarded by the Grants and Governance Sub-Committee.

3. Reason for Recommendation

The Grants and Governance Sub-Committee recognised the exceptional circumstances described in the application and considered the Community Scrapstore to be a valuable local initiative. Members noted that the organisation provides a service which supports local businesses, schools, groups and individuals while diverting waste from landfill and promoting reuse and recycling.

The recommendation for Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider the further £4,000 reflects the Sub-Committee's view that the application fell outside the normal grant limit and therefore required consideration at Committee level.

Members are asked to consider whether the exceptional circumstances and the benefits provided to the Weston-super-Mare community justify providing the additional £4,000 requested.

4. Expected Benefits

If the additional funding is approved, it would contribute towards the Rescue and Sustainability Plan and support the organisation's efforts to secure its near term survival and develop a more sustainable and resilient operating model.

The organisation states that continued operation would help retain a source of low cost materials for local educational, community arts and crafts activities and reduce the amount of business waste going to landfill.

5. Implications

5.1. Legal

None.

5.2. Risks

The applicant has stated that without an injection of funding and a plan to increase revenue in a controlled and sustainable way, the charity may need to close. There is therefore a risk that, if additional funding is not provided, the organisation may be unable to continue its current activities.

Conversely, approval of the additional funding represents a financial commitment by the Council to an organisation that has identified a current funding shortfall. The applicant has provided a Rescue and Sustainability Plan setting out measures intended to improve its longer term financial resilience.

5.3. Financial Implications

The Grants and Governance Sub-Committee has already awarded £1,000 from the Small and Voluntary Grants budget.

Finance and General Purposes Committee is asked to consider an additional grant of £4,000. If approved in full, the Town Council's total support for this application would be £5,000 where there is no set budget available.

The applicant has advised that its other funding includes a £20,000 annual grant from the Quartet Foundation, for which it has applied again this year, and that it is discussing the possibility of a further one off emergency grant of £5,000. It has also applied for a community grant through the Co-op scheme and is considering applications to other funding organisations.

5.4. Timescales

The grant is sought as part of the charity's immediate Rescue and Sustainability Plan, following the organisation's assessment that it is at risk of closure without additional funding and increased revenue.

The proposed additional £4,000 would be a one off contribution towards the rescue funding element of the plan.

5.5. Stakeholders

Community Scrapstore North Somerset, its members, local businesses, schools, community groups, individuals, volunteers and organisations that use the Scrapstore's materials, workshops and meeting room. The wider Weston-super-Mare community may also benefit from the continuation of the service.

5.6. Contractors

None.

5.7. Crime & Disorder (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

None.

5.8. Biodiversity (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

The organisation's activities support reuse and recycling of surplus and waste materials and therefore have an environmental benefit.

5.9. Privacy Impact (consider Privacy Impact assessment)

None.

5.10. Equality & Diversity (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

None.

6. Members are recommended to:

1. Consider the recommendation from the Grants and Governance Sub-Committee to provide a further £4,000 towards the Community Scrapstore North Somerset Rescue and Sustainability Plan.

Fiona Gardner

Finance Administration Manager

Drafted 10th August 2026

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WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE
HEALTH & SAFETY TEAM MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5th AUGUST 2026
32 WATERLOO STREET

Meeting Commenced: 9.30am **Meeting Concluded:** 10.30am

PRESENT: Helen Morton (Director of Finances & Resources), Sophie Roberts (Museum Services Manager), Matt Hardy (Community Operations & Resource Manager), Julie Smith (Senior Customer Services Officer).

Meeting Chair: Helen Morton

		ACTION
1.	**Apologies for Absence** There were no apologies received.	
2.	**Notes of the Previous Meeting** The notes from the meeting held on 6th May were approved.	
3.	**Training** • HM confirmed that training requirements for next year will be reviewed following completion of staff appraisals. • MH advised that GM has requested DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) training. HM advised checking with FP, being the Council's designated person. • SR reported that KB will require First Aid training when the next suitable session is booked. • Fire Marshal training is to be arranged for HQ in September. • LC queried whether a Fire Marshal would also be required at the Quarry once the Grounds Team relocates there. HM confirmed that staff based at the Quarry for 70% or more of their working time would require the training and advised liaising with MH regarding this. • MH also advised that the Grounds Team will require fire extinguisher training, as fire extinguishers are located in the vans and plant room. • LC asked whether an updated training list was available. HM confirmed that she is currently compiling an updated list.	**HM** **MH** **LC/MH** **HM**

4.	**Maintenance & Antisocial Behaviour** MH reported lots of maintenance on going at the Water Park. HM said that there was a problem with the back door at HQ not closing fully, Badmans have been out to repair but needs to be monitored as now the door slams shut it is sometimes bouncing open again. Badmans to be called out again to repair Clarence Park toilets service door repairs in hand. Museum "Blue" doors maintenance issues are ongoing. Antisocial behaviour in play areas at Byron Road and Runway. LC said ground staff are working in pairs and it was discussed as to whether body cams should be considered.HM said that this would be a discussion for the next SMT meeting.	
5.	**Compliance Schedule** Fire extinguishers are due for servicing in September across all sites, with the exception of the Museum, which is due in August. HM suggested completing the Museum's service separately this year, with all sites then being aligned for servicing next year. LC asked whether approximately seven broken fire extinguishers could be collected from Quarry. HM to arrange the collection.	**HM** **HM**
6..	**Risk Assessments – updates and new** • All assessments are up to date. • **LC** to review the grounds risk assessments when staff relocate to the Quarry. • **HM** reported that she has completed the Cleaning/COSHH Manual (Best Practice) for the new Housekeeping team for all sites. • **HM** reported ongoing issues with cleaning at the Waterpark and will contact Sleek Easy Clean to discuss these concerns. • It was confirmed that the public toilets are open from **8:00am to 4:00pm**. The toilets have been closing earlier in the hope that this will help prevent antisocial behaviour. • **LC** suggested contacting **NSC** regarding responsibility for the external cleaning and care of the new toilets in Grove Park. HM suggested a conversation with FP would be useful. It was also confirmed that **FG** holds the spare key.	

7.	**Health & Safety Notices** HM highlighted that role names should be put on H&S notices and not personal names e.g. Town Clerk	
8.	**COSHH discussion on assessments.** It was confirmed that all COSHH materials/products were kept in the Barn at the quarry in a COSHH cabinet; and it was suggested the key be kept in the key safe at the quarry.	
9.	**Health & Safety Issues - accidents and near misses** MH mentioned that there had been now a few accidents with regards to the zip line at the Waterpark where children had not seen the zip line coming and there had been a collision. Accidents forms had been received and noted. There were no RIDDOR issues reported. HM advised that this should be brought to FP's attention and discussions about a marking out the zip line area should be had. HM asked managers to check their old files as there is now a Records and Retention Policy that identifies how long the Council legally needs to keep records. Managers to bring lists back with document types so that the policy can be updated	**MH** **ALL**
8.	**Toolbox Talks** It was discussed that some of the tool box talks may now not be relevant to all departments. It was thought that it would be more relevant for the managers to talk within individual teams but the keep the topics for the discussion the same.	**ALL**
9..	**Suggested matters for next meeting, Chair of next meeting date/venue confirmation.** **Date:** 3rd September 2026 – Staff Room HQ **Chair** – Helen Morton Signed.. Dated......................	

SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEFING NOTE: Item 7

To: Finance & General Purposes Committee

Subject:	Accounting Services issues year end accounts 2025 / 2026
Reason for Briefing Note:	Update on why there was a delay in producing the 2025/2026 year end accounts
Responsible Officer(s):	Chief Executive Officer / Town Clerk
Senior Lead:	Director of Finance & Resources (DOFR)
Date:	31.07.2026
File Path:	

Full Town Council action:

Reference: Full Town Council meeting 29th June 2026 reference minute no 34

The CEO/Town Clerk introduced the supplementary report and advised that, due to delays in the completion of the year-end accounts by the Council's accounting contractor, it had not been possible to comply with Standing Order 17.5. She confirmed that the statutory deadlines for the approval and submission of the AGAR had nevertheless been met, advised that a meeting with the contractor was scheduled, and that the matter would be reviewed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The CEO/Town Clerk apologised for the late circulation of the accounts.

At Full Town Council on 29th June 2026 the year accounts for 2025-2026 were presented to Council for approval of the AGAR. The CEO/ Town Clerk had explained that there had been some issues with the drafting of the unaudited accounts with the accounting contractor. The meeting requested further information around these issues for review by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Below is the timeline of engagement with the accounting contractor.

Date	WSMTC action	Accounting contractor (team of 2)
08.01.2026	Accounting contractor year end prep form completed and returned (purchase order FN 707 raised to cover costs)	Email received 09.01.2026 confirming receipt of form advising latest date for year- end close down is May 2026
25.06.2026 – 27.05.2026	Dates diarised for accounting contractor to attend 32 Waterloo Street to do year end accounts	Accounting contractor attended on 27th May only
01.06.2026 – 15.06.2026	DoFR on annual leave. Left instruction with Finance Manager to chase accounting contractor as	

To: Finance & General Purposes Committee

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>accounts promised back by 29th May 2026 and not yet received</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>15.06.2026</td><td>DOFR return from annual leave. Advised the accounts were not yet complete despite the Finance Manager chasing. Finance Manager not advised of any issues arising at that point</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>17.06.2026</td><td></td><td>Accounting contractor requested phone call with DOFR and Finance Manager</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Query 1</u>
From the phone call with the accounting contractor the queries raised about consistency with how the year end accounts for 2024 – 2025 were processed. This was queried by the DOFR as any change in accounting principles would need to be acknowledged to the external auditors.
The 2024 – 2025 accounts had no accruals made as per discussions with the accounting contractor as the outstanding purchase order list was recognised as an Ear Marked Resource. For 2025-2026 the request from the accounting contractor was to split all of these out.
DOFR spend 1hour on the phone with accounting contractor splitting out and discussing the reasons for the change in accounting principles of the accruals. This had never been done for the Council's accounts before.</td></tr>
<tr><td>19.06.2026</td><td><u>Query 2</u>
DOFR advised the accounting contractor that in 2024-2025 they had identified these as capital creditors . According to one of the accounting contractors with was wrong Emails sent to the accounting contractor team with information.</td><td><u>Query 3</u>
Accounting contractor requested information about retentions.</td></tr>
<tr><td>23.06.2026 (am)</td><td>Final accounts pack received back from accounting contractor. DOFR checked through identified anomaly.</td><td>Accounting contractor advised and will resubmit back to DOFR</td></tr>
<tr><td>24.06.2026</td><td>DOFR chased accounting contractor for amended accounts pack</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>25.06.2026</td><td>DOFR received amended 2025-2026 accounts from accounting contractor Accounts figures and wording checked and confirmed now correct.</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

To: Finance & General Purposes Committee

Subsequently after these events a meeting was held on 30th June 2026 with the accounting contractor, CEO/Town Clerk and Director of Finance & Resources.

The accounting contractor explained that their accounting company was being merged with another and that the promised resources to support the year end timetable they had agreed to had not come to fruition which left a team of two people to support Weston Town Council. The conversation continued about the quality of service given and that the delay that put the Town Council in an awkward position in not being able to comply with Standing Order 17.5

The accounting contractor agreed that the delivery of service had not met their own standards and apologised. It was then agreed that the accounting contractor would start the year end accounts for 2026-2027 week commencing 17th May 2027. The Director of Finance & Resources reiterated the importance of this date not changing due to the date of the Full Town Council meeting being set at mid-June 2027 to sign off the unaudited accounts and the AGAR by 30th June 2027.

Members are required to:

Note this report only.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

Finance & General Purpose 24th August 2026
Bank accounts update
Report from the Director of Finance & Resources

1. Purpose and Background of Report

The Council has investments to the value of £2,002,939 across the following bank accounts . This is shown as a percentage of the above value

The Natwest bank account has a balance of around £31,191. The Finance department have, since 2019, tried continuously to close this account and been told that one of the named signatories need to make the call. Since October 2025, letters have been sent three times requesting closure of the account and both the RFO and one named signatory have tried on four different occasions to close the account and on every occasion spoke to someone different and had to start the process again. We are still receiving bank statements but on a 3 monthly basis. The last statement received was March 2026. The account has now been designated a dormant account so another set of documents has been completed and returned to the Dormancy Department. Natwest has a cash holding 2%.

The Santander bank account currently has a balance of £470,049. Due to changes in bank signatory requirements every year new signatory information needs to be provided to Santander in order to function the account. Access to this account is near completion within the next month and full online access will be available for officers to maintain the account for day to day purposes. This fund is a 95-day notice account with a current interest rate of 1.30%. Santander has a cash holding of 23%.

The CCLA Public Sector Deposit fund currently has a balance of £700,000. This is an easy access fund that can be called upon with a same day withdrawal so very low risk. This currently has annual yield rate of 3.78%. CCLA has a cash holding of 35%.

The Lloyds Bank Instant Access account currently has a balance of £801,699. This is an easy access fund. This currently has an interest rate of 3.00%. Lloyds Bank Instant Access has a cash holding of 40%.

2. Options for Council

To consider opening another long-term investment account (for max 1 year) with Unity Trust Bank.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

3. Reason for Recommendation

Unity Trust Bank are a new sector recommended bank that specialise investing local council funds. It is an ethical bank that provides business banking services to organisations with a social conscience. The bank holds awards and accreditations that recognise its commitment to ethical banking and creating positive social and environmental impacts. The bank's core mission is to create a better society by supporting businesses and organisations that aim to make a positive difference to their communities.

4. Expected Benefits

Additional interest earned of the investment

5. Implications

Not being able to deposit enough of the council's residual funds across the current bank accounts, above the maximum of 40% holding in one institution limits the amount of interest that can be gained from those investment.

5.1. Legal

n/a

5.2. Risks

The primary risk of not being able to access the bank accounts is significant financial disruption and the moving of funds in a timely manner for business continuity and in line with the Financial Regulations 14.6 and the Investment Strategy Policy.

Under section 2 of the Investment Strategy. The Council's investment priorities, in order, are:
1. Security of capital – protecting reserves from loss;
2. Liquidity – ensuring funds are available when required to meet expenditure;
3. Yield – achieving a return commensurate with the above priorities.
4. To review the funds held in the Lloyds Bank current account, on a monthly basis, and invest any funds held above £500,000 held in the bank to maximise interest income.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

5.3. Financial Implications

Opening another investment account will spread the Council's financial risk across differing account types, being able to maximise interest gained on the accounts balances, whilst having the flexibility to access funds quickly.

5.4. Timescales

n/a

5.5. Stakeholders

n/a

5.6. Contractors

n/a

5.7. Crime & Disorder (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

n/a

5.8. Biodiversity (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

n/a

5.9. Privacy Impact (consider Privacy Impact assessment)

n/a

5.10. Equality & Diversity (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

n/a

6. Appendices

Appendix A shows the variety of Fixed Term Deposit products currently available with Unity Trust Bank

7. Members are recommended to:

a) The Council should invest in a 6-month fixed term deposit account at a rate of 3.85% with a starting investment value of £400,000.

b) To approach the Financial Ombudsman Service for advice on the Natwest Bank issues

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

Helen Morton

Director of Finance & Resources

Drafted 14th August 2026

Appendix A

Classification: Public

Unity Trust Bank

	Variable Savings Products	Fixed Term Deposit Products				
	Instant Access Savings Account	30 Day Term Deposit	90 Day Term Deposit (Deposit of £85k -£10m)	90 Day Term Deposit (Deposit of £10m+)	6 Month Fixed Term Deposit	12 Month Fixed Term Deposit
Interest Rate as of 05/05/26	1.95%	2.25%	2.35%	2.45%	3.85%	4.06%
Term	–	30 days	90 days	90 days	6 months	12 months
Minimum Deposit	None	£85k	£85k	£10m	£85k	£85k
Maximum Deposit	None	None	£10m	None	£20m	£20m
Access	Instant	No Access	No Access	No Access	No Access	No Access
Fixed or Variable	Variable	Fixed for the term	Fixed for the term	Fixed for the term	Fixed for the term	Fixed for the term
Account Fee	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 9

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 24th August 2026

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER / TOWN CLERK

WESTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) RENEWAL – FOURTH TERM BALLOT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the forthcoming renewal ballot for the Weston-super-Mare Business Improvement District (BID), to clarify the Town Council's voting position in respect of premises within the BID area, and to seek formal direction from Members on how the Town Council wishes to exercise those votes for which it is entitled.

The Town Centre/BID Manager and BID Consultant will attend the meeting to present information regarding the proposed fourth term of the BID and respond to Members' questions prior to the Committee determining its position.

2. BACKGROUND

The Weston-super-Mare Business Improvement District has been operating since 2012 and is delivered through Weston Town Centre Partnership Ltd.

The current third term of the BID runs until 31st March 2027 and the BID is now seeking renewal for a fourth five-year term.

Consultation with levy-paying businesses has taken place during 2026 and the proposed Business Plan for the fourth term is being prepared for the renewal ballot.

The anticipated ballot timetable provides for notice of ballot to be issued during September 2026, followed by the statutory postal ballot period.

For the BID renewal to proceed, the ballot must secure the required majority both:

- by number of those voting; and
- by the aggregate rateable value of those voting.

The forthcoming ballot therefore requires the Town Council, as a ratepayer for qualifying premises within the BID area, to determine how it wishes to exercise its votes.

3. TOWN COUNCIL INTERESTS WITHIN THE BID AREA

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 9

The Town Council has property interests in a number of premises situated within the BID boundary.

These are:

- 32 Waterloo Street
- Weston Museum
- Blakehay Theatre
- Grove House
- Grove Lodge

Whilst the Town Council owns or has a property interest in these premises, entitlement to vote in the BID ballot is determined by the organisation responsible for the relevant Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) liability rather than by property ownership alone.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish between those premises for which the Town Council remains the ratepayer and those where NNDR liability rests with the tenant or occupying organisation.

4. NNDR LIABILITY AND VOTING ENTITLEMENT

The Town Council currently remains responsible for NNDR in respect of:

- 32 Waterloo Street; and
- Weston Museum.

Subject to confirmation against the final BID ballot list, the Town Council would therefore expect to receive and exercise the BID ballot votes relating to these hereditaments.

The following properties are occupied by tenants/operators who are responsible for their own NNDR liability:

- Grove House
- Grove Lodge
- Blakehay Theatre

The Town Council has not paid the NNDR liability in respect of the Blakehay Theatre since the current tenant took occupation. The tenant has therefore been responsible for the NNDR liability during its period of occupation.

Where the relevant tenant/operator is recorded as the qualifying non-domestic ratepayer for the purposes of the BID ballot, the voting entitlement rests with that organisation rather than the Town Council.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

Accordingly, the Town Council would not seek to determine or direct how the tenants/operators of Grove House, Grove Lodge or the Blakehay Theatre exercise their respective BID votes.

5. BLAKEHAY THEATRE

The position regarding the Blakehay Theatre requires specific consideration because the legal process associated with the tenant's occupation has not yet been fully completed.

Notwithstanding this, the tenant is in occupation of the premises and the Town Council can confirm that it has not paid the NNDR liability for the Blakehay Theatre since the tenant took occupation.

On this basis, it is anticipated that the tenant/operator will be identified as the qualifying non-domestic ratepayer for the purposes of the BID ballot and will therefore be entitled to exercise the vote relating to the Theatre independently.

Members are asked to confirm that they are content with this position and that, subject to the tenant/operator being confirmed on the final BID ballot list as the qualifying ratepayer, the tenant/operator should determine and exercise the BID vote relating to the Blakehay Theatre independently of the Town Council.

This approach recognises the actual NNDR arrangements in place whilst ensuring that the formal requirements of the BID ballot process are observed.

6. BID RENEWAL PRESENTATION

The Town Centre/BID Manager and BID Consultant will attend the meeting to present information regarding the proposed fourth term of the BID.

The presentation will provide Members with an opportunity to consider matters including:

- the activity and achievements of the current BID;
- the proposed priorities for the fourth BID term;
- the proposed levy arrangements;
- planned projects, services and initiatives;
- governance and accountability arrangements;
- benefits to businesses and Weston town centre;
- the proposed Business Plan; and
- the implications should the renewal ballot not be successful.

Following the presentation and consideration of the information provided, Members will be required to give formal direction as to how the Town Council should exercise the votes for which it is entitled.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The BID is funded through a levy applied to qualifying non-domestic hereditaments within the BID area.

Should the renewal ballot be successful, the Town Council will continue to incur BID levy costs in respect of those qualifying properties for which it remains the non-domestic ratepayer, in accordance with the levy arrangements contained within the approved fourth-term Business Plan.

At present, these are expected to comprise:

- 32 Waterloo Street; and
- Weston Museum.

Where NNDR liability rests with a tenant/operator, responsibility for any associated BID levy would ordinarily rest with the relevant ratepayer in accordance with the BID arrangements.

The detailed financial implications for the Town Council will be confirmed against the final BID Business Plan, rating information and ballot list.

8. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

Business Improvement District ballots are governed by the Local Government Act 2003 and the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004.

Voting entitlement is linked to the qualifying non-domestic ratepayer for the relevant hereditament within the BID area.

It is therefore important that property ownership, occupancy arrangements and NNDR liability are treated separately when determining the organisation entitled to exercise each BID vote.

Officers will verify the final position against the formal BID ballot list before any Town Council ballot papers are completed.

As a public body and significant stakeholder within Weston town centre, it is appropriate that the Town Council determines its voting position transparently and following consideration of the proposed Business Plan and the information presented by the BID representatives.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

The principal governance risk is that a BID ballot vote could be exercised by an organisation that is not formally entitled to do so.

This risk will be mitigated by Officers confirming the qualifying ratepayer and final ballot entitlement for each relevant hereditament before the ballot papers are completed.

There is also a reputational consideration for the Town Council as a significant property owner, service provider and stakeholder within Weston town centre.

Members should therefore ensure that their decision on the Town Council's votes is informed by the proposed fourth-term Business Plan, the presentation from the BID representatives and the interests of the Council and wider town centre.

10. RECOMMENDATION

That the Finance & General Purposes Committee:

1. Notes the BID renewal arrangements and proposed fourth five-year term; the Town Council's property interests within the BID area; and the respective NNDR and anticipated voting arrangements for 32 Waterloo Street, Weston Museum, Grove House, Grove Lodge and the Blakehay Theatre, as detailed within this report.
2. Agrees that, subject to confirmation on the final BID ballot list, the tenants/operators of Grove House, Grove Lodge and the Blakehay Theatre may determine and exercise their respective BID votes independently of the Town Council.
3. Determines, following consideration of the BID Business Plan and presentation from the Town Centre/BID Manager and BID Consultant, whether the Town Council's votes for 32 Waterloo Street and Weston Museum are to be cast FOR or AGAINST renewal of the Weston-super-Mare Business Improvement District for a fourth term.
4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk to confirm the final voting entitlement against the formal BID ballot list and to complete and submit the Town Council's ballot papers in accordance with the Committee's decision.

Sarah Pearse BA (Hons), FSLCC
Chief Executive Officer / Town Clerk
August 2026

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 10

Finance and General Purposes Committee
Review of Policies
Report from the Director of Finance & Resources

1. Background & Purpose of the Report

The Council's policies and procedures are now reviewed via the policy tracker either annually, bi-annually or when legislation changes and the policies need updating. These have been approved by WorkNest as our appointed HR legal indemnity holder. The new AI policy was presented for adoption at the F&GP meeting of 27th July 2026. From that meeting there were several areas of the AI policy that needs further review or adaption. The policy resubmitted below is ready for adoption. As the Council grows having defined policies and procedures will support and reduce the risk to the Council.

1.1. Background

The following policy has been updated in line with the observation from the F&GP meeting of 27th July 2026 :

- AI policy

1.2. Purpose

This report and subsequent appendices have been produced by officers following an in-depth review of the council's current governance to ensure all new legislation and obligations are covered within those adopted by Weston super Mare Town Council.

1.2.1. Document Overview

For ease of understanding the following has been applied to the documents in Appendix 11.1

- Anything in **BOLD** type is a legal requirement and therefore cannot be removed or altered.
- Anything in red type is included within WSMTC current documents and therefore has been previously approved by resolution
- Anything in red type crossed through is text to be replaced or deleted.
- Anything in blue type is within the recommended models and legislation but was not included in the current WSMTC documents or is a new document.
- Due to the extent of the review following initial submission this is a complete new document.

Members will note that the format of the document is representative of the National Models and this is something that they may wish to alter to suit our individual council's needs.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

2. Options for Council

The Finance & General Purposes Committee to review the revised and new document.

Members Action required:
Consider and adopt the policy brought to this meeting

3. Reason for Recommendation

To ensue all governance and regulation policies are up to date with latest recommended national models:

- Associated current AI legislation

4. Expected Benefits

- Clear and concise guidance on governance practices undertaken by WSMTC
- Key documents have been reviewed fully and will then form part of a schedule of review going forward
- Accessible and consistent format of key policy and procedure documents

5. Implications

In adopting policies and procedures this streamlines and reduces risk to the Council.

5.1. Legal

The council has a legal obligation to have full regard for and undertakings described in the:

- Local Government Act (LGA)1972
- NALC
- Any changes in Government legislation in relation to data management

5.2. Risks

Failure to adopt up to date policies and regulations as required and advised with 5.1 above would not enable the council to be assured it has followed and has carried out all adequate steps in relation to governance which they have to confirm annually– this responsibility remains with the council and councillors (not officers).

5.3. Financial

n/a

5.4. Timescales
With immediate effect once approved

5.5. Stakeholders
Weston super Mare Town Council

5.6. Contractors
n/a

5.7. Crime & Disorder
n/a

5.8. Biodiversity
n/a

5.9. Privacy Impact
n/a

5.10. Equality & Diversity
n/a

6. Appendices
11.1 –Revised AI policy

7. Members are recommended to:
Consider and adopt the policy brought to this meeting.

Helen Morton
Director of Finance & Resources
11th August 2026

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

History of Policy Changes

Date	Version	Author	Origin of Change e.g. change in legislation	Changed by
July 2026	V1	H Morton (DoFR)	New policy and legislation	
August 2026	V2	H Morton (DoFR)	Consultation feedback and governance review	

This policy applies to Weston-super-Mare Town Council

Date policy adopted	August 2026
Review cycle	Annually, and following material trigger events
Review date	12 months from V2 adoption

Contents

1. Introduction

This policy establishes the governance framework for the responsible, lawful, secure, fair and transparent use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by Weston-super-Mare Town Council (the Council).

1.1 The Council recognises that AI can help staff and Councillors work more efficiently, improve accessibility and support better services. AI must be used responsibly to protect people, Council information, public trust and democratic accountability.

1.2 The Town Council is committed to taking a risk-based approach to the implementation and use of AI. This means:

- Assessing the risks to the rights and freedoms of individuals that may arise when using AI
- Implementing appropriate and proportionate organisational and technical measures to mitigate these risks.
- Ensuring that a named member of staff or authorised decision-maker remains responsible for the work, decision, communication or service supported by AI.

1.3 AI is an assistive tool. It does not replace human judgement, responsibility or accountability. Staff and Councillors remain responsible for decisions, actions and communications undertaken with the assistance of AI.

1.4 This policy applies to employees (including temporary and agency staff), Councillors, contractors, agents, volunteers, suppliers and any other person using AI for, or on behalf of, the Council.

1.5 This policy applies to AI tools and AI features used for Council business, including assistants, chatbots, content generation, transcription, summarisation and systems that support recommendations or decisions.

1.6 This policy should be read alongside the Council's data protection, information security, records management, information sharing, retention, procurement, HR, equality, complaints and communications requirements. Where another Council policy sets a higher standard, the higher standard applies.

1.7 This policy sets out the Council's rules, responsibilities and minimum requirements for using AI. Detailed technical instructions will be kept in supporting Council guidance and procedures.

2. Use of AI

2.1 The use of AI solutions/technologies should always support the Town Councils vision, priorities and values.

2.2 Council use of AI must be lawful, fair, transparent, proportionate, secure and subject to meaningful human oversight. AI must support, not replace, the judgement of staff or Councillors.

2.3 Public-facing or significant AI uses must consider transparency, public confidence and whether resident, stakeholder or Member engagement is appropriate before implementation.

2.4 Before a new AI use is introduced, the responsible manager or Business Owner must consider the main risks and requirements, including data protection, security, procurement, copyright, confidentiality, accuracy, equality, records, oversight and links to other systems.

2.5 AI services should have logging and auditing capabilities appropriate to the risk and intended use.

2.6 AI must not make a final Council decision that has a significant effect on a person's employment, rights, access to services, complaint or grant outcome, safeguarding position or other significant interests, unless the law allows it and the Council has specifically approved the use with appropriate safeguards.

2.7 Without specific prior approval, AI must not determine, score or rank people for recruitment, appointment, dismissal, disciplinary action, performance management, redundancy, grant awards, complaint outcomes, safeguarding decisions or similarly significant Council decisions.

2.8 AI may assist with administrative or preparatory work in restricted areas only where the approved tool/use case permits it and a responsible human independently reviews the work and makes the decision.

2.9 AI must not be used to impersonate another person, fabricate evidence, create misleading Council records, make deceptive public communications, or bypass professional advice, statutory decision-making requirements, Council delegations or committee responsibilities.

3. Governance Requirements for Using AI

3.1 Any stakeholder looking to use or implement an AI solution/technology must understand the Council policies and procedures relevant to that use. As a minimum this includes:

- Data Protection Policy
- Corporate Information Security Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Information Sharing Policy
- Corporate Information Retention Schedule
- Procurement requirements and Financial Regulations
- Equality, HR, complaints and communications requirements where relevant

3.2 No new AI tool, AI-enabled feature, material integration or materially new AI use case may be used for Council business until it has completed the Council's proportionate approval process.

3.3 Approval of an AI product does not amount to approval for every possible use of that product. A materially new or changed use may require further assessment and approval.

3.4 Each organisational AI use must have a named Business Owner. The Business Owner is responsible for ensuring that the use remains within its approved purpose, lawful, proportionate and secure, and that appropriate human oversight is maintained.

3.5 The risks associated with a proposed AI use must be assessed and managed. A proportionate AI Risk Assessment must be completed and a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) must be completed where required by data protection law or Council procedure.

3.6 As a minimum, the relevant manager or Business Owner must consult ICT and data protection support where appropriate before implementation.

Procurement, HR, legal, equality or other specialist advice must also be obtained where the use requires it.

3.7 Final approval for an organisational AI tool or higher-risk use must be given by the Town Clerk or a senior officer formally delegated for that purpose, following completion of the required checks. The Council's Scheme of Delegation and procurement rules continue to apply.

3.8 The Town Clerk, or a senior officer acting under delegated authority, may suspend or prohibit an AI tool or use immediately where there are reasonable concerns about legality, data protection, security, accuracy, discrimination, public safety, reputation or other material risk.

3.9 The Council will keep a central AI Register of approved organisational AI tools and significant uses. It will record what is approved, why it is used, who is responsible, any restrictions or conditions, the relevant assessments and approval, and when the use is due for review.

3.10 Register entries and significant AI uses must be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a significant incident or material change to the system, supplier terms, data use, integration or approved purpose.

4. Supplier/Vendor

4.1 Where the Council procures or subscribes to AI solutions/technology, the responsible officer must ensure proportionate supplier and procurement due diligence is completed before approval, with input from the relevant Information Asset Owner, senior management, ICT, data protection and other specialists as appropriate.

4.2 Checks must be proportionate to the proposed use. They should cover where Council data is stored and processed, how long it is kept, whether it is used to train or improve AI models, who can access it, any subcontractors or international transfers, security and incident arrangements, intellectual property, significant service changes, and what happens to Council data when the service ends.

4.3 Contracts and purchasing decisions must comply with the Council's Financial Regulations, procurement rules and applicable public procurement law. Approval of a supplier does not remove the Council's responsibility to assess the particular AI use case.

4.4 Where a supplier materially changes its model, data practices, terms, integrations or security arrangements, the Business Owner must consider whether reassessment or reapproval is required.

5. Copyright Considerations

5.1 Council use of AI must comply with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and other applicable intellectual property rights, including database rights, trade marks and confidential information.

5.2 AI must not be used deliberately to generate or reproduce material that infringes the intellectual property rights of others. Users must not assume that AI-generated material is free of copyright or licensing restrictions.

5.3 Before significant AI-generated material is published or used commercially, the responsible person must consider whether there are ownership, attribution or licensing issues that need specialist advice.

5.4 Where there is material uncertainty about ownership, licensing or infringement risk, legal or other appropriate specialist support must be obtained before use.

6. Accuracy of AI Output

6.2 If the Town Council has any doubt about the accuracy of AI output then AI solutions/technology should not be used.

6.4 The fact that AI produced or recommended an output does not transfer responsibility to the technology. The person who approves, relies upon, communicates or acts on the final output remains accountable for it.

6.5 AI-generated legal, financial, HR, employment, procurement, health and safety or other specialist professional advice must not be treated as authoritative or relied upon as the sole basis for Council action. Material advice must be verified by an appropriately qualified or authorised person.

6.6 For significant or high-impact AI applications, the Business Owner must ensure appropriate periodic testing and accuracy review, including review after material changes or recurring errors.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 Personal, confidential, commercially sensitive or otherwise non-public Council information must not be entered into unapproved public or consumer AI services.

7.4 Users must only enter information that is needed for the approved purpose and allowed for that service. Personal information should be kept to a minimum and anonymised or pseudonymised where possible.

7.5 Special category personal data, criminal offence data, safeguarding information, confidential HR or legal material, security credentials, payment information and other particularly sensitive information must not be entered into AI unless the specific use is authorised and the necessary data protection and security safeguards are in place.

7.6 Any processing of personal data using AI must comply with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, as amended, and with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

8. Disclosure and Transparency

8.1 The Council will be open about significant uses of AI where this is needed for public trust, understanding, or to meet legal or regulatory requirements.

8.2 Disclosure should normally be considered where AI interacts directly with residents; materially contributes to public-facing information; materially influences a Council decision; analyses information about an individual; or is used in a context where knowledge of AI involvement is important to accountability.

8.3 Routine assistance such as brainstorming, spelling, formatting or low-risk drafting will not necessarily require a public AI statement where a human has fully reviewed and taken responsibility for the final content.

8.4 Where a disclosure statement is appropriate, it should be clear and proportionate. For example: "This content was produced with assistance from an approved AI tool and has been reviewed by the responsible Council officer/author. Responsibility for the final content remains with the Council decision-maker or author."

9. Integration with Other Tools

9.1 AI integrations, plugins, agents, connectors and APIs can extend an AI service's access to Council information and systems and must therefore be specifically approved before use.

9.4 Staff and Councillors must not enable unapproved plugins, agents, connectors, integrations or similar functions that could extend an AI service's access to Council information or systems.

9.5 Where AI is integrated into a public-facing or decision-support service, the responsible human owner must ensure that users can report concerns and that the limitations of the service are understood and communicated where relevant.

10. AI Risks

10.1 The use of AI carries inherent risks. Before an AI solution/technology or materially new use is implemented, a proportionate AI Risk Assessment must be completed and a DPIA undertaken where required.

10.2 Each new AI project or significant use must be assessed on its own circumstances, including the information involved, who may be affected and how the output will be used. Approval of the AI product alone is not enough.

10.5 The Council must ensure risks are reviewed throughout the life of the use and must seek reassessment or reapproval where circumstances materially change.

11. Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Requirements

11.1 **Council use of AI must comply with all applicable law and Council policy. Depending on the use case, relevant legislation includes:**

- **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended, including relevant changes made by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.**
- **Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.**
- **Human Rights Act 1998.**
- **Freedom of Information Act 2000 and, where applicable, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.**
- **Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and other applicable intellectual property law.**
- **Procurement Act 2023 and associated regulations where applicable to AI-enabled goods and services.**

11.2 Where AI processes personal data, the Council must have a lawful basis, be clear about how the data is used, protect people's data rights, build data protection into the use from the start, and complete a DPIA where required.

11.3 Where an AI system is used in relation to a significant decision about a person, the Council must ensure that any involvement required by law is genuine. The decision-maker must be able to understand, question, influence, amend or reject the AI-supported outcome rather than simply approve it automatically.

12. Business Impact Analysis and Discrimination

12.1 The Council must take reasonable steps to identify and mitigate risks of unfairness, bias and discrimination before, during and after deployment of AI. Reviewers must not assume that an AI output is neutral or objective.

12.5 The responsible reviewer must actively consider whether an output reflects inappropriate assumptions, stereotypes, omissions or unequal treatment and must challenge, amend or reject it where necessary.

13. Security

13.1 The Town Council is committed to protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of its data.

13.2 AI services must be checked for security before they are approved. The responsible officer must seek appropriate ICT and data protection advice and make sure the safeguards match the type of information involved and the level of risk.

13.4 Where personal or confidential information is processed, the responsible officer must consider data minimisation, anonymisation or pseudonymisation and ensure appropriate access controls, encryption and other safeguards are applied in accordance with Council security requirements.

13.5 The Council must understand how the service protects Council information, deals with incidents and supports business continuity. Independent security assurance or certification should be considered where the level of risk justifies it.

13.6 Suspected weaknesses or security concerns must be reported promptly and may result in immediate suspension of the relevant AI service or integration pending investigation.

14. Data Sovereignty and Protection

14.1 Before approving an externally hosted AI service, the Council must know where Council information is processed and stored, how any international transfers are protected, and how long the supplier keeps the data and how it is deleted.

14.2 Where personal data may be transferred outside the United Kingdom, the Council must ensure that the transfer complies with applicable UK data protection law and that appropriate safeguards are in place. The Council will always check where a provider's servers are based so that it understands where personal data is being held and processed.

14.3 The supplier assessment must also establish, where relevant, whether Council prompts, uploaded files or outputs may be retained, accessed by the supplier or subcontractors, or used to train or improve models, and whether those arrangements are acceptable for the approved use.

14.4 If the Council cannot get satisfactory information about where data is held, transferred, kept, deleted or used by the supplier, the service must not be approved until appropriate data protection and ICT advice has been obtained.

15. Training and Awareness

15.1 Staff and Councillors must receive appropriate guidance or training before using Council-approved AI where required by the service, role or risk classification.

15.3 Completion of mandatory AI training should be recorded.

15.4 Managers are responsible for ensuring that users in their area understand the approved purpose and controls and remain competent to exercise meaningful judgement and oversight.

16. Compliance

16.1 This policy applies to all Town Council uses of AI solutions/technology.

16.2 Staff and Councillors must promptly report suspected AI incidents, significant mistakes or policy breaches through the Council's established reporting route and to the relevant manager. All data protection or security incidents must be reported to the CEO/Town Clerk in the first instance without delay and then referred to the appropriate data protection/ICT support as required.

16.3 An AI incident may include a data or security breach, discriminatory treatment, misleading public information, an inappropriate decision, a serious factual error, a copyright or confidentiality breach, unauthorised AI use, or another serious breach of this policy.

16.4 Where necessary to protect people or the Council, the Town Clerk or delegated senior officer may require immediate suspension of the relevant AI tool, integration or use case pending investigation.

16.5 The Council must respond to incidents in proportion to the risk. This may include stopping the use, keeping relevant evidence, correcting records or communications, making any required reports or notifications, learning from the incident and deciding whether the AI use can restart.

16.8 The fact that an AI tool produced, suggested or recommended something does not remove or reduce the responsibility of the person who chooses to use, approve or act upon it.

16.9 Failure to comply with this policy may result in access being withdrawn and, where applicable, disciplinary, Member, contractual or other Council procedures being considered.

17. Review

17.1 This policy will be reviewed at least annually to reflect changes in AI, legislation, regulation and public-sector guidance.

Appendix A - AI approval workflow

1. Identify proposed AI use

Purpose, users, information involved and expected benefit

↓

2. Manager confirms need

Check whether an existing approved Council solution can meet the need

↓

3. Complete proportionate checks

AI Risk Assessment and DPIA, security and supplier/procurement checks where required

↓

4. Seek specialist advice

ICT, data protection and other specialist input where relevant

↓

5. Approval decision

Town Clerk or delegated senior officer: approve, approve with conditions, or refuse

↓

6. Record approved use

Enter the approved use on the Council AI Register and set a review date

↓

7. Use, review and report

Users receive guidance/training; issues or material changes are reported and reviewed

The level of assessment and approval should be proportionate to the intended use and the information involved.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 11

Finance & General Purposes Committee 24th August 2026

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME 2026-2029

Outcome of Member Project Review Group and Recommended Next Steps

Report of the Chief Executive Officer / Town Clerk

DECISION FOCUS
Members are asked to determine the next stage of the Digital Transformation Programme following the Member Project Review Group, including approval to proceed with Abavus My Council Services through the proposed Government G-Cloud procurement route and referral of a fixed-term Transformation Manager proposal to Personnel Committee.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the outcome and recommendations of the Digital Transformation Project Review Group held on 12 August 2026.

1.2 To present the completed Digital Transformation Strategic Business Case at Appendix A and seek approval to progress the next stage of the programme.

1.3 To seek approval to proceed with Abavus My Council Services as the preferred corporate digital platform, subject to completion of the required Government G-Cloud procurement process, final pricing and due diligence.

1.4 To seek agreement to refer the proposed fixed-term Transformation Manager role to Personnel Committee for a full job description, grading, costing and funding proposal in October 2026.

2. Recommendations

1. Notes the outcome and observations of the Digital Transformation Project Review Group held on 12 August 2026.

2. Approves the Digital Transformation Strategic Business Case at Appendix A as the strategic framework for progression of the Council's Digital Transformation Programme 2026-2029.

3. Approves Abavus My Council Services as the Council's preferred corporate digital platform, noting that the current Year 1 proposal of £19,350 excluding VAT can be met from the £30,000 CRM / IT provision included within the approved 2026/27 budget, subject to completion of the procurement process and confirmation of final contractual pricing.

4. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer / Town Clerk and Director of Finance & Resources to complete the procurement of Abavus through the appropriate

Government G-Cloud framework, subject to completion and retention of the required framework buying-process evidence; confirmation of the applicable Abavus service listing; confirmation of scope, whole-life cost and value for money; and compliance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

5. Notes that Microsoft 365 has previously been approved by the Committee, including the associated budget provision, but implementation has not yet commenced, allowing it to be coordinated with the wider Digital Transformation Programme.

6. Agrees that officers undertake a corporate review of existing software, licences, applications and associated IT expenditure during implementation to identify duplicated functionality, under-utilised systems, systems capable of rationalisation or discontinuation, and potential revenue savings or avoided future costs.

7. Agrees that a hardware and infrastructure audit is completed before implementation of the relevant programme workstreams to confirm that devices, connectivity, mobile equipment, security arrangements and supporting infrastructure are fit for purpose.

8. Agrees that any additional hardware or infrastructure costs identified are reported to Committee where further budget approval is required, unless they can be met from approved provision or through an authorised virement in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and delegated authority.

9. Endorses the strategic requirement for a dedicated fixed-term Transformation Manager, recognising that the cross-Council implementation and embedding of the programme cannot reasonably be absorbed within existing officer roles and workloads.

10. Refers the Transformation Manager proposal to Personnel Committee, with a full report to be presented in October 2026 setting out the proposed job description, person specification, fixed-term duration, job evaluation and grade, full employment cost, proposed funding source and programme outcomes.

11. Requests that progress on implementation, financial implications, system rationalisation, risks and benefits realisation is reported periodically to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

3. Background

3.1 At its meeting on 27 July 2026 the Finance & General Purposes Committee approved continued development of a comprehensive Digital Transformation Business Case and established a one-off Member Project Review Group to review the proposals before formal consideration by the Committee.

3.2 The Committee also approved the Council's transition to Microsoft 365 and allocated approximately £10,000 from the 2026/27 IT Support & Upgrade budget to fund any associated overspend. Implementation has not yet commenced.

3.3 The Council is already undertaking or planning a number of strategically linked digital workstreams, including the new Town Council / Super Weston website, Civica Modern.Gov, Microsoft 365, GDPR and records-management improvements, the Asset Data Intern / Devolution work and the proposed Abavus platform. The Business Case therefore considers these as one organisational transformation programme rather than as separate technology purchases.

4. Outcome of the Member Project Review Group

4.1 The Digital Transformation Project Review Group met on 12 August 2026. Present were Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly, Councillor Peter Crew and Councillor John Standfield.

4.2 Following review of the Business Case and supporting information, the Group made the following observations and recommendations.

4.1 Existing digital applications and implementation

The Group observed that some Council digital applications and programmes are outdated / obsolete or have never been used to their full potential. This has developed over a number of years through incremental additions and, in some cases, relatively light-touch implementation without sufficient dedicated capacity to redesign working practices or fully embed the functionality purchased.

Members considered this an important lesson for the next phase. The objective should not simply be to purchase further applications; systems must be properly implemented, adopted and embedded so that working practices change and the Council receives the intended return on its investment.

4.2 Review of existing digital and IT costs

The Group requested a full review of existing digital applications, licences and associated IT expenditure as implementation progresses. As functionality moves into Microsoft 365, Abavus and other modernised systems, opportunities may arise to discontinue software, reduce duplicate licences and support costs, and avoid future replacement expenditure.

4.3 Existing approvals and budget provision

The Group noted that the principal applications and workstreams identified within the Business Case have either already been purchased, previously approved by Members or have budget provision identified for implementation. The immediate programme is therefore primarily about coordinating, implementing and obtaining full organisational value from planned investment rather than creating a wholly new programme of unfunded technology expenditure.

A specific provision of £30,000 has been included within the approved 2026/27 budget for a CRM system / IT development for this purpose.

4.4 Dedicated transformation capacity

The Group endorsed the Business Case conclusion that dedicated staffing capacity is required. Members considered that the programme affects all Council services and requires process redesign, supplier coordination, data migration, staff engagement, training, implementation control and benefits realisation. This work could not reasonably be absorbed within existing staff roles and workloads.

The Group therefore supported a fixed-term Transformation Manager role and recommended that a fully developed proposal is presented to Personnel Committee in October 2026, including a job description, grade, duration, full cost and identified funding source.

4.5 Hardware and infrastructure readiness

The Group requested a hardware and infrastructure audit before major application implementation to ensure the Council has suitable devices, connectivity, mobile equipment, security arrangements and supporting infrastructure. Any additional costs will be reported to Committee unless they can be met from approved budgets or an authorised virement under existing delegations.

5. Strategic Business Case

5.1 The Strategic Business Case is attached at Appendix A. It concludes that the Council's digital environment has developed incrementally, with useful individual applications operating alongside spreadsheets, email-driven processes, manual workflows and fragmented data.

5.2 The proposed programme aims to establish a more integrated corporate environment supporting improved customer access, workflow automation, document and records management, asset management, mobile working, stronger reporting, governance, resilience and future organisational growth.

5.3 The Business Case identifies that the key implementation risk is not simply choosing unsuitable software. It is purchasing capable systems without sufficient organisational capacity to redesign processes, coordinate implementation, train staff, remove duplicated ways of working and realise the intended benefits.

6. Preferred Corporate Digital Platform - Abavus

6.1 Following officer assessment, supplier demonstrations, functional review, benchmarking and consideration of comparable town-council experience, Abavus My Council Services is recommended as the preferred corporate digital platform.

6.2 The proposed Enterprise Platform provides functionality including:

customer portal and online forms

CRM and service desk / workflow management

mobile working

asset management and inspections

allotment management

appointments and bookings

bereavement management

FOI management

grants management

reporting and analytics

6.3 The current supplier proposal is £19,350 excluding VAT in Year 1, including platform licence, implementation consultancy and training, followed by an indicative platform cost of £11,000 excluding VAT in each of Years 2 and 3. Final scope and pricing will be confirmed through the formal procurement process.

7. Procurement Approach

7.1 Officers recommend procurement through the appropriate Government G-Cloud framework. G-Cloud is an established public-sector procurement framework for cloud software and services and provides a structured route through which the Council can procure the required service.

7.2 Use of the framework is not an exemption from procurement. Officers will still be required to document the Council's requirements, identify the relevant framework service, apply the prescribed selection process, confirm whole-life cost and value for money, reconcile the existing supplier proposal with the framework listing and retain a clear procurement audit trail.

7.3 Subject to completion of that process confirming Abavus as the appropriate solution, the Council would enter into a framework call-off contract. Officers consider this a more robust and transparent approach than relying solely upon the specialist-services provisions within the Council's Financial Regulations.

8. Linked Programme Activity

8.1 Microsoft 365 has been approved but implementation has not started. This allows its design and migration to be coordinated from the outset with Abavus and the wider programme.

8.2 The programme also includes strategic dependencies with the live Town Council / Super Weston website, Modern.Gov, GDPR and records-management work, and the Asset Data Intern / Devolution programme. These projects share staff, data, processes and governance requirements and should therefore be sequenced and managed collectively.

8.3 In particular, the Asset Data Intern work supports the consolidation and cleansing of asset information required for future asset-management and mobile-working systems, while Modern.Gov and the website create linked requirements around document publication, Member access and digital customer journeys.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 The Council has included £30,000 within the approved 2026/27 budget for a CRM system / wider IT development associated with this programme.

Element	Current position	Financial position
Abavus - Year 1	£19,350 excluding VAT	Within the £30,000 2026/27 CRM / IT budget provision, subject to procurement and final contract price.
Abavus - Years 2 and 3	£11,000 excluding VAT per year	Ongoing revenue requirement to be reflected in future budgets / MTFP, offset where possible by system rationalisation.
Microsoft 365	Previously approved; implementation not started	Approximately £10,000 from the 2026/27 IT Support & Upgrade budget approved for associated overspend.
Transformation Manager	To be costed	Separate October Personnel Committee report to identify grade, full employment cost and funding source.

Hardware / infrastructure	Audit required	Further costs only to return to Committee where existing provision or authorised virement is insufficient.

9.2 The Project Review Group requested that financial assessment is undertaken on a whole-system and whole-life basis. Officers will therefore review current licences, applications and IT support costs to identify potential savings, avoided costs and opportunities to rationalise existing systems as the new environment is implemented.

10. Transformation Manager

10.1 The proposed Transformation Manager would be a time-limited programme and organisational-change role, not an additional permanent management layer and not a replacement for IT support, service managers, the Data Protection Officer, the Asset Data Intern or supplier implementation teams.

10.2 Its purpose would be to coordinate the programme across services and ensure that technology investment translates into embedded working practices and measurable benefits. Core areas would include programme planning, process redesign, supplier coordination, migration readiness, testing, training, adoption, system rationalisation and benefits realisation.

10.3 The detailed staffing decision should be taken through the Council's Personnel governance. A full proposal will therefore be developed for Personnel Committee in October 2026.

11. Risk and Governance

11.1 The principal risks are under-utilisation of purchased systems, continued parallel manual processes, duplicate licences, insufficient implementation capacity, poor data quality, hardware limitations, change fatigue and failure to achieve anticipated efficiencies, cyber security and GDPR compliance ability.

11.2 These risks will be mitigated through phased implementation, dedicated programme leadership, the hardware and software audits, service-owner involvement, data cleansing and migration controls, training, clear system ownership and regular benefits reporting.

12. Conclusion

12.1 The Member Project Review Group supported the direction of the Digital Transformation Business Case and reinforced the need to learn from previous light-touch implementation of digital applications. The Council has an opportunity to coordinate a number of already approved or budgeted workstreams and ensure that they are fully embedded across services.

12.2 Abavus My Council Services is recommended as the preferred corporate platform, with the current Year 1 proposal capable of being met from the existing £30,000 2026/27 CRM / IT provision, subject to completion of the Government G-Cloud procurement process and confirmation of final contractual pricing and value for money.

12.3 The Review Group also endorsed dedicated fixed-term transformation capacity. It is therefore recommended that the detailed Transformation Manager proposal is referred to Personnel Committee for consideration in October 2026.

Appendix A - Digital Transformation Programme 2026-2029 Strategic Business Case

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

Finance and General Purposes Committee 24th August 2026
Ramp at 32 Waterloo Street
Report from the Senior Development Officer

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WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

1. Purpose and Background of Report

1.1. Purpose

The report responds to a request for further information regarding the installation of a ramp at 32 Waterloo Street.

This report covers the information provided historically, together with the current position, highlighting where matters have evolved and where they remain unchanged.

1.2. Background

Request from Committee to explore alternative options

At the meeting of Town Council on the 29th June 2026, a report regarding the installation of a ramp at 32 Waterloo Street was considered, and the following resolution was made:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley
SECONDED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: That **Option 2** of the report, to **Defer the project** pending further review of financial priorities.

1.3. Demonstration of Need

In considering the available options, officers have sought to establish the nature of accessibility issues experienced by visitors to 32 Waterloo Street. While it is difficult to quantify the number of individuals affected, staff working within the building were asked to provide examples from their experience.

The examples received identify a range of circumstances in which visitors with mobility needs have experienced difficulty accessing the building. These include visitors requiring assistance with the front steps, wheelchair users being directed to the rear entrance, reliance upon staff assistance, and occasions where the dimensions of the rear entrance have restricted wheelchair access.

The frequency of these occurrences varies and the evidence should therefore be considered alongside the wider statutory, operational, financial and physical considerations set out within this report. The anonymised examples provided by staff are included at Appendix A as supporting information.

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1.4. **Constraints to keep in mind**

When considering the available options for improving accessibility at 32 Waterloo Street, Members should be aware that there are a number of statutory, physical and operational constraints which significantly limit the range of viable solutions. These constraints should be considered alongside the capital cost of each option.

a. Equality Act 2010

As a provider of public services, the Council has a duty under Sections 20 and 21 of the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments where a physical feature places disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people.

The Act does not prescribe exactly what constitutes a *"reasonable adjustment*"; this is determined on a case-by-case basis, taking account of factors such as practicality, **cost,** effectiveness and the resources available to the organisation. Ultimately, should a dispute arise, it is for the court to determine whether an adjustment is reasonable.

Given that adaptations to the building are demonstrably possible, and that planning permission has already been granted for an accessible entrance, retaining the existing arrangements without further improvement may carry a risk of legal challenge. This should be considered alongside the cost of the originally developed proposal, which Members have indicated is not considered viable or affordable at the present time following their original resolution for planning to be submitted recognising the need for a permanent ramp to the front of the building.

b. Building Regulations – Approved Document M

Although the Building Regulations primarily apply where building work is undertaken, Approved Document M provides nationally recognised guidance on achieving reasonable access to buildings.

For existing and historic buildings, the guidance recognises that full compliance may not always be achievable. It states that accessibility should be improved "where and to the extent that it is practically possible", whilst ensuring that works do not prejudice the special architectural or historic character of the building or increase long-term deterioration of its fabric.

The guidance therefore requires a balance between accessibility and conservation, rather than strict compliance in every circumstance.

c. Grade II Listed Building Status

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

32 Waterloo Street is a Grade II Listed Building.

Any permanent alterations affecting the character of the building require Listed Building Consent, and proposals must preserve the building's special architectural and historic interest.

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent have already been granted for a bespoke Bath stone ramp following extensive consultation with the Local Planning Authority, Conservation Officer and Highways Authority. Any materially different design would be likely to require a fresh planning application and Listed Building Consent, with no guarantee of approval.

d. Physical Site Constraints

The building occupies a constrained position within the public realm.

The principal constraints include:

- the entrance is located immediately adjacent to the public highway;
- the building frontage is curved;
- the neighbouring commercial entrance restricts the available footprint;
- a compliant ramp projecting directly from the entrance would extend into the highway;

These physical constraints significantly restrict the design options available.

e. Existing Rear Access

A temporary accessible route currently exists via the rear entrance.

However, this route:

- is accessed via an unadopted highway (meaning a permanent ramp cannot be applied);
- is affected by parked vehicles;
- does not benefit from a continuous accessible pedestrian route;
- can require members of staff to escort visitors from the principal entrance.

Whilst this arrangement was provided as an interim means of access originally, it does not offer an equivalent level of independent access to the principal entrance. Members should therefore consider whether it is appropriate as a long-term solution, taking account of the practical limitations identified above.

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f. Highway Considerations

Any permanent ramp must avoid creating an obstruction to pedestrians or the public highway.

A compliant ramp designed in accordance with Approved Document M would require a significant footprint due to the existing level change of approximately 280 mm. Depending on the gradient adopted, a straight ramp would extend between approximately 3.4 metres (1:12) and 5.6 metres (1:20), before allowing for the required landings. This would project into the highway and affect pedestrian movement. These constraints were a major factor in the bespoke curved design that has already received planning approval, but whose current estimated cost has led Members to request consideration of alternative options.

g. Health and Safety

Where portable or temporary ramps are considered, the Council must also have regard to the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.

The Health and Safety Executive does not prescribe a maximum lifting weight. Instead, employers are required to:

- avoid hazardous manual handling where reasonably practicable;
- assess any manual handling that cannot be avoided; and
- reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable.

A portable ramp capable of overcoming a 280 mm level difference is likely to be several metres in length and sufficiently large and cumbersome to require a formal manual handling risk assessment. Consideration would also need to be given to storage, deployment, staff training, frequency of use and the interaction with pedestrians and the adjacent highway.

h. Independent and Dignified Access

Both Approved Document M and the Equality Act promote accessibility that enables disabled people to access buildings independently wherever reasonably practicable.

Solutions which require users to request assistance, wait for staff, use an alternative entrance or rely upon temporary equipment may still constitute reasonable adjustments in certain circumstances, particularly in listed buildings. However, they do not provide the same level of independent access as a permanent, independently usable solution and would need to be considered in the context of the Council's reasonable adjustment duties.

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i. Summary

In considering the available options, Members will need to balance cost alongside a number of other relevant considerations, including:

- compliance with the Equality Act 2010;
- the principles of Approved Document M;
- the statutory protection afforded to a Grade II Listed Building;
- highway and public realm constraints;
- operational practicality;
- health and safety obligations; and
- the Council's commitment to providing accessible, dignified and inclusive public services.

1.5. **Existing Proposal**

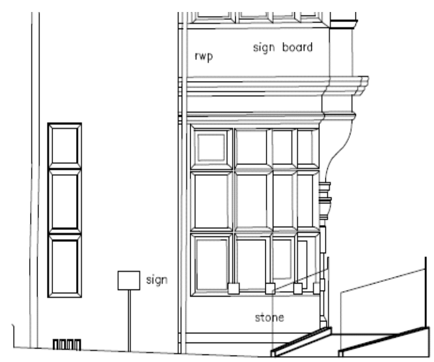
Permanent Stone Ramp

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent have been granted for the following design:

Datum 5.00m

Proposed North Elevation

Scale - 1:100



Datum 5.00m

Proposed East Elevation (Partial)

This design has been provisionally costed by the Town Council's appointed Quantity Surveyor as follows:

- Build Cost £71,027

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

- Professional and statutory application charges £10,570
- Total £81,597 plus VAT.

The budget allowed within 2026/2027 for the installation of the ramp is as follows:

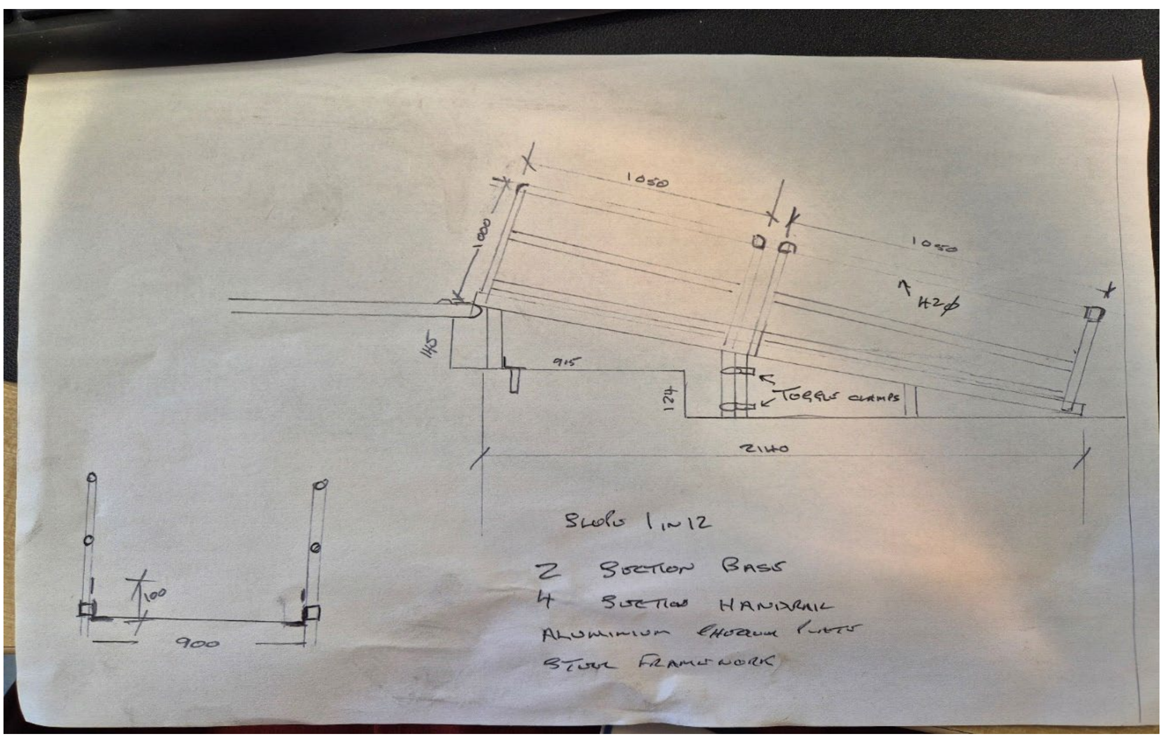
- Budget available for Capital works in 2026/2027 - £62,160
- Budget for Professional fees (for whole year all projects) in 2026 /2027 - £31,080

Members were concerned about the rising cost of the capital works required and could chose to seek a comparable costing exercise to be undertaken by another company.

1.6. **Alternative options**

Portable Aluminium Ramp – Option 1 (Operational Adjustment)

Two in One Ducting have provided a design for a portable metal ramp:



They have proposed a ramp which comes in six parts, two ramp sections and four handrails. Each element locks into the floor and together for stability. The frame would be steel, and an aluminium chequer plate floor. It was estimated the heaviest section would be around 25kg.

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The quoted value for the ramp is: £1,195.

Challenge under Equality Act

Approved Document M applies to building work. A portable ramp that is not fixed to the building and is simply brought out when required is generally not regarded as building work, so it would not normally have to comply with every dimensional recommendation in Part M.

For example, many public buildings use:

- folding aluminium ramps
- suitcase ramps
- telescopic ramps

These are often steeper than 1:12 and would not meet the dimensional recommendations applicable to a permanent access ramp. This does not automatically make their use unlawful; rather, portable ramps may be considered as an operational adjustment under the Equality Act rather than a permanent building alteration.

A portable ramp may be perfectly reasonable where:

- the rise is very small;
- the building is listed;
- permanent alteration would cause unacceptable heritage harm;
- the portable ramp can be deployed quickly and safely.

There are, however, a number of accessibility and operational considerations.

The disabled visitor:

- has to request assistance;
- may have to wait for staff;
- Adequate staff need to be available under manual handling obligations
- cannot access the building independently;
- may feel singled out.

Independent access is an important consideration when assessing the reasonableness and effectiveness of an accessibility solution.

A portable ramp therefore provides a different level of access from a permanent solution, although it may still constitute a reasonable adjustment depending on the particular circumstances and how it is operated.

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<u>Length</u>

Rise = 280 mm

At:

- 1:12 = 3.36 m
- 1:15 = 4.2 m
- 1:20 = 5.6 m

Even the shortest ramp meeting the dimensional recommendations for a permanent ramp would require a significant footprint.

A portable ramp designed in accordance with Approved Document M would project into the adopted highway and would therefore create additional highway considerations that would need to be addressed.

Upon initial inspection, a ramp using a ratio of 1:12 would need to come out as far as the first bollard due to the nature of the front of the building and multiple steps to overcome (image below):

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Weight and manual handling

There are a number of practical and operational considerations associated with a temporary ramp of the dimensions required. A portable ramp long enough to negotiate 280 mm safely would be substantially larger than a small suitcase ramp. A 3.5-4.5 m aluminium ramp can weigh anywhere between 30 kg and over 60 kg, depending on its design and load rating. This introduces considerations under the Manual Handling Operations Regulations.

In order to minimise this, the design provided by Two in One Ducting comes in parts:

- Two ramp sections - which lock into the floor and into each other
- Four removeable handrails

This is to ensure that each individual element is as light as it can be, to aid in use.

Under the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 the Council would first be required to consider whether such manual handling could reasonably be avoided. Given the length, bulk, deployment requirements, public location and potential interaction with the highway, the use of a portable ramp would require a detailed manual handling risk assessment and further assessment of the operational and health and safety implications to ensure it was suitable and adequate for use.

Storage

Consideration would need to be given to the storage of the ramp to make deployment as straightforward as possible.

Deployment Time

The Equality Act also considers dignity. In using the ramp, staff would need to:

- locate the ramp;
- unlock the store;
- carry ramp outside;
- assemble it;
- install it;
- remove it afterwards.

This would not provide the same level of independent access as a permanent solution and would require staff involvement each time the ramp is deployed, this would need to be fully understood.

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Overall assessment

Whilst a portable ramp could be considered as an operational reasonable adjustment rather than a permanent building alteration, it would not provide an equivalent level of independent access to a permanent solution. In considering this option, Members would need to take account of the length required to negotiate the 280 mm change in level, the resulting weight, staff deployment requirements, storage and the potential interaction with the adjacent highway during use.

Portable Aluminium Ramp – Option 2 (Operational Adjustment)

Following discussion with the councils PPM contractor, it was considered that a solution similar to that used by GWR could be explored at the site. It was also noted that, should the Council wish to progress the option presented above (b - portable aluminium ramp option 1) with an alternative contractor, project management would need to be undertaken within the contract with the contractor due to the value of the works. The same considerations with regard to Option 1 are likely to also apply for this example.

No Ramp at the Front Entrance – Option 3

This option would retain the existing arrangement: access via the front entrance would remain unavailable to wheelchair users and some people with restricted mobility, with reliance instead on the existing rear access arrangement.

This option would not provide any improvement to accessibility at the principal entrance. Members would need to consider whether the existing arrangements continue to constitute a reasonable adjustment, having regard to the Equality Act 2010, the particular constraints of this listed building and the alternative means of access currently available.

The previous report records that 32 Waterloo Street was inaccessible when purchased, that the Council has already accepted the need to make the ground floor public areas accessible, and that an internal ramp has already been installed as part of that approach. It also notes that external ramped access is still required, and that planning permission and Listed Building Consent have now been granted for a front ramp.

Approved Document M states that reasonable provision should be made so that people, regardless of disability, age or gender, can “gain access to buildings and to gain access within buildings and use their facilities.” It also states that, for historic buildings, the aim should be to improve accessibility “where and to the extent that it is practically possible,” provided the works do not prejudice the character of the building or increase deterioration of the fabric.

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Retaining the existing arrangement would not improve accessibility at the principal entrance. Disabled users would continue to rely on the rear entrance, which the previous report identifies as a temporary measure. That route requires members of the public to attend the front entrance and then be escorted by staff to the rear through Kings Lane, with Palmers Row not having pedestrian access on that side of the road. The previous report noted that this arrangement was 'not practical long term'.

There is also an Equality Act 2010 consideration. Section 20 requires reasonable steps to be taken where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people. Section 21 provides that failure to comply with the reasonable adjustment duty amounts to discrimination.

For public services and public functions, Schedule 2 of the Equality Act applies the reasonable adjustment duty and allows for either avoiding the disadvantage or adopting a reasonable alternative method of providing the service. In this case, the existing alternative route has a number of limitations, including the lack of a continuous accessible pedestrian route, potential vehicle conflict and reliance on staff assistance. It therefore does not provide an equivalent level of independent access to the principal entrance.

The previous report also records that a member of the public had raised concerns about the accessibility of the building through the local MP, and identified a potential risk of challenge if no further action were taken. It further records the previous assessment that adaptations to 32 Waterloo Street were considered possible.

1.7. **<u>Engagement with WECIL</u>**

Given Members' concerns regarding the affordability of the approved permanent scheme, and the alternative options subsequently identified, officers have sought independent accessibility advice to assist Members in considering the available options.

The purpose of this advice is to support consideration of a proportionate approach which takes account of accessibility needs, relevant legislation, the constraints of the building, operational practicality and cost.

The Council has therefore engaged with West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL), who have previously assisted with the Museum designs, to undertake an initial light-touch site audit. This will consider the accessibility implications of the alternative options explored and provide additional information to assist Members in their decision-making. The visit is scheduled for 21st August 2026. As the meeting papers will already have been circulated, an update on the audit will be provided at the meeting.

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Conclusion

The options available each present different financial, operational and accessibility considerations. The permanent scheme provides the greatest level of independent access but at a significantly higher capital cost. A portable ramp may provide a lower-cost operational adjustment, subject to satisfactory consideration of accessibility, highway, manual handling and operational requirements. Retaining the existing arrangements would avoid additional capital expenditure but would not improve access at the principal entrance and would retain the limitations and associated risks identified within this report. The forthcoming advice from WECIL will provide Members with additional independent information to assist in determining the most appropriate and proportionate way forward.

2. Options for Council

Options as noted above:

a. Installation of the approved permanent stone ramp - estimated cost £81,597 plus VAT. Please note, in order to progress with this option, the following would also need to be approved:

    I. Approve progression to procurement, subject to confirmation of costs

    II. Agree to include the project within Budget allocations noting whilst approving overspend to this budget estimated at being circa £10,000 with regard to capital costs based on QS estimations.

b. Proceed with a portable, temporary metal ramp, having considered the advice provided by WECIL.

c. Retain the existing access arrangements (no ramp at the front entrance).

3. Reason for Recommendation

Noted above.

4. Expected Benefits

Noted above.

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5. Implications

5.1. Legal

Noted above.

5.2. Risks

Noted above.

5.3. Financial Implications

Noted above.

5.4. Timescales

A procurement exercise will take around 8-12 weeks, but could be less for portable options.

Beyond this, timescales will be subject to contractors work programmes, lead time and availability.

5.5. Stakeholders

Members of the public, particularly those with accessibility needs

5.6. Contractors

A contractor will be appointed through a formal procurement process, in accordance with the Council's procurement requirements.

5.7. Crime & Disorder (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

No significant implications identified. The design will continue to consider security and safe access to the building. As the installation of a ramp was considered at the point of the main building refurbishment, allowances to the gated building access were made, with the gate level allowing for the slope of the ramp.

5.8. Biodiversity (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)

n/a

5.9. Privacy Impact (consider Privacy Impact assessment)

Supporting examples in Appendix A have been anonymised for publication. No significant privacy implications have been identified.

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5.10. **Equality & Diversity (councils have a legal duty to consider impact)**

The project will have a positive impact by improving access for individuals with disabilities and supporting compliance with equality legislation.

6. Appendices

Appendix A - Supporting Evidence: Accessibility at 32 Waterloo Street

7. Members are recommended to:

Make a decision regarding the installation of a ramp at 32 Waterloo Street.

Molly Matthews

Senior Development Officer

Drafted 12th August 2026

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8. Appendix A - Supporting Evidence: Accessibility at 32 Waterloo Street

The following anonymised examples have been provided by staff working at or using 32 Waterloo Street in response to a request for information about accessibility experiences. They are provided as supporting evidence to section 1.2.2 of the report and are not intended to represent a comprehensive record of all visitors to the building.

Staff account 1

- Once I had to help an elderly lady in with her shopper Trolley/Zimmer frame. She wasn't able to lift it over the two steps to come into the building.
- I've often had people wanting to pop in to ask a question and they're in a mobility scooter/ wheelchair but have been able to get out of their chair and walk in. But there is still a frustration that they have to do this. As this makes it harder for them if they aren't able to walk far and their disability aids are left outside.
- For evening meetings, we've had people ask for instructions before if they're coming around the back and think it may be a bit confusing and then they don't bother turning up.

Staff account 2

- On one occasion I have needed to direct someone to the rear of the building, when they were attending an evening meeting.
- A regular wheelchair user visits the building approximately once a month to deliver materials. On arrival, they use the doorbell and staff collect the items directly, as they do not enter via the front entrance as there is inability to do so.
- Over the past couple of years that we have been based here, it has been also been noticed a small number of people appearing unsteady while using the front steps. On those occasions, I have assisted them with their walkers where necessary as I am able to do so, not all staff who cover reception may be able to with their own abilities.
- I also recall that, when we first opened, a member of the public visited the premises and commented that more appropriate accessible access was needed.

Staff account 3

- One example involved a resident who sometimes uses a wheelchair or walking aids and wished to attend a meeting in the Chamber.
- The visitor advised that they needed an accessible entrance, and arrangements were made for them to be dropped off at the rear entrance so that

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they could use the step-free route. They could otherwise have travelled independently but were not aware of suitable nearby parking and were therefore reliant on assistance to reach the building.

- It was also noted that, where a visitor attends a Chamber-based event without having disclosed an accessibility requirement in advance, staff may need to escort them around to the rear entrance. This is only practicable where another member of staff is available to remain in Reception to greet other guests arriving.

Staff account 4

- We host a significant number of civic receptions. We have encountered several occasions where we have had to ask guests with mobility needs to enter via the rear entrance. We have received comments about the first impression that is given to disabled people using the 'back staff door' when able bodied guests can use the formal front door. This has prevented them from experiencing our reception area meet and greet which is an important part of the visitor experience.
- On one occasion, a wheelchair user attending a civic event required the rear entrance. Their wheelchair was too large to fit through the rear door, and they required assistance to transfer in order to enter the building, with the wheelchair remaining outside. This illustrates the limitation of the rear entrance for some larger mobility equipment.
- Another civic event; visitors from a local care setting who used mobility aids were also required to enter via the rear entrance.
- A further example involved a visitor who uses a large wheelchair and is fully dependent upon it for mobility. The wheelchair would not fit through the rear entrance, meaning that appropriate access to the building could not be provided.

Staff account 5

- An attendee at a community group meeting, which had booked the Council Chamber, arrived at the front entrance using a wheelchair and also had a visual impairment.
- A member of staff was called to Reception to assist the visitor in locating the rear accessible entrance.
- As the meeting took place in the late afternoon in November, it was already becoming dark. The route proceeded along the Boulevard and into Kings Lane, where there was no lighting.

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- The visitor commented that she felt vulnerable using this route and was reassured by the presence of a member of staff but did comment about the fact ‘ that she was female also’.
- The route then continued into Palmer Row. There is no pavement on the side of the road serving the Council’s rear access, meaning that part of the journey had to be undertaken in the carriageway facing oncoming traffic.
- The member of staff was wearing high-visibility clothing, which assisted visibility, although the route remained challenging due to two blind corners on the approach to Kings Lane which did have a few cars coming around quite quickly as we proceeded.
- On arrival at the rear of the building, parked vehicles associated with neighbouring properties were obstructing the access, making manoeuvring more difficult.
- At the rear entrance, a Street Warden who was leaving the building assisted by holding the door fully open. The wheelchair only just passed through the doorway due to the width of the chair and the position of the visitor’s arms.
- The visitor expressed her thanks for the assistance provided but, on entering the Chamber, commented to her group that accessing the building had been “a bit of an ordeal”.