

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE MUSEUM ON
MONDAY 13TH DECEMBER 2021**

Meeting Commenced: 7:00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 9.28 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak (Chairman), Roger Bailey (S), Mark Canniford, Peter Crew (S), Dave Dash, Pete McAleer (S), Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter and Tim Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley, Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearce (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk – Operational Services), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer/Officer Manager) and Rebecca Saunders (Civic and Committee Officer).

254	To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Thornton who was substituted by Pete McAleer, Peter Fox who was substituted by Roger Bailey and Sarah Codling who was substituted by Peter Crew.
255	To receive Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest received.
256	To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 18th October 2021 The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda. It was noted that those in attendance who had no other designation should be referred to as a 'member of the public' rather than a political party member. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.
257	The minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 9th September (unapproved) There were none due to the 11 th November meeting being cancelled.
258	Monthly Financial Reports: September & October 2021 a) For Approval Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ian Porter
SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

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

.1 RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for September & October 2021 be approved.

b) For Noting

- i. Bank Reconciliations
- ii. Budgetary Control Report
- iii. Bank Interest Report
- iv. Schedule of Receipted Income
- v. Bad debt report

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

.2 RESOLVED: That reports 5b i – v be noted.

259 To approve the updated Procurement Guide Scoring Matrix

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that a productive meeting with limited numbers was held the previous week and a scoring matrix would be submitted for approval at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the item be deferred and a scoring matrix be submitted for approval at the next meeting.

260 To approve the acquisition of a Civic Officer Credit Card

The recommendation from the Civic Consultation Group had been previously circulated. That the obtainment of a Civic credit card be recommended for urgent approval.

RESOLVED: To approve the obtainment of a Civic credit card as per below.

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated - Credit Cards – Changes to Current Credit Card Provision.

Recommended changes to credit card provision	Changes
Town Clerk £1,000	no change
Deputy Town Clerk £1,000	no change
Former Museum Manger £500	cancel card
Assistant Town Clerk – Operational Services	issue new card £500 limit
Civic Officer	Issue new card £500 limit

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter

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

RESOLVED: To approve the changes to credit cards, as per the changes tabled above.

261 Acquisition of 32 Waterloo Street

The minutes of the Premises Working Group had been previously circulated for members' information.

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk in relation to parking had been previously circulated.

A progress report of the Town Clerk was circulated at the meeting and members were advised that the Structural Engineer's Report was still awaited and anticipated in January.

A request was made for the Working Group minutes to be more succinct to identify areas discussed, decided and for action which was duly noted.

Discussion ensued regarding DDA access to the building and it was confirmed that the rear entrance was compliant and that the Surveyor was looking into options to make the entrance compliant, which would require acquiring a license.

In relation to the Deputy Town Clerks' report regarding parking, a member suggested that an assessment of parking spaces is required and should be undertaken before agreeing to purchase the maximum available.

The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that the total annual cost for 19 parking spaces was £9,500 which was within budget. The spaces once secured could be reviewed and reallocated on a month by month basis.

The Town Clerk recommended that all 19 spaces be pursued, at least for the first year, to accommodate Mayoral and other approved visitors, councillors and officers. This would enable best use of the new HQ and could also be useful for functions at the Museum. The spaces to be used while on council business only.

Debate ensued. Concern was raised by a member that purchasing car parking spaces contradicted the council's Climate Change pledge and therefore, it was requested that car parking be reviewed by the Climate Change Working Party. Other members felt that some car parking provision was needed. It was highlighted that town centre car parking spaces were very sought after and would be sold if the council did not acquire them.

To clarify, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that the item had been brought to the committee because of its budgetary implications.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter

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

RESOLVED:

1. To receive the minutes of the HQ Working Party.
2. To authorise the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee and the Chairman of the HQ Working Party to consider all the information, including the engineers report and

	<p>solicitors report on title, and in their discretion to exchange contracts on the premises and agree a completion date.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To authorise the Town Clerk to enter into contractual arrangements with Bakers Dolphin for parking at West Street (Food Bank carpark). 4. To approve the provision of 19 spaces with opportunity for these to be reviewed during the first year of occupation as necessary.
<p>262</p>	<p>Town Council Charges</p> <p>a) To approve Museum Exhibition Board Charges The report of the Museum Manager had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that when this had been trailed, had made money and increased footfall through the Museum. This would be subject to suitability and location of groups within Weston.</p> <p>It was requested to include that this should be in consultation with the Chairman of the HAC committee to alleviate pressure on officers.</p> <p>Discussion ensued regarding the remit of a community group and the discretion used. It was suggested that the term 'local community' was more appropriate.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the discretionary 'Free' hire of exhibition boards to local community groups noting approval is subject to: available courtyard space, location of group and suitability of the subject wishing to be displayed. The Museum and council reserves the rights to decline any exhibition if it is felt to be inappropriate for the service users.</p> <p>b) To approve the Blakehay Theatre split box office charging system The report of the Blakehay Manager had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk reported that this had been discussed by the HAC committee and requested that the current 5 year charging schedule to be extended for one year. There was no ability for box office split at present and although there was a small risk in doing so, it would allow for more use of the theatre.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk – OPS informed that she had been advised by the Theatre Manager that the split was industry standard at 80/20 and would attract large professional hirers.</p> <p>Members agreed that it would demonstrate industry professionalism and they would like the theatre booked out 5 days per week and queried the live shows budget.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the live shows budget could be reduced if members decided and that the draft budget had been produced before the proposal was received.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p>

	<p>RESOLVED: To approve the use of both 'Fixed Fee' and 'Box Office Splits' when programming.</p> <p>c) To approve the Town Council charges for the year 2022/2023 The charging schedule for 2022 / 2023 had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk reported an inflationary increase of 2% had been applied and that there were minor discretionary changes to the Museum. The Blakehay charges were separate and would be brought to committee in one years' time.</p> <p>Members queried whether a 2% inflationary increase was adequate, considering the current inflation rate was between 4-6%.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk reported that inflation costs had increased since the charges had been produced and suggested that members could apply the 'actual' inflationary increase set at 31st March 2022.</p> <p>It was queried as to whether this would affect the bookings and hire, to which it was advised that the booking dates would be honoured at the point of booking.</p> <p>Discussion ensued regarding the Blakehay and Museum charges being comparable, specifically the option for hourly rates and equipment hire. The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that the Blakehay did offer hourly rate bookings which should be reflected and that equipment hire had always been included within the theatre charges.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To approve the Town Council charges for the year 2022/2023 as reported.2. That a review of all charges across all areas be undertaken within the next financial year.
<p>263</p>	<p>CCTV provision at Burlington Street</p> <p>The report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.</p> <p>Consideration had been given previously for the provision of CCTV at the end of Burlington Street along the front of the Museum where both main entrances to the Museum are. This was not possible with the old CCTV system but since the upgrade confirmation had now been received that this could now be done at a cost of £5,125 plus VAT, which could be funded from general reserves.</p> <p>It was agreed that CCTV would undoubtedly benefit the Museum and give added protection to staff and visitors coming into and leaving the building.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the above quotation for CCTV installation at Burlington Street as an additional cost to budget provision in 2021 / 2022.</p>

<p>264</p>	<p>Cargo Bike Asset Transfer</p> <p>The report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The For All Healthy Living Centre had been given grant funding for a cargo bike, for the sum of £5,678, to support food projects around Weston-super-Mare (Community Fridge which the Town Council are collaborating on). However, there has been difficulty in insuring the valuable community asset within the community itself.</p> <p>The For All Healthy Living Centre are willing to transfer the cargo bike to the Town Council, at no cost in order for it to be insured under its own policy, alongside other electric bikes to enable it to be used within the community as intended. This would also continue to bolster the partnership with the For All Healthy Living Centre, with their volunteers registering with the Town Council to ensure fully compliant for insurance purposes.</p> <p>It was suggested that an SLA be negotiated to cover the maintenance of the bike.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the transfer of the asset to the council for use by community, facilitate in partnership with the For All Healthy Living Centre and that an SLA be negotiated to cover the maintenance of the bike.</p>
<p>265</p>	<p>Grove Park Toilets – to review the Cost of Winter Opening</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Town Clerk had been asked by the Group Leaders at their meeting on Thursday 2nd December to report the situation at Grove Park toilets to Committee as a matter of urgency, given the impact on the budget.</p> <p>The toilets at this location have been subject to frequent vandalism, often linked to misuse for drug dealing. In recent months the toilets have been closed more often than they have been open, despite the installation of contactless card entry machines in two of the three cubicles – these have themselves been vandalised within weeks of their installation. The toilets have always been little used by legitimate users in the winter months (November to March inclusive) and are often unsafe, with three reports of assaults on the cleaners having taken place. In the longer term the council had agreed to look for an alternative site that can be better managed and supervised and officers are exploring short term temporary alternatives which may be possible within reasonable cost.</p> <p>Due to the drug abuse and vandalism at the site the cost of additional cleaning and repairs had now reached approximately £30,000 per annum, over the contracted approved budget of £36,000. A provision of £65,000 would be needed in 2022/23 for public toilets in recognition of this additional cost.</p> <p>Group leaders had asked if a decision could be made that the budget be removed and accordingly the Grove Park toilets be closed for the winter months, at least 1st November</p>

	<p>until 31st March, with a review in March to decide whether they could be opened in the summer months within the remaining budget. The figures were approximate at this stage and more accurately estimated savings will need to be refined ahead of final budget setting.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk – Operations added that a full breakdown of costs would be reported at the next committee meeting.</p> <p>Debate ensued. A member whilst supportive of the facts and views was aggrieved at the decision to close the toilets and feared that once the service was withdrawn, would not return and urged members to continue with a long-term solution. It was clear that it was a failed site for toilet provision and a thankless task to manage, however the impact of closure on vulnerable people must be considered. The Police’s recommendation to close the toilets and lack of involvement in tackling it was very disappointing.</p> <p>Discussion ensued regarding CCTV and it was reported that CCTV was in situ on the outside of the toilets and had been provided to the Police on many occasions, but it could not be used as evidence, as was not clear proof of who had caused the vandalism. There was no CCTV link to North Somerset Council’s control room.</p> <p>It was suggested that mobile cameras could be utilised via North Somerset Council and their teams designated to deal with drugs and vulnerable people.</p> <p>Members agreed that the subsidy of providing the toilet provision and risk to staff and contractors was too high. The council had tried everything to reduce this over the years and it was clear the site was the problem. The Café and toilets could be relocated to Grove House and it was requested that it would be helpful to have a roadmap and clear plan for the future.</p> <p>It was noted that homelessness may increase due to the decision to close the toilets.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the draft budget for toilets be reduced by an appropriate sum representing the cost of repairing and cleaning up vandalism at Grove Park toilets and, if agreed, that the Grove Park toilets be closed for the winter months, 1st November until 31st March, with a review in March to decide whether they could be opened in the summer months within the remaining budget.</p>
<p>266</p>	<p>To recommend a Draft Budget for 2022/2023 to the Council</p> <p>The draft budget had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that there was an overarching 7% increase in staffing costs due to a national insurance increase. There was flexibility in staffing provision at the Museum and Blakehay and changes in the cemetery due to and SLA increase. There was also a decrease due to a re charges allocation.</p> <p>The following requests and comments were raised:</p>

	<p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the budget as presented equated to a 2.3% increase on the budget and predicted an underspend of approximately £280,000. Budgets for review included the Environmental, HQ and Blakehay.</p> <p>It was noted that as of yet, no Band D figures had been received.</p> <p>It was advised that the current available balance for general reserves was £514,000 which was reported to Town Council back in November. It was noted that 4months revenue expenditure was the best practice, recommended budget for general reserves and this equated to £600,000/700,000 for a council of the size.</p> <p>If members wished to add in the £282,000 surplus from the current year’s budget, then £200,000 could be allocated back into the revenue budget.</p> <p>A member queried the current staffing structure and whether this was sufficient to deliver council services.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that capacity had been challenging at certain times, especially throughout the pandemic. The Deputy Town Clerk added that strategic projects had a big impact on staff workload.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the draft budget, incorporating the above changes, be recommended to the Town Council for approval on the 24th January 2022.</p> <p>This gave an overall 1.76% increase to the budget with a 0.85% increase on the precept requirement, equating to £100.45p increase on a Band D property (TBA once received from NSC).</p>
	<p><i>It was resolved under the Public Bodies (Admissions of Meeting) Act 1960 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for reasons of confidential nature of the following business.</i></p>
<p>267</p>	<p>Barcode Legal Claim</p> <p>The Town Clerk verbally reported that as per council instruction, the claim had been robustly defended. He was hopeful that the claimant would drop the case and that a proportion of the council’s legal costs would be recovered.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.28 pm</p> <p>Signed.....Dated..... Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee</p>