

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON  
MONDAY 20<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2014**

**Meeting Commenced:** 7.00 pm

**Meeting Concluded:** 8.32 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Peter Crew (Chairman), Alan Peak (Vice Chairman), Roger Bailey, Mike Bell, Mark Canniford, Peter Fox, Michal Kus, Keith Morris, Robert Payne, Sonia Russé and Richard Tucker

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors John Crockford-Hawley and Clive Webb, Malcolm L Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Responsible Financial Officer) Helen Morton (Finance Officer), Zoe Clements (Development Officer), Steve Matthews (Town Council Surveyor), Jennifer Lawley (Committee Officer), Rebecca Mear (VANS) and Bethan Evans (Weston & Somerset Mercury)

<b>211.</b>	<b>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</b>  No apologies for absence were received. Members were informed, however, that Councillor Tim Taylor may be late due to work commitments.
<b>212.</b>	<b>To receive Declarations of Interest</b>  There were no Declarations of Interest received.
<b>213.</b>	<b>To approve Minutes of the Policy &amp; Finance Committee Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2014</b>  The Minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.  <b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.
<b>214.</b>	<b>The minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure &amp; Governance</b>  <b>a) To note the minutes of the Working Party to review Expenditure &amp; Governance held on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014</b>  The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda and it was noted that they were draft until approved.  Clarity was sought on agenda item 5 (Update on the Chess Contract) which read ' <i>The Town had been advised to withdraw from the contract line by line, giving the correct period of notice</i> '. Line by line refers to telephone lines.  <b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Minutes be received and noted.

215.	<p><b>Standing Order 10 - Variation of Order of Business</b></p> <p>The Chairman requested a change to the order of business.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the order of the agenda be varied to consider agenda items 9 (Museum) and 8 (Public Toilets) before agenda item 6 (Monthly Financial Reports).</p>
216.	<p><b>Presentation by Rebecca Mear (VANS – Voluntary Action North Somerset )</b></p> <p>In response to the Chairman’s welcome, Ms Mear introduced herself to the Committee and commenced her PowerPoint presentation.</p> <p>VANS, based in the Badger Centre in Weston-super- Mare, was established in 1997. VANS manage the North Somerset Volunteer Centre which helps people to find out about a variety of volunteering opportunities in their area and provides a brokerage service to help groups and organisations to recruit volunteers. In an average year, VANS achieves the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Helps over 1300 people, 300 of whom have additional support needs, find the right volunteering opportunity.</li> <li>b) Helps 250 organisations recruit and retain the right volunteers.</li> <li>c) Delivers development services and training to over 250 VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) organisations and groups.</li> <li>d) Generates over £280,000 of funding from outside of North Somerset for voluntary and community organisations to deliver vital projects and services.</li> <li>e) Provides weekly information to over 1500 VCSE sectors for contacts each week.</li> <li>f) Provides a quarterly newsletter to disseminate policy updates and news.</li> <li>g) Provides Children’s Centres in North Somerset with their own volunteering system.</li> <li>h) Represents the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector on a range of strategic boards.</li> <li>i) Delivers the Voluntary Sector Forum and the Health and Wellbeing Forum.</li> <li>j) Supports volunteer co-ordinators through training and guidance.</li> <li>k) Actively involved in a range of strategic Health and Wellbeing boards and groups.</li> <li>l) Leads the celebration of national Volunteers Week in North Somerset.</li> <li>m) Develops a range of community development initiatives and delivers outcomes for the community.</li> </ul> <p>Ms Mears informed that VANS was under threat as they had not been successful in fundraising bids. They were looking for funding for 2015/16 and not only sought a grant from the Town Council but hoped that many other organisations would contribute.</p>

	<p>In response to the VANS presentation, the Committee noted that a number of Town Council services increasingly depend upon volunteers. Weston In Bloom and Weston Museum were a success as a direct result of volunteering.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Ms Mear for her informative presentation.</p> <p><i>Rebecca Mear left the meeting at 7.28 pm</i></p>
<b>217.</b>	<p><b>Museum</b> (<i>agenda item 9</i>)</p> <p>The reports of the Responsible Financial Officer were previously circulated with the agenda together with the following documentation as required for Weston Museum's HLF bid (Heritage Lottery Fund) submission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Final HLF Application costs (second round submission 06.11.14)</li> <li>b) HLF Activity Plan Costs (second round submission 06.11.14)</li> <li>c) HLF 7 Year Revenue Budget projections (second round submission 06.11.14)</li> <li>d) HLF Cash flow Statement (second round submission 06.11.14)</li> <li>e) HLF Capital Funding Strategy (second round submission 06.11.14)</li> <li>f) VAT Implications for HLF Submission report</li> <li>g) Conservation &amp; Management Plan – Executive summary and Policy Statements (report from SJ Surveyors attached).</li> <li>h) Key dates / Milestones extract from the full Project programme</li> <li>i) Business Plan (<i>preparation</i>)</li> </ul> <p>The documents circulated were extracts from much larger papers and were provided to offer members sight of the final costings and timescales as resolved at full Town Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014. The Business Plan was still a working document and being checked to ensure that everything was covered for the HLF submission.</p> <p>Members were requested to approve the documentation for the HLF submission and delegate final approval of the completed Business Plan and related documents to the Town Clerk and Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee in order to meet the HLF submission date on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014.</p> <p>The Business Plan was a specific requirement of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid to ensure the museum was sustainable for the future. All documentation had been approved by the Community Services Committee on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 and the Town Council on 15<sup>th</sup> September for the submission of the stage 2 grant application in November.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer advised that a creative design consultancy working in the heritage sector had been tasked with the Museum's exhibition designs. She advised that the contingency was very low and the costings in this area should be treated with caution. However the figures had been challenged and the consultancy had given assurances that their figures were correct.</p>

	<p>The Chairman of the Museum Working Party advised that he had personally read the key documents and that the bid was almost complete. Although it had been a demanding project, the advice from HLF and Somerset County Council had been very helpful. If successful it would be the largest project the Town Council had ever undertaken. The original project could not be financed in its entirety at this stage as not enough funding was available. The Architects had, however, designed the project in such a manner that if in the future the Town Council could finance its completion, the Museum would not have to be closed.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Peter Crew  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Keith Morris</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The documentation <b>a) to h)</b> for the HLF submission be received and approved.</li> <li>2. The final approval of the completed Business Plan and any related documents be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee and Chairman of the Museum Working Party in order to meet the HLF submission date on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014.</li> </ol> <p><i>Councillor John Crockford-Hawley and the Development Officer left the meeting at 7.40 pm.</i></p>
<p><b>218.</b></p>	<p><b>Public Toilets</b> (<i>Agenda item 8</i>)</p> <p><b>a) Report of the Finance Officer</b></p> <p>The report of the Finance Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Members had requested a report on the Town Council's six public toilets (<i>Uphill Links, The Maltings, Clarence Park, Grove Park, Ashcombe Park and Locking Road Car Park</i>) at the half year point to catalogue issues arising during the period since the transfer of the public toilets from North Somerset Council to the Town Council.</p> <p>A diary of issues and a cost analysis comparison with North Somerset Council of the toilets had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Confirmation was given that refurbishment of all six public toilets had been completed as per the tender specification and processes were in place with the Town Council's planned maintenance and cleaning contractors for any issues to be dealt with as quickly as possible.</p> <p><b>b) Security</b></p> <p>The report of the Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda</p>

<p>The Town Council had requested quotes from its current security provider in order to establish costs for the installation of CCTV and intruder alarms at the Town Council's six public toilets. Due to the value of the purchase price two further quotations would need to be obtained to comply with the Town Council's Financial Regulations.</p> <p>The diary of issues identified a timeline of problems with the coin entry machines, door mechanisms and sensors; vandalism of units; theft of coin machines and drug abuse with evidence of needle use mainly at Grove Park but also at Locking Road and Clarence Park. Members were informed that the Town Council receive regular complaints from tourists and residents.</p> <p>Debate ensued on the possibility of the public toilets remaining unlocked when mechanisms were not working. Although this might appear a viable solution, the problem of drug abuse would remain. Drug related crime appears to have increased over the past three months, with a spate of incidents with contractors and the public finding people taking drugs in the toilets including one incident of abuse and intimidation of the contractor's staff. Drug abuse was not an isolated problem with just the public toilets and was also occurring in many of the parks and open spaces of the town.</p> <p>The Town Clerk informed that he had written to the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner regarding drug related crime not only blighting the Town Council's public toilets but parks and open spaces. He had also contacted the neighbourhood Inspector who had offered to direct patrols to these locations.</p> <p>Debate reflected on the asset transfer of the public toilets and the early deliberations on outsourcing management to a private contractor. This had appeared to be too expensive at the time and the Town Council had resolved to manage the public toilets directly. Whether this decision had been prudent was questioned. The overspend reported was considerably larger than had been anticipated. Closure and out of order toilets impacted on the public which as taxpayers was not good enough. The view was expressed that while it was a difficult situation the Town Council were making every effort to provide this valued service to the public.</p> <p>The concerns regarding people sleeping overnight in the public toilets was met with the comment that poor policing may be the issue especially in Grove Park. It was suggested that an evening visit by the Police to eject people sleeping in the public toilets might be the only deterrent required.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council advised that discussions were currently under way with North Somerset Council regarding installing wireless CCTV coverage for the security of the public toilets with the installation of a radio antenna at Weston College part funded by stakeholders such as the Police.</p> <p>Further debate ensued on the refurbishment of the public toilets and whether the installation of the doors, sensors and coin mechanisms was fit for purpose. The Town Council's Surveyor assured members that the problem</p>
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<p>was not the equipment's failure but was the systematic damage caused by vandalism.</p> <p>Suggestions were put forward that the coin machines be dispensed with in an attempt to avoid damage and theft of the coin units. The Surveyor advised that the public toilets had been refurbished with vandalism in mind but the extreme vandalism occurring had not been anticipated. The Leader proposed that alternative times for opening and closing the public toilets be considered at the next Expenditure and Governance Working Party to combat the problems of vandalism, drug abuse and sleeping in the toilets. He also informed that if the closing time was changed to 5.00 pm, the Street Wardens would unlock and lock the Grove Park toilets.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The next Expenditure and Governance Working Party consider alternative opening and closing times for the public toilets.</li> <li>2. The Street Wardens be requested to check Grove Park toilets when alternative opening times are approved.</li> <li>3. Feedback and outcomes resulting from discussions with North Somerset Council regarding CCTV security coverage of the toilets be taken to the Expenditure and Governance Working Party.</li> </ol> <p><b>c) Uphill Public Toilets</b></p> <p>Correspondence from Uphill Village Society had been circulated with the agenda together with a letter from the Town Clerk to the Society.</p> <p>The Society were interested in storage facilities at the premises of Uphill public toilets, the main items for storage being equipment for Village fete games and the burner for the beacon on the hill. Assurances had been given that gas would not be stored and keyholders would be restricted.</p> <p>However concerns had been raised that the storage space was potentially unsafe and also allowed access to the rear of the cash box which would be a breach of local government audit requirements, necessitating alternative access to the toilet block at Uphill through a new door with an area for storage needing to be partitioned off. A diagram of the proposed alterations and costings was circulated at the meeting. The alterations would incur estimated costs £2,989 plus VAT. In order to resolve these issues and if necessary identify unbudgeted expenditure, the matter was referred to the Policy &amp; Finance Committee.</p> <p>Debate ensued. It was noted that there was no budget available and the question was raised as to whether Uphill Village Society could be approached to pay for the alterations. Other options were put forward which included sub-letting the premises at a peppercorn rent.</p> <p>The ward councillor for Broadoak and Uphill informed that Uphill Village Society did not have available funding for the alterations. The Leader advised that there was an area of ground to the rear of the toilet block at Uphill</p>
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	<p>protected by large wooden gates (presently padlocked by a neighbour) which could accommodate a shed for storage purposes. The land was owned by Wessex Water but currently leased by the Town Council.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the ward councillor of Broadoak and Uphill advise Uphill Village Society that the land at the rear of the Uphill public toilet block is available for their use and could accommodate a shed for storage.</p>
219.	<p><b>Monthly Financial Reports:-</b></p> <p>The financial reports had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><b>a) For Approval</b> Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for July, August and September 2014</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the schedules be received and approved.</p> <p><b>b) For Noting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Bank Reconciliations for July 2014</li> <li>ii) Budgetary Control Report for July 2014</li> <li>iii) Bank Interest Report for July, and 2014</li> <li>iv) Schedule of Receipted Income for July 2014</li> <li>v) Bank Reconciliations for August 2014</li> <li>vi) Budgetary Control Report for August 2014</li> <li>vii) Bank Interest Report for August 2014</li> <li>viii) Schedule of Receipted Income for August 2014</li> <li>ix) Bank Reconciliations for September 2014</li> <li>x) Budgetary Control Report for September 2014</li> <li>xi) Bank Interest Report for September 2014</li> <li>xii) Schedule of Receipted Income for September 2014</li> <li>xiii) Income Analysis</li> </ul> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the reports be received and noted.</p> <p><b>c) Overspend report for July, August and September 2014</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Overspend report be received and approved.</li> <li>2. The Overspend report be included under item <b>a)</b> of the Monthly financial Reports in the future.</li> </ul>
220.	<p><b>To note Final Audited Accounts for year ended 2013/2014</b></p> <p>The Final Audited Account from the external auditor had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the annual return for the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 be received and approved.</p>

221.	<p><b>Standing Orders 35 - Admission of Public and Press to Meetings:</b></p> <p><i>(35.1) The public and the press shall be admitted to all meetings of the Council and its Committees and Sub-Committees, which may, however, temporarily exclude the public or the press or both by means of the following resolution: 'That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.'</i></p> <p><i>(35.2) The Council, committee or sub-committee shall state the special reason for exclusion.</i></p> <p>The Chairman recommended that the public and press be excluded from the following agenda item due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted and the disclosure by name of the defaulter.</p> <p>Debate ensued on whether this agenda item should be accredited privacy. A judgement had already been applied on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014 by HM Courts and the defaulter's name documented.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> 'That the debate on the agenda item 'Bad Debt' be held in public.</p>
222.	<p><b>Bad Debt</b></p> <p>The report of the Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda as a confidential paper.</p> <p>The debt in question was incurred in January 2012 and to-date had not been paid. Members were advised of the course of action already undertaken to recover the debt as outlined in the Responsible Financial Officer's report and instructions were requested on how to proceed further.</p> <p>Debate ensued on costs that would be incurred in retrieving the debt which would far outweigh the debt. It was, however, considered a matter of principle. The Town Council could not risk further non-payment and present the impression that it would not act against defaulters if the debt was small. Members recognised that it would not be an easy course of action considering the difficulties already experienced but were confident that the defaulter would be found eventually.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the outstanding bad debt of £110 be pursued and recovered.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.32 pm.</p>

Signed: ..... Dated: .....  
Chairman