

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE  
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD AT THE BLAKEHAY THEATRE ON  
MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

**Meeting Commenced:** 7:01 pm

**Meeting Concluded:** 9:21 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Alan Peak (Chairman), Roger Bailey (S), Mark Canniford, Sarah Codling, Dave Dash, Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter, Tim Taylor and Helen Thornton.

**IN ATTENDANCE :** Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk Operational Services), Fiona Walsh (Finance Officer), Molly Maher (Senior Development Officer) and Councillor Peter Crew (non voting member)

<b>227</b>	<b>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</b>  Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Fox who was substituted by Roger Bailey. Councillor Sarah Codling had informed that she would be slightly late.
<b>228</b>	<b>To receive Declarations of Interest</b>  There were no declarations of interest received.
<b>229</b>	<b>To approve the minutes of the Policy &amp; Finance Committee Meeting held on the 17<sup>TH</sup> October 2022</b>  The minutes had been previously circulated.  <b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Robert Payne <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Tim Taylor  A vote was taken and <b>carried</b> . Accordingly, it was:  <b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.  <i>Councillor Ian Porter entered the meeting at 7:03pm</i>
<b>230</b>	<b>Monthly Financial Reports: July &amp; August 2022</b>  <b>a) For Approval</b> Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure  <b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Mark Canniford <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Robert Payne  A vote was taken and <b>carried</b> . Accordingly, it was:

Policy & Finance Committee 10th December 2022

**RESOLVED:** That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for September & October 2022 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
- vi. Overspend report

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

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

**231 Town Council Charges**

The Deputy Town Clerk following work with service managers and spending officers recommended an increase in the proposed charges to recognise the increased cost in running services as such a 10% increase was suggested for other service areas. and these were circulated with the agenda.

In relation to the Cemetery it was confirmed that a comparative exercise within the local area had been undertaken to be able to identify suggested areas of increase to charges for cemetery services. A decision was required on the charges for the burial of children in Milton Road Cemetery. The comparison carried out highlighted that most other cemeteries do charge for infant internment. Compared to other cemeteries of a similar size, Milton Road was in general much cheaper. It was therefore recognised that charges should be increased where a significant difference was observed.

Debate ensued. The accuracy of comparison with cemeteries in more affluent areas was questioned. Weston Crematorium was also included in the comparison and they were significantly more expensive. As there had not been many children interred previously, the potential income was too low to consider disrupting the current policy.

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

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

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. To keep the burial of children under the age of five free of charge.
- 2. To approve the Town Council charges for the year 2023/2024 as reported.

**232 To recommend a Draft Budget for 2023/2024 to the Council**

The draft budget had been previously circulated with the agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that budget setting had been difficult this year due to a large increase in staffing costs as a result of national negotiated pay increases in 2022 / 2023, insurance costs and fuel costs as other examples. A Medium-Term Financial Plan covering a 5-year period had been taken to Expenditure and Governance, with the option to bring a secondary budget with cost savings to the meeting but they had decided this was unnecessary, and felt it should be debated at Policy and Finance accordingly. The Deputy Town Clerk went through the budget in detail and advised of large increases

on each page of the budget, with the following suggestions for services areas raised:

**Allotments** – CPI was added on top of maintenance costs to ensure adequate funding  
**Blakehay Theatre** – The proposed budget did not currently allow for expansion, only continuation of current service. Members were advised that they may wish to consider expansion of service which was hard to do with the current allocation of resources at the Theatre.

**Capital Works** – it was suggested that the budget be increased to £175,000 to allow for the increase of material costs.

**Civic** – the proposed budget included an increase in catering costs, a 1 off in year event for the Coronation and chauffeur costs.

**Community Services** – Weston in Bloom provision had been decreased. There was a large capital requirement in CCTV provision, with the contract period coming to an end next year.

*Councillor Sarah Codling entered the meeting at 7:27pm*

**Democratic Representation** – Election costs and increased training costs had been allowed for.

**Environmental** – it was suggested that the £100,000 budget for Climate Change could be reduced, but that £48,000 had already been committed with existing contracts and works, and an additional £25,000 was required for HQ in line with the roadmap to zero.

**Milton Road Cemetery** – there was an increase in graving digging costs, and a reduction in income due to the lack of space remaining in the cemetery.

**Weston Museum** – Overhead charges were high, with the NNDR still under review. The South West Heritage Trust were noted as having a substantial cost. Learning and events were, due to the nature of the service, a large outgoing with little income but they brought a lot of footfall to the museum and take heritage awareness out into the community.

**Old Town Quarry** – costs had been based off of the Civic Society's last set of accounts but these would need a full review during the year prior to the Quarry being transferred

**Other costs and income** - £50,000 was recommended to replenish general reserves, with a requirement to cover PWLB repayments for the purchase of HQ. It was suggested that the reserves be broken down to include revenue surplus reserves and capital reserves. This would still keep reserves within the recommended rate and enable improved financial governance.

**Parks and Play Areas** – essential maintenance was required at the splash park.

**Planned Maintenance** – CPI was added to the previous year's figures.

**Planning** – there was a slight increase in overhead charges.

**Strategic Planning** – professional fees had been reduced, but an amount was still required to be able to carry out rebuild surveys for all sites.

**Street Furniture** – Charges needed to increase to allow for the increase in fuel. The income from dog bins was now in the main covering the cost of waste removal from all sites.

**Toilets** – there would be no NNDR next year.

**Tourism** – advertising costs had been reduced, and the difficulty in raising income from the website and through window advertisements was recognised. equipment purchase provision had been included to cover the cost of interactive digital screens for HQ.

**Youth** – there would be a meeting after Christmas to discuss the current SLA with the YMCA but the current provision with CPI had been included.

**Central Services** – a new cost was added for the inclusion of a HR software system.

**Central Grounds Services** – the SLA with Somerset Wood Recycling could be considered, with the rangers able to cover a considerable amount of the work they were currently providing. This could also provide an income opportunity, by providing this service for other parishes.

**Central Operational Services** – there was a reduction in staffing costs, but this was a reallocation to the VIC costs, recognising where staff were utilised.

**HQ Overhead Costs** – the costs presented reflected 3 months spent in Grove House and Grove Lodge, and the remaining 9 months in HQ.

Members went through each page of the budget and decided on additions and exclusions, which include the following:

232.1 Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to remove the £32,088 cost for the Service Level Agreement with Somerset Wood Recycling. They also requested the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk/ RFO to explore identify and bring forward opportunities for more cost effective operations of all council services to include in particular the Blakehay Theatre and Museum.

A number of **AMENDMENTS** were then proposed and debated as follows:

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Sarah Codling

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.2 RESOLVED:**

1. That insurance costs be reduced across the budget from 11.5% to 7.5%.
2. To reduce Capital Work from £175,000 to £145,000.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.3 RESOLVED:** That the 1 off in year event budget of £2,000 be removed from the Civic budget, and be taken from the community events budget.

232.4 It was then also **RESOLVED** by the committee that the Weston in Bloom Budget be reduced from £14,000 to £12,000 recognising the current review and need for sustainable options in the town. Members also expressed a wish to allow a 'grant scheme' within this budget to encourage community participation and ownership of areas.

Further amendments ensued as follows:

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Sarah Codling

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Roger Bailey

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

**232.5 RESOLVED:** That the Small and Voluntary Grants budget remain the same.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.6 RESOLVED:** That CCTV Capital works be taken out of the budget, and come out of a capital reserves budget, reducing the CCTV budget to £81,890.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Lisa Pilgrim

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Sarah Codling

That the Community Events budget be reduced by £10,000.

A vote was taken and **lost** (4 for, 5 against). Accordingly, it was:

**232.7 RESOLVED:** That the community events grant budget remain the same at £60,000 to include the Upfest street art provision.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

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

**232.8 RESOLVED:** That Blue Plaque budget be reduced to £1,000.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.9 RESOLVED:** That the environmental budget be reduced to £75,000.

*Peter Crew left the meeting at 8:52pm*

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.10 RESOLVED:** That the £50,000 for general reserves be removed from the budget, and instead that £15,000 (approximately, exact figure to be confirmed ahead of the final Council Budget setting meeting) be added for PWLB loan repayments.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.11 RESOLVED:** That the EMRRP budget be kept at £160,000, and the £5,000 provision for a resident's scheme allocation be removed.

Members agreed to reduce the PPM holding budget to £120,000.

*Councillor Peter Crew re-entered the meeting at 8:55pm*

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.12 RESOLVED:** That the professional fees budget be reduced to £10,000 for 2023/2024, and that the surplus from this year's professional fees budget be put in an Ear Marked Reserve.

Members then unanimously **resolved** to reduce the Tourism advertising to £9,000, increase the website income to £15,000 and remove the £10,000 equipment purchase cost for touchscreens. It was further agreed to reduce the training budget for Central

*Councillor Sarah Codling left the meeting at 9:11pm*

With the above amendments, the budget increase was at 12.06%, the precept band D at 265.67 and the precept increase at 10.81%.

*Councillor Sarah Codling re-entered the meeting at 9:14pm*

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ian Porter

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

**232.13 RESOLVED:** That the draft budget, incorporating the above changes, be recommended to the Town Council for approval on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2022.

**233 Procurement for HQ other works**

The report of the council's Surveyor had previously been circulated with the agenda.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the meeting that, following on from the EOI stage of the procurement and the subsequent work to produce specifications for the work streams being finalised (for the Mechanical and Electrical (M+E) works and the internal alterations at HQ), the council's professional services consultants had felt that there was too much overlap between the two contracts. As such following discussion with the Town Clerk and reporting to Policy & Finance Committee the decision had been taken to combine the contracts. The combined contract opportunity had then been issued to all contractors who had expressed interest in either contract

Five expression of interests had been received but two potential contractors later decided to withdraw. Three tender returns were still expected, however due to unforeseen circumstances causing delays with two of the potential contractors, it had been necessary to extend the return date to ensure the council had competitive bids to consider, and this had been agreed in liaison with the Town Clerk.

Accordingly, it was not possible for the Committee to make a decision at this time but the next meeting was not until February. Therefore, in order to avoid undue delay in the HQ project, a decision was needed regarding either delegated responsibility or to hold an additional Policy and Finance Meeting in early January.

Members unanimously felt that a meeting of the entire committee was unnecessary as the project was being monitored adequately through various channels.

The Town Clerk strongly recommended that the creation of a sub-committee of either 3 or 5 members would be prudent as a minimum for this contract award.

It was then:

**RESOLVED** (nem con): that a Special Policy and Finance Sub-Committee consisting of the three group leaders be created and meet on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> January to consider the three tenders and to award a contract

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.21 pm.

Signed.....6.....Dated.....

