

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2014**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 9.55 pm

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm L Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Responsible Financial Officer) Helen Morton (Finance Officer), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer), Bethan Evans (Weston & Somerset Mercury), Ben Nichols and David Cordingley (Members of the public).

Before the commencement of the meeting the Chairman invited Ben Nichols and David Cordingley to address the meeting as members of the public. David introduced himself as a friend representing Ben Nichols as he suffered from Aspergers and was not confident in presenting to the Council. David explained that Ben wanted to present his idea to the Town Council rather than North Somerset Council because he felt that they had a better connection with the local people.

The idea was for a 'Taxi card' scheme which would allow elderly, disabled people who were unable to catch the bus to call a taxi at a discounted price. This scheme is already running in Dundee which works well and is subsidised by the Council (£2 off the fare price). After speaking to local taxi drivers in Weston, it was apparent that the running 'a like for like' scheme would not be possible as taxi drivers simply could not afford to subsidise fares and so it would fall to the Town Council to subsidise. It was suggested that a pilot test for the scheme could be run on Worlebury hillside and the Council were then asked for their views on the possibility of subsidising the 'Taxi card' scheme.

Councillors were complimentary of the idea of the scheme but had concerns regarding the impact on officers' time, finances and how the scheme would be controlled to avoid misuse. It was suggested that the scheme needed to be extended to younger disabled people also. The Chairman advised that the scheme would be taken to the Expenditure & Governance Working party for consideration in January and that they would be informed of any decision.

The Chairman thanked both Ben Nichols and David Cordingley for addressing the meeting and they left at 7.12 p m.

294	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tim Taylor who was substituted by Councillor Mike Lyall.</p> <p>It was noted that Councillor Mark Canniford would be late joining the meeting.</p>
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295	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest received.</p>
296	<p>To approve Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 20th October 2014</p> <p>The Minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Sonia Russé SECONDED BY: Councillor Michal Kus</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.</p>
297	<p>The minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance</p> <p>a) To note the minutes of the Working Party to review Expenditure & Governance held on the 3rd November 2014</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda and it was noted that they were draft until approved.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received and noted.</p>
298	<p>Monthly Financial Reports:-</p> <p>The financial reports had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>298.1 a) For Approval Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for October 2014</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the schedule be received and approved.</p> <p>298.2 b) For Noting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Bank Reconciliations for October 2014 ii) Budgetary Control Report for October 2014 iii) Bank Interest Report for October 2014 iv) Schedule of Receipted Income for October 2014 v) Income Analysis <p>RESOLVED: That the reports be received and noted.</p>
299	<p>Review of Service Level Agreements</p> <p>299.1 Somerset Wood Recycling</p> <p>The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda. It recommended approval of a budget uplift of £4000 to bring the SLA value to an annual figure of £1200 for the period April 1st 2015 to 31st March 2016 and agreement to an extension to the SLA.</p>

	<p>The Town Clerk added that the Council were effectively getting three people for the price of one and that the Grounds Manger’s request was sensible.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>299.1.1 To approve a budget uplift of £4000 to bring the SLA value to an annual figure of £1200.</p> <p>299.1.2 To agree an extension to the SLA for the period April 1st 2015 to 31st March 2016.</p> <p>299.2 Town Centre Partnership The report of the Responsible Financial Officer on the Weston Town Centre Partnership SLA Annual Review 2012-2016 was circulated at the meeting.</p> <p>The report requested members to note the Weston Town Centre Partnership SLA Annual Review 2012-2016 and to consider the proposal for inclusion within the SLA for the year 2015/2016 for the Town Centre Partnership to update parts of the Love Weston website.</p> <p>The overall cost of the SLA for 2015/2016 would remain the same at £17,145 (+ CPI).</p> <p>The Town Clerk informed that the Town Centre Partnership did provide valuable support to the Town Council, in particular with events such as the Christmas Lights and Armed Forces Day, and they contributed financially to the Love Weston website. However, he aired caution with the proposal for Love Weston website updating.</p> <p>A request had been made to the Town Centre Partnership for their business directory to be supplied so it could be published on the website.</p> <p><i>At this point in the meeting Councillor Sonia Russé declared a non-pecuniary interest as a trustee of the Town Centre Partnership.</i></p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>299.2.1 To note the Annual Review 2012-2016 to the Weston Town Centre Partnership SLA.</p> <p>299.2.2 To decline the proposal for updating of parts of the Love Weston website.</p>
<p>330</p>	<p>Review of extension of John West Contractors Contract The report of the Responsible Financial Officer was circulated at the meeting; which recommended that the contract be extended by 2 years, subject to Key Performance Indicators being received and reviewed by the Expenditure & Governance Working Party as being acceptable.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer explained that the reason for bringing it before the committee at this time was because if the Council did not wish to</p>

	<p>renew the contract, then it would allow time for a full Procurement process to be undertaken.</p> <p><i>At this point in the meeting Councillor Peter Fox declared a non-pecuniary interest as his son-in-law was employed by John West.</i></p> <p>RESOLVED: That the contract be extended by 2 years subject to KPIs being received and reviewed by the Expenditure & Governance Working Party as being acceptable.</p>
<p>301</p>	<p>Local Authorities Data Transparency Code</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Data Transparency Code was an extension to the existing requirements of legislation to publish various information, including the Local Government Acts plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012) • Environmental Information Regulations 2004 • Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 • Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community Regulations 2009 • Section 15 of the Audit Commission Act 1998 <p>The Town Clerk informed that complying with the code's requirements had an impact on the workload of officers and in particular the Finance team. Available from the Town Clerk was a full appendix of the code which detailed the requirements. There were concerns over the impact of this on officers but the Council must comply with the legislation.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that this had had a big impact on the Finance Team, they were currently working towards the first deadline of the 31st December 2014 for expenditure over £500 and procurement, and there was a further deadline on 2nd February to meet. They were working with the Council's accountants to achieve the deadlines but once the systems were in place, the workload should become more manageable.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
<p>302</p>	<p>Confirmation of the re-opening of the Boulevard Post Office branch</p> <p>A letter dated 5th November 2014 from the post offices' Regional Network Manager on the decision to reopen the new Boulevard post office had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>It had been requested that the Council get involved in the consultation process for the relocation of the Regent Street post office as it was currently an embarrassment as the town's main post office and not fit for purpose.</p>

	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>232.1 That the reopening of the new Boulevard Post Office be noted and welcomed.</p> <p>232.2 That the Town Clerk relays the Town Council’s request to become involved with the consultation plans for the Regent Street post office.</p>
<p>303</p>	<p>The Chairman brought forward items 11 and 12 to be discussed at this point in the meeting.</p> <p>Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations The Responsible Financial Officer advised that the Financial Regulations were not yet available as a phone call was awaited from the bank regarding releasing of Bacs payments and so they would be reported directly to full Council in January 2015.</p> <p>The Town Clerk informed that Standing Orders had already been reviewed by the Expenditure & Governance Working Party and would go direct, together with the Financial Regulations, to full Council in January 2015 to lie on the table for one cycle until any further changes could be made and finally approved by the Council at its March meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be directly reported to the full Town Council meeting on 19th January 2015.</p>
<p>304</p>	<p>304.1 Standing Orders 35 - Admission of Public and Press to Meetings: <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> <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.</p> <p>Debate ensued on whether this agenda item should be accredited privacy. The figures detailed in the report had already been included with the attached draft budget.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the debate on the agenda item ‘Quotations for Dog Bin Emptying’ be held in public.</p> <p>304.2 Quotations for Dog Bin Emptying The Town Clerk’s report recommending that the quotation from Bin-it Dog Waste Solutions be accepted at a price of £3.98 per empty per bin had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p>

	<p>It was questioned whether surrounding Parish Councils such as Bleadon and Kewstoke had been asked to join the contract. The Town Clerk informed that they had not at this stage, however were very welcome to, once the contract was established and they could be informed of this.</p> <p>References from other Councils had been received and it was noted that North Somerset Council had declined from quoting for the contract.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that Bin-It were a small company which did carry risks regarding response times and contingency plans. However there were few other viable options to make savings and so far as possible these concerns would be addressed with the company.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the quotation from Bin-it Dog Waste Solutions be accepted at a price of £3.98 per empty per bin.</p>
<p>305</p>	<p>Budget 2015/16</p> <p>A draft budget had been previously circulated with the agenda. The Chairman informed that due to very last minute changes received that day, an amended draft budget was proposed and copies had been circulated to members at the start of the meeting.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer apologised for the lateness of these changes. She explained that the main changes were to election cost figures, which had been negotiated by the Town Clerk to achieve a reduction and changes to the North Somerset Council grant figure. This was still only an estimated cost but had been verbally agreed that it would not change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first change was on page 7 of the budget - Election costs • Second change was on page 10 of the budget - Reduction in NSC Grant at 8.7% • Third change was on page 19 of the budget - £6,000 Reported difference from 2014/15 • Fourth change was on page 20 – NSC Grant Awarded for 2014/15 <p>With these amendments the difference in cost to Band D from 2014/15 was 2.5%. If the Council wanted to achieve a 0% increase then they would need to find £36,000 of further savings. The Responsible Financial Officer suggested that £30k could be taken from General Reserves for the repair of the Cemetery Wall. This could be done regardless of the HLF Bid impact on General Reserves.</p> <p>It was requested that the reduction in NSC grant of £13,279 be taken out of the revenue budget as it would appear to be counted twice. The Responsible Financial Officer advised that the theory behind leaving it in the revenue budget had been to follow the same scheme as last year to build a provision but agreed that the figure could be taken out.</p> <p>Debate ensued.</p>

FIRST AMENDMENT

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Bell
SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

RESOLVED: To remove the reduction in NSC grant of £13,279 to make the balance nil.

SECOND AMENDMENT

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew
SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

RESOLVED: To remove £30,000 from Capital Projects to achieve a reduction and make the balance £10,000.

Budget proposals to amend the budget put forward were circulated at the meeting by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

THIRD AMENDMENT

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne
SECONDED BY: Councillor Mike Bell

Additional budget costs:

1. Scrap Water Park entry fee (cost £25,000)
2. Scrap charge for toilets (cost £6,500)
3. Scrap tourist bus, saving £20,000 and increase tourist grants by £20,000 instead, to provide a fund to support existing events such as the Sand Sculptures, the Food Festival and attract new events to encourage visitors.

Additional savings:

1. No new signage at play areas (saving £2,500)
2. No new bus shelters this year (saving £3,500)
3. Don't introduce Trip Advisor functionality to Love Weston this year (saving £1,200)
4. Reduce growth in tourism advertising by £5,000.
5. Reduce extra security to public toilets to Grove Park only (saving £6,885)
6. Remove internal charges for Love Weston website to Museum and Blakehay, but maintain advertising income target.
7. Any matched funding required for Skatepark to come from reserves (saving £10,000)

The Chairman commented that the Town Council were in conversations with North Somerset Council regarding staffing of the Water Park and that the concession was up for renewal the following year which would bring income

opportunities so to scrap the Water Park entry fee at this time would hinder these arrangements. In respect of the toilet charge, it has been proven across the country that a minimal charge for the use of the toilet deters damage and that the Council was currently looking at a solution to make the toilets free of charge for disabled people.

Councillor Mark Canniford joined the meeting at 8.10 pm.

In favour of the Amendment, it was argued that the income from the toilets was derisory. The spirit of these proposals was to raise a discount for the residents of the town without putting up their council tax. These proposals would not affect any plans the Council had with North Somerset Council in relation to the Water Park. The idea of charging for public toilets was considered penny pinching. Running the Tourist Bus again was a case of priority, it had not done as well as envisaged and until the plans for a land train came to fruition, the Tourist Bus should be removed. Spending money on tourism related events would be a better use of the money.

Debate ensued. The view was expressed that the Water Park should be made free for local residents but not for visitors from elsewhere. The proposer of the Amendment agreed to take this on board. The provision of bus shelters should not be removed as this was an invaluable service to the public, in particular the elderly.

Some members were against scrapping the Water Park entry fee. There was a need to fund staff on the site to keep things in order and prevent damage. Another viewpoint was that people respect things more if they have to pay for them. It was queried whether there would be a cost for making the toilets free entry?

The Responsible Financial Officer advised that the pay units could only be removed by the factory and that there was no room on the doors for door handles, so there would be a one-off cost of approximately £20,000 to implement a decision to make the toilets free of charge.

The Committee was advised that there would be no savings to be made by removing internal charges for Love Weston website to Museum and Blakehay because the computer licences would still need to be paid for.

The Chairman decided that each element of the Third Amendment should be voted on individually the committee:

Additional costs:

1. Scrap Water Park entry fee for local residents (cost £25,000)

A vote was taken and lost 3 For and 7 Against. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: LOST

2. Scrap the charge for the toilets (cost £6,500)

A vote was taken and was 6 For/6 Against. The Chairman declined to use his casting vote. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: That the proposal to Scrap charge for toilets (cost £6,500) lay on the table and not be recommended to Town Council for consideration.

3. Scrap the budget for the tourist bus, saving £20,000 and increase tourist grants by £20,000 instead to provide a fund to support existing events such as the sand Sculptures, the Food Festival and attract new events to encourage visitors.

A vote was taken and CARRIED. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: To scrap the budget for the tourist bus, saving £20,000 and increase tourist grants by £20,000 instead.

Proposed Savings:

1. No new signage at play areas (saving £2,500) – unless required by HSE.

A vote was taken and lost 3 For and 8 Against. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: LOST

2. No new bus shelters this year (saving £3,500)

A vote was taken and lost 0 For and 8 Against. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: LOST

3. Don't introduce Trip Advisor functionality to Love Weston this year (saving £1,200)

A vote was taken and lost. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: LOST

4. Reduce growth in tourism advertising by £5,000

A vote was taken and lost. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: LOST

5. Reduce extra security to public toilets to Grove Park only (saving £6,885)

A vote was taken and carried 7 For and 0 Against. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED: To reduce extra security to public toilets to Grove Park only (saving £6,885) agreed budget to be £2,000

6. Remove internal charges for Love Weston website to Museum and Blakehay, but maintain adverting income target.

	<p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To remove internal charges for Love Weston website to Museum and Blakehay, but maintain the adverting income target (cost neutral overall).</p> <p>7. <u>Any matched funding required for Skatepark to come from reserves</u> (saving £10,000)</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That any match funding required for Skatepark is to come from reserves (saving £10,000)</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer noted the amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in Capital Projects of £30,000 to make the balance £10,000 • Reduction in NSC grant of £13,279 to make the balance nil • Increase in Tourism Grants of £20,000 to make the balance £22,000 • Reduction in Tourist Bus of £20,000 to make the balance nil. • Reduction in security provision in Toilets of £6,885 to make the balance £2,000 • Reduction in Skate Park Match funding of £10,000 to make the balance nil <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>▪ Band D numbers</td> <td style="text-align: right;">23,842.40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>▪ NSC Grant @ 8.7% reduced</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£194,020.75</td> </tr> </table> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer advised that with the above agreed amendments and confirmation of the Band D numbers and NSC Grant reduction the overall effect was a precept requirement of £1,365,491 and a Band D decrease of £1.00</p> <p>A vote was taken to recommend the amended budget to the Town Council. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Michal Kus</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the circulated draft budget, incorporating the above amendments, be recommended to the Town Council on 19th January 2014 for approval.</p>	▪ Band D numbers	23,842.40	▪ NSC Grant @ 8.7% reduced	£194,020.75
▪ Band D numbers	23,842.40				
▪ NSC Grant @ 8.7% reduced	£194,020.75				
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.32 pm.</p>				

Signed: Dated:
Chairman