

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 23RD FEBRURAY 2015**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.45 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Peter Crew (Chairman), Alan Peak (Vice Chairman), Roger Bailey, Mark Canniford, Peter Fox, Michal Kus, 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), Sally Heath (Blakehay Manager) and Becky Parker (Weston & Somerset Mercury).

361	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mike Bell.</p>
362	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest received.</p>
363	<p>To approve Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on the 23rd February 2015</p> <p>The Minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>It was queried why the ‘Taxicard’ presentation had not been referred to the Expenditure & Governance Working Party for consideration as stated in the Minutes. The Town Clerk informed that he had been trying to find a comparable town that had tested the scheme before bringing it before the Working Party. Dundee with a population of 15,000 made a contribution of £200,000 towards the scheme which was not comparable to Weston-super-Mare Town Council. The presenters had been notified of the situation.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.</p>
364	<p>364.1 Minutes (unapproved) of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 26th January 2015</p> <p>The Minutes were available at the meeting and it was noted that they were draft until approved.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received and noted.</p> <p>364.2 References from the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance</p>

364.2.1 Microshade Managed IT Service

The report of the Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda which requested that Members 'consider the quotations and recommendations from the Expenditure & Governance Working Party in order for procurement of IT solutions for the Council for implementation in April 2015 (budget available)'. Quotations from both Microshade and Compex were attached.

The Town Clerk advised that the subject had been discussed at length by the Expenditure & Governance Working Party. A request had been sought for a further quotation from Aglysis who provided North Somerset Council with their IT system but a response had not been received. Microshade offered bespoke packages to suit the needs of organisations and that of other local Councils. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Expenditure & Governance Working Party along with the Town Clerk and the Finance Officer visited Cirencester Town Council to view the Microshade system which proved to be a very satisfactory visit. The Town Clerk therefore recommended approval of a contract with Microshade and to let the arrangement of the contract commence.

The Responsible Financial Officer informed that there would be a further charge to the quote of an annual £1,200 to host the emails (outlook).

The fees per user were queried within the quotation by Microshade and the Responsible Financial Officer clarified that the fee was per user and that not all users would need all packages. The price was based on what the Council's requirements would be at each site.

Councillor Tim Taylor joined the meeting at 7.14 pm

The upgrading of hardware was then questioned and the Responsible Financial Officer advised that Microshade had confirmed that hardware would not need to be replaced and that all packages would be automatically upgraded. The Council's spend to date over the last 5 years on hardware including a server was in excess of £20,000 and the Council currently paid approx £8,500 per year for its IT.

One of the advantages of the Microshade system was that users could log onto the system from any location that had an internet connection.

The Responsible Financial Officer informed that Microshade were SLCC approved and its Directors had been the Town Council's-Year end Accountant ~~Auditors~~ for many years and had demonstrated a history of good service. Recommendations from other Town Council's had also been received.

The financial difference between the 5 year and 2/3 year contracts were queried and the Responsible Financial Officer informed that they had

been advised by Microshade that the 5 year contract would be more cost effective because of the variance in the migration and set up costs. However, over a 1-5 year period the total cost would be £12,223 and over a 1-3 year period the total cost would be £11,417 which resulted in a £800 variance. Responsible Financial Officer explained that there was no preference on the length of contract to be selected and informed that the benefit of the 5 year contract was that the contract could be terminated at annual intervals.

For clarity, it was confirmed that a 2/3 year contract would be in total cost £28,000 and a 5 year contract would be in total cost £32,000, resulting in a potential saving of £4,000.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michal Kus

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

RESOLVED: To award the 2/3year contract to Microshade for procurement of IT solutions for the Council for implementation in April 2015.

364.2.2 To approve the Fees & Charges for the year 2015/2016

The report of the Responsible Finance Officer for the Fees & Charges for the year 2015/2016 had been previously circulated with the agenda.

The report recommended approval of the Fees & Charges for the year 2015/16. Direction and consideration was also sought for the hire of the meeting room at Grove House and the inclusion of Blakehay charges as outlined under a separate agenda item for the forthcoming year.

The Chairman informed that the Fees & Charges before the Committee had been discussed by members of the Expenditure & Governance Working Party and it had been recommended and agreed that users of the Museum affected by the closure should be allowed to hire the Blakehay's Upper and Lower studios' at the same rate, excluding the Auditorium.

The credit card charge was queried and it was confirmed that the charge was per transaction and that to date there had been 235 transactions this year and that this included debit cards.

There was concern that charging for the use of debit cards could be losing potential bookings.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the Fees & Charges for the year 2015/2016 with the proviso that users of the Museum affected by the closure should be

	<p>allowed to hire the Blakehay’s Upper and Lower studios at the same rate as their hire fees for the Museum in 2014/15.</p> <p>2. To retain the credit charge and to monitor the payment methods for theatre bookings in order to review in one year.</p> <p>364.2.3 Partnership working with the Seafront Events Team</p> <p>The Chairman reported for noting purposes that the SLA (Service Level Agreement) with the Seafront Events Team had been verbally agreed but not signed as yet. This would be a one year deal and would include Weston Welcomer’s running the Water Park for the 2015 season and that once the kiosk vendors contract ended at the end of the 2015 season (October) then the possibility of running the kiosk could be considered for 2016. The use of the front of the Tropicana for a possible T.I.C (Tourist Information Centre) service to include a display for the Museum which would be staffed by Welcomers was also a consideration. However this was subject to further discussion and a site visit to the Tropicana.</p> <p>There was concern regarding North Somerset Council’s lack of long term plans for the Tropicana.</p> <p>It was argued that the Town Council be representative of the whole of Weston-super-Mare with regards to Tourism and not just the Seafront. The Chairman informed that the Council’s tourism strategy was also intended to promote other areas within the town and that this had recently been demonstrated with the promotion of Grove Village.</p> <p>It was reported that the BID were also rumoured to be moving into the Tropicana front building and so it was hoped that this would help towards partnership working in relation to Tourism for Weston.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.</p>
<p>365</p>	<p>Monthly Financial Reports:-</p> <p>a) For Approval</p> <p>i) Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for November and December 2014 and January 2015</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the schedule be received and approved.</p> <p>b) For Noting</p> <p>i) Bank Reconciliations for November 2014</p> <p>ii) Budgetary Control Report for November 2014</p> <p>iii) Bank Interest Report for November 2014</p> <p>iv) Schedule of Received Income for November 2014</p> <p>v) Bank Reconciliations for December 2014</p> <p>vi) Budgetary Control Report for December 2014</p>

	<p>vii) Bank Interest Report for December 2014 viii) Schedule of Receipted Income for December 2014</p> <p>ix) Bank Reconciliations for January 2015 x) Budgetary Control Report for January 2015 xi) Bank Interest Report for January 2015 xii) Schedule of Receipted Income for January 2015</p> <p>xiii) Income Analysis</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the reports be received and noted.</p> <p>c) Overspend report for November and December 2014 and January 2015</p> <p>RESOLVED: That that there was no overspend to be reported as at January 2015.</p>
<p>366</p>	<p>Consultation on relocation of the Regent Street Post Office</p> <p>Correspondence from the Post Office consulting on the relocation of the Regent Street Post Office had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Town Council welcomes and supports the relocation of the Regent Street Post Office to 84/86 Regent Street.</p>
<p>367</p>	<p>Electricity dispute at former Barcode Premises</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda which advised that a decision was required.</p> <p>The Town Clerk gave the background on the situation and advised of the current position which was that a demand for £32,473, including £27,261 unit charges plus interest and a £100 late payment charge, was received without any warning on Wednesday 28th January from EDF's Solicitors. The Council had made a budget provision for this of £51,379 although £25,000 of this had been committed towards funding the surrender of the lease.</p> <p>The Town Clerk had sought advice from FDC Law, the Council's solicitors, and a specialist Counsel's Opinion had been sought. The legal advice was unfortunately that the Council was liable under the Utilities Act to pay EdF direct for the electricity used even though the Lease created a liability to pay through the Landlord.</p> <p>A further letter from EDF's Solicitors had been received on the afternoon of the meeting with the information requested by the Town Clerk including a lengthy statutory Scheme which he had not had time to digest in time before the meeting and therefore was not in a position to make a firm recommendation. However a way of making an urgent decision after the Committee meeting needed to be agreed so that the</p>

	<p>situation could be resolved later that week and therefore, the Town Clerk recommended that the Committee nominate the Chairman, Vice Chairman and one other Member to be contactable and consulted on the matter to make an urgent decision.</p> <p>The interest element of £5,000 should if legally possible be contested as the Council were not at fault. The amount requested over a 7 year period was not considered to be unreasonable overall and if the Council could prove meter readings from the period 2010-2014 then a realistic amount could be ascertained. The Council should offer to pay that amount and inform the former Landlord of the payment made.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford</p> <p>RESOLVED: That once a figure for payment had been calculated by the Finance team the Town Clerk be authorised to make an offer of payment to EdF in consultation with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Deputy Leader (or any two of those).</p>
<p>368</p>	<p>Process for dealing with Minor Consultations</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Members instructions were requested on whether the Committee were happy for the Town Clerk to make judgement on any minor consultations received, or alternatively to set up a small sub-committee of three members to meet and consider consultations.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne SECONDED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk make judgement on any minor consultations received by the Town Council.</p>
<p>369</p>	<p>To agree an indemnity to HSBC regarding summer signage</p> <p>Correspondence received from CBRE Limited regarding summer signage installation had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the indemnity to HSBC regarding summer signage, subject to the conditions outlined within the correspondence received from CBRE Limited and that the letter be addressed to the correct authority and consistently referred to within the rest of the document.</p>
<p>370</p>	<p>To note the change of ownership of the Sovereign Centre</p> <p>Correspondence receive from Vixcroft Limited regarding the change of ownership of the Sovereign Centre had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p>

	<p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the change of ownership of the Sovereign Centre be noted.</p>
<p>371</p>	<p>To approve The Treasury Management Policy The Treasury Management Policy had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer advised that the only fundamental change to the policy was the updating of the PWLB.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Policy be approved.</p>
<p>372</p>	<p>The Blakehay Theatre:</p> <p>372.1 Process for Booking</p> <p>The report of the Blakehay Theatre Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><i>Councillor Mark Canniford declared a pecuniary interest and left the meeting at 8.19 pm.</i></p> <p><i>The Chairman left the meeting at 8.19 pm during which the Vice Chairman took the the Chair.</i></p> <p><i>The Chairman re-joined the meeting at 8.21 pm and resumed his place as Chairman of the meeting.</i></p> <p>Section 1 of the report headed changes to the Payment Process for hiring the Blakehay Theatre recommended that hirers be offered the choice of two options:</p> <p>Option 1: 25% Non-refundable Deposit + £100.00 damage deposit on booking and then pay balance 21 days before the event.</p> <p>Option 2: 40% Non-refundable Deposit + £100.00 damage deposit on booking and then balance of hire is deducted from ticket sales after the event or if the ticket sales do not cover these costs, an invoice is then raised for the amount due for hire, less the ticket sales taken.</p> <p>The Theatre Manager informed that non-refundable deposits would really help the situation as normally bookings are made in advance of up to one year and a loss of income results when bookings are cancelled or dates are changed by hirers who are able to recover their deposit. Over the last couple of months a lot of time had been spent in chasing bookings. For example, over the January/February period there had been 58 booking enquiries, 62 provisional bookings made, 42 of which had changed their dates.</p>

	<p>Members agreed that some deposit enforcement needed to be put in place. They were, however, sceptical about enforcing non-refundable deposits on changing of dates as date changes could sometimes be considered beneficial to the Blakehay.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the hirers be offered the choice of two options as follows for the hire of the theatre:</p> <p>Option 1: 25% Non-refundable Deposit + £100.00 damage deposit on booking and then pay balance 21 days before the event.</p> <p>Option 2: 40% Non-refundable Deposit + £100.00 damage deposit on booking and then balance of hire is deducted from ticket sales after the event or if the ticket sales do not cover these costs, an invoice is then raised for the amount due for hire, less the ticket sales taken.</p> <p>372.2 Terms and Conditions of Hire</p> <p>Section 2 of the report recommended changes to the Blakehay Theatre’s Terms and Conditions of hire.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Terms and Conditions for hire of the Blakehay Theatre be amended so that cancellation of a hire or a booking result in loss of deposit.</p> <p>372.3 Proposal for Summer Season</p> <p>Section 3 of the Theatre Manager’s report recommended approval of a Summer Season at the Blakehay with two options for consideration.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that the confidential appendix on red paper detailed the financial details of the Proposal and should not be in the public domain until approval. The proposal represented a departure from the normal method of funding for shows which was why it had been brought to Policy and Finance Committee.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer advised that the minute needed to reflect approval of unbudgeted expenditure as the Council would be buying in the show and reclaiming the money back through ticket sales.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the offer of a Summer Season at the Blakehay Theatre by selecting option two of the report for a 14 week run of the ‘Songs from the Shows’ Summer Season and approval of £10,000 unbudgeted expenditure.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45 pm.</p>

Signed: Dated:
 Chairman