

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2016**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: pm

PRESENT: Councillors Clive Webb (Chairman), Roger Bailey, Peter Crew, Mark Canniford, Clive Darke, Peter Fox, Michal Kus, Mike Lyall, Richard Nightingale, Robert Payne and Lisa Pilgrim.

IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm L Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Responsible Financial Officer), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer) and Sarah Robinson (Weston & Somerset Mercury).

143.	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Catherine Gibbons with no substitution.</p>
144.	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
145.	<p>To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 22nd August 2016</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer clarified that minute number 89 was for the Cemetery fees and charges to explore income streams through means of advertising.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Clive Darke SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.</p>
146.	<p>To note the minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance 12th September 2016 (unapproved)</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>It was highlighted that approved minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance should come back to the committee for noting.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>146.1 That the draft minutes be noted. 146.2 To include approved minutes on future agendas for noting.</p>

146.2

<p>147.</p>	<p>Monthly Financial Reports</p> <p>The financial reports had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Monthly Financial Reports:</p> <p>a) For Approval</p> <p>i. Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for August 2016</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michal Kus SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey</p> <p>a vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>147.1 RESOLVED: That the expenditure be approved.</p> <p>b) For Noting</p> <p>i. Bank Reconciliations for August 2016 ii. Budgetary Control Report August for 2016 iii. Bank Interest Report for August 2016 iv. Schedule of Receipted Income for August 2016 v. Income Analysis for 2015/16 vi. Overspend: a) Month end overspend report for August 2016 b) Microsahde (IT) report of the Finance Officer c) Cemetery Digital Mapping – Approval of over budget expenditure report of the Responsible Financial Officer</p> <p>It was queried why the cost of the Pear Mapping package detailed in report 5vib) had increased by £1,400. The Responsible Financial Officer explained that it was due to an initial assumption that there would be less than 18,000 graves within the area. The increase in the cost had been queried and clarified by the Grounds Manager. The package was needed as the council's current system which was created voluntarily by the Family History Society, cross referenced with the council's records would not sit on the server on the citrix system, as it was too old. This meant that that the database was not currently backed up securely and was at risk hence the urgency for the Pear mapping package.</p> <p>A member challenged whether this would be value for money for residents. The Responsible Financial Officer reported that the council charged for any family history searches (which was covered within the cemetery fees and charges) and were looking into funding streams which would include the reusing of burial plots. The primary reason for needing the package was so that the council could manage its own records better and that they were secure. The package would provide digital images and would match up with GPS.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Michal Kus</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was: RESOLVED:</p>
-------------	--

	<p>That the reports 5b i – vi be noted.</p> <p>147.2.2 That the reported overspends for reports 5bvi b)Microshade (IT) and 5bvi</p> <p>c) Cemetery Digital Mapping be approved.</p> <p>It was noted that Councillor Clive Darke voted against the motion.</p> <p>At the request of a member the Responsible Financial Officer would email the income analysis figures to committee members and apologised for it not being included with the report due to a computing error.</p> <p>vii. Bad Debt for August 2016 report of the Responsible Financial Officer</p> <p>The RFO advised the committee that the Financial Regulations did make provision for writing off outstanding debt with committee approval; this would remove the debt from the accounts.</p> <p>The Town Clerk reported that none of the measures the council had instructed had had an effect on the debtor and suggested that if the council wished to write off the debt then they could still ban them from making any future bookings at the Blakehay.</p> <p>It was queried if the case had gone to court of which the Town Clerk confirmed it had and that bailiffs had attended the address but had not been able to recover the debt.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer informed that the debt was incurred before the booking process at the Blakehay had changed to receiving money in advance of bookings.</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>147.3 RESOLVED: To write off the debt and black list the debtors Rob Dumbarton and John Butler from using any Town Council facilities.</p>
<p>148.</p>	<p>To receive the Audited Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2016</p> <p>The Audited Accounts and letter from the auditor and the report of the Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that the points made in the auditors' letter were minor comments in relation to presentation only.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Fox RESOLVED:</p> <p>148.1 To note the comments in the letter made by the Auditor.</p>

	To approve the conclusion of the audit for the year ending 31 st March 2016.
149.	<p>Capping of Parish and Town Councils – Consultation</p> <p>The Town Clerk’s report had been previously circulated with the agenda which gave an overview of the consultation. The Town Clerk had prepared a draft response to the consultation questions as set out in the appendix to the report to assist debate.</p> <p>The Town Clerk referred to part 2 of the report which outlined the proposals for capping of parish and town councils. He explained that, while the Town Council would not immediately be affected by the proposals, it did face significant financial challenges including the likely loss of £170,334 Council Tax Benefit grant and therefore they could restrict the Town Council’s ability to respond to the town’s needs in future. He had suggested that, if the Government was intent on capping, this should be at a much higher level of, say, £150 on a Band D property which represented approximately 10% of the average total Band D Council Tax.</p> <p>Debate ensued. Concern was expressed that whether or not the council approved of these capping measures, it would in time be forced upon them. Other members felt that the council were well under the precept figures and that it would not affect them any time soon and that the council should oppose these capping measures.</p> <p>The view was expressed that constitutionally Whitehall would be making the decisions and taking it away from the elected councils and that this was wrong.</p> <p>A member expressed the view that it was reasonable for the Government to set a limit on parish and town council spending.</p> <p>The Town Council’s Council Tax precept resulted in an average Band D household paying the sum of £66.57 per year, or a shade over £2 per week. Some other larger town councils charged between £100-£150 and in a few cases over £200 so Weston-super-Mare Town Council’s precept was of a reasonably low level of which it was proud.</p> <p>Further debate ensued regarding whether capping at any level was acceptable.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Darke</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk on behalf of the Town Council communicate that they oppose any capping of Parish and Town Councils on the grounds that they wanted to stay in touch with their local community and run the council on that basis.</p> <p>It was noted that Councillor Roger Bailey voted against this motion.</p>

<p>150.</p>	<p>Town Council Insurance</p> <p>To receive the report of the Responsible Financial Officer which requested the committee to consider the extension of the current 3 year insurance plan by a further 2 years at the current rate offered by Aviva.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer reported that she did not have a preference either way and confirmed that WPS were the insurance brokers on behalf of Aviva only.</p> <p>Debate ensued. The Town Clerk advised that there were only four companies that specialised in town and parish council insurance.</p> <p>In answer to a question the Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that the market was tested 2 years ago.</p> <p>Members noted that insurance costs had risen in the last two years and felt that the proposal was a good deal.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Richard Nightingale</p> <p>RESOLVED: To extend the current 3 year insurance plan by a further 2 years at the current rate offered by Aviva.</p>
<p>151.</p>	<p>Blakehay Theatre</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer's report had been previously circulated with the agenda. The report recommended the use of general reserves to Town Council for approval on 21st November 2016 for the project based in the revised estimates of £55,000 received.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer needed a committee decision to specifically record that the council wanted £55,000 to come from general reserves prior to awarding the contract.</p> <p>It was queried why the estimate had increased from £40,000 to £55,000 and the Responsible Financial Officer reported that this was due to the sprung floor not being included within the planned maintenance schedule for the year 2016/2017. Other costs included the upgrade of the removing walling to meet fire regulations.</p> <p>The Blakehay Supervisor had communicated that the works could begin between January-April 2017 and so a resolution from Town Council for the use of general reserves was needed to commence the project. Procurement process had commenced with Expressions of Interest having been received. Companies House checks were being undertaken before the official tender documents could be sent.</p> <p>From recollection a member recalled that the council had approved the use of general reserves for the project and the name of the Upper Studio was not</p>

	<p>agreed to be the Jill Dando suite. It was also noted that the minutes stated ‘recommended’ when as town council it should state ‘resolved’.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor Michal Kus</p> <p>RESOLVED: To recommend the use of General Reserves to Town Council on the 21st November 2016 for the project based in the revised estimates of £55,000 received.</p> <p><i>Councillor Lisa Pilgrim left the meeting at 8.00 pm</i></p>
<p>152.</p>	<p>Request to maintain two additional Dog Bins</p> <p>The Community and Grounds Administrator’s report had been previously circulated with the agenda. The report asked the committee to decide whether the council would meet the cost of emptying 2 dog bins on a once or twice weekly basis should Holy Trinity Church purchase and install the bins.</p> <p>A member was in support of approving the request. However it was the number of bins the committee needed to decipher.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer informed that this would be an overspend to the current dog bin emptying budget provision.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Darke</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>152.1 To approve the overspend of emptying one additional dog bin once per week at a yearly cost of £206.96. 152.2 That Holy Trinity Church be written to advising them of this, with the caveat that if, after a monitored period, a second bin was needed then this could happen with the second bin also provided by the church as agreed; noting that it would however require Policy & Finance to approve the emptying cost of this second bin.</p>
<p>153.</p>	<p>Public Conveniences – To extend existing contracts</p> <p>A recommendation was received from the Expenditure & Governance Working Party to extend the existing toilet cleaning and maintenance contracts for 12 months.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer reported that since the appointment of the new contractors there had been no public complaints relating to the cleanliness of the toilets.</p> <p>A member was disappointed that option 4 of the report discussed at the Expenditure & Governance Working Party, to consider dropping the 20p</p>

	<p>charge for their use, seemed to be dismissed. A serious review of the public conveniences as a whole needed to be undertaken.</p> <p>It was responded that it was a proven historical fact across councils that toilet facilities that required a small charge experienced a decreased level of vandalism. The Police had confirmed that the vandalism previously experienced at Locking Road Car Park and Grove Park was due to a gang that had now moved out of the area.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly it was:</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michal Kus SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>153.1 To extend the cleaning contract with Weston Support Services until the end of the contract period (October 2017) to be brought back to a future meeting for review.</p> <p>153.2 To continue the maintenance contract with John West.</p> <p>It was reported that the cleaning contractors had suggested the need for waste bins in the toilets. Members felt however that installing waste bins may attract vandalism.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that the suggestion had come from the cleaning contractors and had been discussed by the Expenditure & Governance Working Party. She recalled that the suggestion was made to install waste bins in toilets without baby change units.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the matter of providing waste bins in the toilets without baby change units be referred to the Community Services Committee for a decision.</p>
<p>154.</p>	<p>Procurement of replacement Skate Park</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer’s report had been previously circulated with the agenda. The report outlined the requirements and timescales of the grant award, the proposals for a new site and changes to the project, procurement process to date and the timescale of the project required to meet the terms of the grant award. The report was based on the conclusion that a change of site would necessitate the negotiation and completion of a new Lease, full design of services and access, application for and grant of planning permission, and the approval of Sports England. The timescales for the Sport England grant were extremely tight and as such any consideration of changes to the project could potentially jeopardise the awarded monies agreed.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer added that she had spoken to Sports England regarding the possible change of site and they had confirmed that there could be no movement with the project deadlines, which was very typical of any grant funding ventures. Works would need to commence within 6 months and if a change of site was included this would need to be re submitted to Sport England to give formal approval to the changes to the grant.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer was in communication with the council’s</p>

	<p>surveyor and there was a concern that the infrastructure needed for an alternative site could potentially cost a further £50,000 of which the grant funding could not cover.</p> <p>The Responsible Financial Officer stressed that the design and build brief needed to be sent out that week (w/c 17th October) and that members would need to confirm which site the council wanted to receive design and build proposals for.</p> <p>The Town Clerk informed that the request for a change of site had come from the sports centre as they felt that the skate park would be better situated to the north near the entrance to the allotment ground as other outdoor sports facilities had been planned for there within the redevelopment plans for the site.</p> <p>If the skate park was to move site it may not receive planning permission as it was still a grass area and considering the problems experienced with planning permission for the Hutton Moor allotment site entrance this was a real concern.</p> <p>Debate ensued. It was felt that if the skate park was moved to the suggested site it would have more noise impact on the surrounding residential areas.</p> <p>A member reported that he had been assured by an executive member of North Somerset Council that the planning permission would be granted and that the town council may be affected by the term of the lease at the existing site in the future. However the executive member understood that the town council needed more security from North Somerset to move sites.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Clive Webb SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Fox</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>154.1 To confirm that the Skate Park refurbishment project will remain on the existing site unless North Somerset Council could prepare the alternative site in time with the grant application deadline.</p> <p>154.2 To immediately commence the procurement process on the existing site noting the timescales above in order to meet the Sports England grant requirements.</p> <p>154.3 To nominate the 3 members already nominated by the Tourism & Leisure Committee plus Councillor Robert Payne to sit on the panel alongside 3 or 4 nominated Skate Park users to meet in the week commencing 21st November 2016 to chose a Design and Build contractor for Tourism and Leisure Committee to approve (5^h December 2016).</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30 pm</p>

Signed.....
Chairman

Dated.....