

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
MONDAY 21ST OCTOBER 2019**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.28 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak (Chairman), Roger Bailey, Gill Bute, Ciaran Cronnelly, David Dash, Peter Fox, Robert Payne, Marcia Pepperell (part attendance), Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter, Tim Taylor and Helen Thornton.

IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer).

199	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ray Armstrong with no substitution.</p> <p>The Chairman informed that Councillor Ray Armstrong was in hospital after a fall and that the Town Council had sent their best wishes for a speedy recovery.</p>
200	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
201	<p>To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 19th August 2019</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ian Porter 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>
202	<p>The minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 24th June 2019 (approved) and 9th September (unapproved)</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Councillor Roger Bailey expressed an interest in becoming a member of the Expenditure & Governance Working Party to which he was informed that he could attend any of the meetings as a non-voting member.</p>

	<p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on held 24th June 2019 (approved) and 9th September (unapproved) be noted.</p> <p><i>Councillor Marcia Pepperell joined the meeting at 7.06 pm</i></p>
<p>203</p>	<p>Monthly Financial Reports: July & August 2019</p> <p>a) For Approval Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for July and August be approved.</p> <p>b) For Noting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Bank Reconciliations ii. Budgetary Control Report iii. Bank Interest Report iv. Schedule of Receipted Income v. Income Analysis vi. Overspend Month end report vii. Bad debt report <p>The DTC apologised for the incorrect reports issued for vi Overspend Month end and that the correct reports would be issued at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chairman queried the cost of the refuse removal costs for Grove House. The Deputy Town Clerk informed that this was due to a change of contactor and that credits were awaited still. The council were always actively trying to review the waste service.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk explained the central service cost allocation for the benefit of members.</p> <p>Discussion ensued regarding the poor service in dog bin collections and the Town Clerk advised that the contactor would not be paid for any missed collections. The newly appointed Grounds Manager had done a lot of work on managing the contract and ways to bring the service in house. As part of a full grounds review a recommendation would be submitted to the Personnel Committee on 23rd October to employ 2x environmental services posts to carry out dog bin collections and watering of the WIB plants.</p> <p>Members queried the timescale on how long an in house service would take to implement. Considering the recruitment process, this was gaged at a minimum of 3 months.</p>

	<p>The Chairman of WIB was very pleased to hear at the watering of the plants was planned to be brought in house. The cost of the monthly watering at present was over £1,000. The Town Clerk advised that this did include the water feed and equipment and that the current contactor was chosen through the procurement process.</p> <p>In repose to a query the DTC advised that the election costs at £65,000 were an outright expense for the council.</p> <p>A member queried the Museum catering costs figure which was a 100% overspend. The DTC explained that this should not be the case and would check it out and report back to members.</p> <p>For the benefit of members, the DTC explained the Bad Debt reports and that the process was triggered after a 3month period. The NSC debt listed, was for the payment of the Water Park fees which would be chased.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That reports 5b i – vii for be noted.</p>
<p>204</p>	<p>Ellenborough Park West</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk was circulated to members at the meeting.</p> <p>As reported to the August 19th meeting, the council had been approached by Corpus Christi Catholic Church about Ellenborough Park West which was owned by the Clifton Diocese. In addition, the West Park was a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).</p> <p>After many years use as a playing field and for sports days etc Corpus Christi Primary School was no longer permitted by the Clifton Diocese to use the West Park regularly as a playing field for health and safety reasons and the park was now locked and inaccessible. The Town Council owns and manages Ellenborough Park East as a public park including a play area and the approach was around the possibility of the Town Council taking over and managing the West Park as well. This had been approved by the Diocesan Property Committee in June and then the full Board of Trustees in July.</p> <p>The Committee therefore resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve further discussions with the Diocese to explore possible terms (subject to contract) for the Town Council taking on the Park in a long lease enabling parish, school and public use. 2. To arrange for a tree survey and a financial assessment to be carried out and clarify the status and any restrictions imposed by the SSSI 3. That the results of the discussions and investigations be reported back to members prior to any commitment being entered into.

Therefore, a meeting was arranged with Derek Salmon, Head of Property for the Clifton Diocese, along with the Deputy Town Clerk and the Grounds Manager. Mr. Salmon sent some draft Heads of Terms proposing a 125-year lease to the Council at a peppercorn rental. Following a delay at the other end the meeting finally took place only last Wednesday, 16th October.

Following negotiations at that meeting amended Heads of Terms were received that morning and were appended to the report. The agreed terms would enable the Council to open the park to the public generally or on specific occasions as well as allowing use for community events, for which there was considerable demand, while allowing an agreed amount of use for school and parish activities.

The financial aspect of owning and operating the park would have to be assessed based on the current costs of maintaining the similar but slightly smaller East Park. There would be some costs to grass cutting, litter picking and tree maintenance but potentially income from letting part of the park for events for which there was considerable demand from local community groups. Overall it was considered that the costs could be at least balanced by income and efficiency savings but as previously reported in order to fully assess the financial implications it would be necessary to discuss with Natural England what restrictions the SSSI might impose on the usage of the park. While the Natural England website contains some information it did not fully define what types of operations, machinery or vehicles were acceptable on site.

The diocese provided the council with their contact with Natural England only on Friday afternoon last week. While initial contact has been made with them, it has not yet been possible to have a full discussion and as a result a fully detailed financial assessment has not yet been possible. Subject to any instructions from the committee we therefore propose to continue investigation and bring a detailed assessment to the next suitable committee or council meeting.

The Town Clerk would personally like to see it opened as a public park, against the reservations of the DTC and GM as the costs would be fairly minimal.

Members expressed the needs for commercial use of the park.

The Town Clerk advised members to note as a holding report until further investigations had made.

A member queried the frequency of the school and the churches' use of the park as it seemed a lot and how would this be managed with other usage of the park.

A timetable of usage from the school and church should be requested.

A member felt that the school should incur a charge for using the park as the town council were already subsidising them via the maintenance.

	<p>Concerns regarding the safety of the park and unauthorised accesses were raised. The Town Clerk informed that the council adopted and enforced a policy to address any camping in its parks.</p> <p>A member raised issues around the maintenance of the tress to which the Town Clerk informed that any trees would be included within the council's annual tree inspections undertaken in January.</p> <p>In response to a question regarding a realistic financial report, the DTC advised that a full feasibility study would be undertaken.</p> <p>Members discussed the possibility of car parking use for events to which the DTC explained this would be unlikely due to the SSSI restrictions.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be duly noted pending further investigations.</p>
<p>205</p>	<p>Town Council Strategy – ideas for next 5 + years Referral from the Strategy Group</p> <p>The Current Strategy was included within the Members Induction Pack previously circulated to members.</p> <p>The Labour Groups ideas were circulated to members at the meeting.</p> <p>In response to item 2.3 the Town Clerk advised that Quality Impact Assessments were not a legal requirement for parish councils but that the town council did do them.</p> <p>Item 3.1 which related to efficiency and value for money, a member felt that it could not be stipulated to using Weston businesses only. The DTC informed that Financial Regulations stipulated that the council didn't have to choose the cheapest quote.</p> <p>Debate surrounding Item 7 - Human Resources – the Labour group would like to see a statement regarding the Town Council recognising the Local Government Trade Unions – GMB, UNISON and UNITE, and encouraging staff to join one of those trade unions. Also a commitment by the Town Council to get Living Wage Foundation employer accreditation and encourage its contractors to become Living Wage Foundation employers ensued amongst members.</p> <p>Other members felt that the ideas needed more time to be considered appropriately and other parties the chance to put forward their ideas.</p> <p>The Town Clerk clarified the process that the Strategy Group agreed that all committees would discuss ideas for the Strategy to be fed back to them in order to make a recommendation to the January or March 2020 Town Council meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Marcia Pepperell apologised that she needed to leave the meeting early and added that she would like to see the council address the concerns of the residents on the outskirts of Weston such as Worle</p>

	<p>and what they received in return for their money, within its next Strategy. <i>And left the meeting at 8.04 pm.</i></p> <p>Councillor Helen Thornton requested that the Labour Group's ideas paper be tabled at all the next committee meetings for consideration and that other parties be invited to do so.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the item be deferred until the next meeting on 17th December in order to consider the Labour Groups ideas for consideration.</p>
<p>206</p>	<p>Consideration of Devolution Proposals to NSC</p> <p>The Town Clerk drew member's attention to item 9.13 of the current Town Council Strategy:</p> <p><i>'The Town Council will seek to acquire recreation grounds, which were historically funded by Weston-super-Mare ratepayers under special expenses charged by North Somerset Council. The Town Council believes that the facilities can be maintained with an improved service at a local level. Once transfer of land is resolved, the Town Council will work in partnership with sports clubs and other community organisations to meet the needs of local people.'</i></p> <p>Members were still in agreement to pursue recreation grounds as well as parks but only if the funds came with them from NSC.</p> <p>The Town Council had more financial flexibility than the district council and could pursue options such as grant funding.</p> <p>The Town Clerk suggested that the town council could request a dowry type payment to take on parks and recreation grounds from NSC.</p> <p>A member felt that the town council needed to find a way of representing its population better. The parish was too large and too diluted to represent the varying wards and diverse communities.</p> <p>Statutory services were saturating district authorities so much, that the non-statutory services and community elements were not being carried out. The Town Clerk explained that that it was a national problem with no answer and may be an opportunity for parish councils to adopt these services and run them more effectively.</p> <p>The council could not afford to take on any non-financially viable services with its current services.</p> <p>The Chairman highlighted that the council were currently paying £82,000 per year to NSC for recreation grounds. The DTC advised that she had queried the payment with NSC and was waiting for a response from John Flannigan. She would consult with the Town Clerk on a Freedom of Information Act submission.</p>

	<p>A member raised the idea of centralising all town council departments into one building and re locating from Grove House, where the heating costs were excessive.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That a Freedom of Information Act submission be actioned ASAP in respect of the £83,000 payment to NSC for recreation grounds.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.28 pm</p>

Signed.....
Chairman

Dated.....

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE WORKING PARTY TO REVIEW
EXPENDITURE AND GOVERNANCE
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON 4th NOVEMBER 2019**

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am

Meeting Concluded: 11.18 am

PRESENT: Councillors Robert Payne (Chairman), Mike Bell, Gill Bute, Peter Crew, Ciaran Cronnelly, Catherine Gibbons (S), Jan Holloway, Sonia Russe and Richard Tucker.

IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer), Fay Powell (Grounds Manager) and Becky Walsh (Communications Officer).

1.	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Peak who was substituted by Councillor Catherine Gibbons. Councillor Mike Bell would be late joining the meeting.
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest received.
3.	To agree the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 9th September 2019 RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.
4.	To receive notes of the Health & Safety meeting on 3rd July and 4th September 2019 The notes of both meetings were previously circulated with the agenda. A member queried the reason for a pay out to a child. The Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) explained that this was due to an injury sustained at the water park. A child had tripped on the boardwalk which had since been addressed. Unfortunately, the gaps were slightly bigger than the acceptable level, due to the uneven ground of the waterpark. The council's insurance was still very low and the installation of the PSS Live system had helped the council monitor safety to a high level and enabled subsequent insurance claims to be thrown out. In response to a query regarding the water testing, the DTC informed that this was done regularly by a private company where results were back within 48hrs. RECOMMENDED: That the notes of the Health & Safety meeting be noted.

<p>5.</p>	<p>General Risk Assessment 2019 – Health and Safety</p> <p>The summary report from Ellis Whittam had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The DTC Informed that this was a legal requirement for the council to undertake. The full document was over 80 pages long and was available at the request of members.</p> <p>The two high risk areas outlined within section b were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Management of H&S Risk Assessment, this had been addressed and relevant staff IOSH trained.b) Fire Safety Overview, this related to the Blakehay Theatre's posters being re positioned. <p>RECOMMENDED: That the General Risk Assessment 2019 – Health and Safety report be formally noted and received.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Review of the Grounds Department</p> <p>The report of the Deputy Town Clerk and the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The DTC advised that it was an ongoing review which was delayed until the Grounds Manager was in post. Having been in post since August, the Grounds Manager had hit the ground running and was addressing the contractual issues with dog bins. A report was submitted to the Personnel Committee on 23rd November which was approved as attached. The proposals included bringing two outsourced contacts in house from 1st April 2020 and introduction of two dedicated environmental services part time posts. This would enable a small cost saving of £1,540 within the 2020/2021 budget.</p> <p>A member requested the consideration of electric vehicles. The DTC informed that they would consider this in conjunction with the vehicle lease expiry dates.</p> <p>The Town Clerk reminded members of the Climate Change Working Group which was taking place the following week. Whilst electric cars were environment friendly, the downside was that they were not high powered enough for certain types of work.</p> <p>The staffing proposal figure of £17,935 within appendix 3 of the report and how it was calculated was queried. The DTC explained that the figure did include the two part time staff, empty/disposal, petrol, cleansing, PPE and vehicle costs and was the figure reported to the Community Services Committee.</p> <p><i>Councillor Mike Bell joined the meeting at 10.15 am.</i></p> <p>In relation to bins, a member reported that where dog bins had been removed within her ward, residents seem to accept it and posed the question of whether the council should look to remove them all.</p>

	<p>The Grounds Manager advised that once the emptying of the bins had been brought in house it would give the council more freedom to make decisions like this. She planned to review all bins and their locations and consider all options.</p> <p>The working party felt there were certain areas where more bins were needed and that this must be considered within any review. Ward councillors should be encouraged to monitor and review the bins in their ward and the council needed to liaise with North Somerset Council on their bin locations going forward.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: To note the Grounds Review and re visit its progress at the next meeting on 6th January 2020.</p>
7.	<p>Devolution/Adoption of Parks from North Somerset Council</p> <p>The Town Clerk reported that the item had been referred by the Policy and Finance Committee and that the council did not have any instruction at this stage to approach North Somerset Council (NSC).</p> <p>The Chairman's view was that parks could be run better by the town council but that the practicalities needed to be explored before any decision was made and he invited members' views.</p> <p>A member recalled the time when the council were planned to take over Sunnyside Road recreation ground and was blocked by NSC at the final stage. He supported the idea of the council adopting parks and recreation grounds.</p> <p>Debate ensued. The council needed to know the costs/budget from NSC on running these services before any plans could be made. It also needed the appetite to spend money if they were to take on these services if the intention was to do more and better. The council could look into the proposed running of Ellenborough Park West and use it as a test pilot before committing to anymore, as this would enable the council to be more realistic and confident. Worle residents felt that the council did not give them value for money and used the failure of Castle Batch as an example.</p> <p>Discussion then ensued regarding the Lottery bid grant managed Big Worle earmarked for Castle Batch and why most of the grant hadn't been spent. Some funding had been utilised towards Dartmouth Close play area and there was still £800,000 available for projects in Worle.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that although community groups could be strong, they could also disintegrate quickly if individuals left. The council had tried to engage with Big Worle on many occasions without success. Unitary authorities were better placed for these projects however statutory services were squeezing out the non-statutory and community services which was a national problem with no solution found.</p> <p>The Grounds Manager highlighted the public perception problems with multiple contractors attending parks and confusion over which authority was responsible for what service.</p>

	<p>In response to a question, the Town Clerk advised that he had meet with the one officer of Big Worle, who had now left. He would contact the new Chairman to organise a meeting regarding the grant funding.</p> <p>The DTC added that she had had several meetings with the previous chairman of Big Worle and had offered the council's support with the procurement of Castle Batch and had found reluctance to accept help. The council had the expertise to support them with procurement and grant funding.</p> <p>A member advised contacting Russ Curry at NSC on the matter, to which the Town Clerk advised that he was meeting him the following week on another matter and would include this element for discussion.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: That the Town Clerk report back to the working party the result of his meeting with Russ Curry at North Somerset on the Big Worle Lottery funding.</p>
8.	<p>Review of the Water Park charging schedule</p> <p>Officers were asked to explore the possibilities for offering a residents' scheme for discounted entry to the Waterpark. The report of the DTC was available at the meeting and requested members to: consider the introduction of a charging scheme and set year of implementation; consider the financial risk in introducing a scheme; and make recommendations to P & F for inclusion within the 2020/2021 charging schedule based on the report findings.</p> <p>The Chairman informed that the item had been referred from the Tourism & Leisure committee and that the report proposed a way forward on a resident pass.</p> <p>It was queried if visitors had the opportunity to purchase a pass as a way of paying in advance. The DTC advised that they did not, but the council already offered a loyalty scheme for frequent users. She pointed out that a scheme would involve some risk to income which was difficult to quantify.</p> <p>Members suggested broadening the concept of a residents' pass for other facilities and encouraging other facilities to get on board. This would help and promote local businesses and support residents. The scheme could be offered to the 95 Visit Weston members to consider and include the Museum and Blakehay Theatre.</p> <p>Debate ensued regarding the application and card issue process and specifically the need for a council tax/utility bill to prove parish residency.</p> <p>The council needed flexibility and the scheme could be trialled with a few local businesses to build on. The council had time to plan the scheme as it would not be needed until April 2020.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Catherine Gibbons</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried:</p>

	<p>RECOMMENDED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To introduce a residents' card scheme for inclusion within the 2020/2021 charging schedule; 2. To note the financial risk in introducing a scheme; 3. Explore the possibility of widening the scheme to other facilities outside of the council and 4. To recommend the Policy and Finance Committee to make allowance for the costs of the scheme.
<p>9.</p>	<p>Town Council Website/Social Media</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Members had requested to improve the council's websites and it was a legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments for website accessibility.</p> <p>Websites</p> <p>The Town Council has four websites: The Town Council corporate website; the Blakehay Theatre website; the Weston Museum website and the Visit Weston website. The Public Sector Bodies (Websites & Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 which came into force on 23rd September 2018. They implement the EU Directive on the accessibility of the websites of public sector bodies and with very limited exceptions require all public sector websites to fully meet new accessibility standards by 23rd September 2020.</p> <p>The WCAG 2.1 AA standard was very complex and demanding and the Town Clerk therefore strongly recommended that a professional IT company be contracted to check and where necessary re-write the Town Council, Museum and Theatre websites.</p> <p>The Visit Weston website was managed by New Mind, an international company who managed large numbers of public sector tourism websites and who would be responsible for ensuring it would comply with the new accessibility regulations.</p> <p>Social Media</p> <p>The Town Clerk reported that, as well as the council operating several social media accounts, a number of councillors used social media to communicate with their public in the ward and wider town. In 2019 social media was a useful, if not essential, means for democratically elected representatives to communicate with their electorate. However social media also had pitfalls and needs to be used carefully for the best effect. The Communications Officer had therefore prepared a guide to social media for councillors explaining why social media can be useful and, for those who chose to use it, how to use it to the best effect and avoid difficulties. The guide was purely advisory and would not purport in any way to restrict what councillors can do.</p>

	<p>Financial Implications</p> <p>It might be possible to commission the necessary IT work to update the Council, Museum and Theatre websites to comply with the Accessibility Regulations from within existing resources. However, it should be noted that the Regulations were mandatory and if not followed the council would be liable to enforcement action and possibly civil claims for damages. There was therefore no choice but to undertake the work.</p> <p>The Communications Officer welcomed members' views on joining up the websites. She planned to make them flagship websites in the public sector which she was very much looking forward to working on.</p> <p>There were no financial implications to the Social Media guide which had been prepared in house.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: That the report be approved and adopted and that a professional IT company be contracted to update the Town Council, Museum and Theatre websites to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Accessibility Regulations.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Future Areas to be considered by the Working Party</p> <p>To explore supplementary ways of clearing walkways/cycle paths</p> <p>Review of the Grounds Department</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.18 am.</p>

Signed.....
Chairman

Dated.....