



**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL ON  
MONDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

**Meeting Commenced:** 7:00 pm

**Meeting Concluded:** 8.13 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors John Crockford-Hawley (Town Mayor), Marc Aplin, Ray Armstrong, Roger Bailey, Joe Bambridge, Mike Bell, Gill Bute, Mark Canniford, John Carson, Annabelle Chard, James Clayton, Jemma Coles, Peter Crew, Ciaran Cronnelly, Catherine Gibbons, Simon Harrison-Morse, Owen James, Hugh Malyan, Robert Payne, Marcia Pepperall, Lisa Pilgrim, Caroline Reynolds, John Standfield, Helen Thornton, Richard Tucker, and Martin Williams.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE:** Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Fay Powell (Director of Community Services-Deputy Town Clerk), Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Manager) and Rebecca Saunders (Civic & Committee Officer). Martin Slade (Member of the Public), Laura Taylor (FE Curriculum Co-ordinator, Adult & External Education, Weston College), Mike Hudson (Adult Recruitment Manager – Weston College) and Emma Grist (Children & Young Persons Intervention Facilitator – Avon Fire and Rescue Service).

The Town Mayor invited Martin Slade, local resident to address the meeting.

Mr Slade addressed the council in relation to agenda item 12. Devolution and transfer of services and expressed his disappointment with regards to previous communication made to North Somerset Council (NSC) with in relation to the critical issue of food security in the town. He had received no further communication, despite 6months having passed. He therefore wanted to address the town council raising the issue of food security reporting that 55% of food consumed was produced in the country and fruit and veg supplied by Spain, flooding issues in NSC were the second worst for farmers in 40years and the Local plan showed solar in fields and not roofs. He questioned what response the town council were making in response to these issues and in addition, with regard to devolution, he asked when any devolution reports would be available for public comment, as this was an important issue for the town. He reiterated that a public forum should be the place when deciding details for the public realm and had concerns with the devolution process with regards to double taxation. Furthermore, Mr Slade expressed opinions with joining WECA.

The Chair informed that the council were only making in principle recommendations to allow further conversation to be held with NSC and that future meetings on the subject would be open to the public, confirming that the council would respond to his questions in due course, following procedure.

<b>197</b>	<p><b>Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutions</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Peak, Robert Skeen, Justyna Pecak-Michalowicz and Charles Williams in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were given at the meeting for Councillor Tim Taylor.</p>
<b>198</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Declarations of interest were received from Councillors:</p> <p>Mike Bell – who had a prejudicial interest in item 12 due to his position as Leader of North Somerset Council and ultimate decision maker and would leave the meeting whilst the item was discussed.</p> <p>Catherine Gibbons – who had a personal interest in item 11 as a Trustee of Somewhere to Go and would not participate in debate.</p>
<b>199</b>	<p><b>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the previous Town Council Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024</b></p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting had been previously circulated.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Gill Bute  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.</p>
<b>200</b>	<p><b>To receive the Minutes of Youth Council Meetings held in September and October 2024</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meetings had been previously circulated.</p> <p>There were no observations made.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes be received.</p>
<b>201</b>	<p><b>To receive announcements and communications from the Town Mayor</b></p> <p>The Mayor's announcements and communications had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p>

	<p>There had been 63 engagements attended by the Mayor; 4 by the Deputy Mayor and 1 by the Leader which was a total of 192 to date.</p> <p>The Mayor highlighted dates for diaries as follows:  9<sup>th</sup> December - Staff and Councillors Christmas reception at 32 Waterloo Street  18<sup>th</sup> December - Carols by Candlelight at All Saints Church - please reserve seats</p> <p>The Mayor thanked members for their attendance at the Remembrance Service and reported that the new proceedings had received favourable comments. Also, for the 11/11 Armistice Service which was well received by members of the public and young people.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Town Mayor's report be noted.</p>
<b>202</b>	<p><b>Neighbourhood and Response Policing in Weston-super-Mare</b></p> <p>Inspector Lee Kerslake was not in attendance.</p>
<b>203</b>	<p><b>Weston College New Pilot Programme</b></p> <p>Presentation by Laura Taylor FE Curriculum Co-Ordinator Adult &amp; External Education, Weston College</p> <p>The Mayor invited Laura and her two colleagues, Mike Hudson Director of?? And Emma?? Avon &amp; Somerset Children and Young People to address the meeting.</p> <p>As a result of there being a void in provision for young people aged between 18-21 finding themselves bored and unmotivated, Weston College in partnership with Avon &amp; Somerset Fire and Rescue had developed a pilot programme named 'IGNITE'.</p> <p>The programme was designed to work with young people facing multiple barriers on soft skills, identifying further training opportunities and improving confidence. A pilot 2week timetable with the Avon &amp; Somerset Fire Service was put together, focusing on communication and teamwork, including interview skills and an assessment day. During the 2weeks the young people visited various site including Yate Fire station where they undertook a live demo and presentation on fire and water safety, including a crawl chamber and where they engaged with members of the team.</p> <p>A further programme would-be live-in January 2025.</p> <p>A Q&amp;A session then ensued</p> <p>In response to questions regarding any of the young people expressing an interest in joining the fire service, members were advised that there was and that the HR department were involved to create opportunities for enrollment/recruitment.</p>

	<p>Members were informed that the presentation along with videos/photographs of the programme would be shared amongst other colleges and fire stations, who had already shown an interest.</p> <p>The Chair offered the opportunity for any of the young people that took part in the programme to address members at 32 Waterloo, where they would be most welcome.</p> <p><i>The Chair thanked them for their address and they left the meeting at 7.25pm.</i></p>
<b>204</b>	<p><b>To receive the Approved Standing Orders (Sept TC)</b></p> <p>No further action required</p> <p>A comment was received in relation to section 3.6 'public participation 15mins' and whether the council may want to review this.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Gill Bute</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To receive the Approved Standing Orders (September 2023), noting the comment in relation to 3.6, for the annual review date.</p>
<b>205</b>	<p><b>To agree the date for the Annual Town Meeting 2025</b></p> <p>This was to be held at the Blakehay Theatre on the proposed date of 28th April 2025.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was unanimously <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To approve the date of the Annual Town Meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025.</p>
<b>206</b>	<p><b>Motion under Standing Order 11 - PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Helen Thornton</p> <p><i>This council believes:</i></p> <p><i>Local democracy should be equally welcoming to all sections of society, regardless of their religion or belief.</i></p> <p><i>Town Council meetings should be conducted without anyone feeling excluded or compelled to either participate in prayers or absent themselves from part of the meeting.</i></p>

	<p><i>The absence of prayers from the formal business of meetings in no way impedes religious freedoms or denies anybody the right to pray. Conversely, organised worship in secular settings imposes worship on those who do not share the faith. A genuine commitment to freedom of religion or belief is incompatible with including acts of worship in the formal business of town council meetings. This motion therefore proposes that we abolish prayers in all Town Council meetings.</i></p> <p>The Mayor invited the proposer to add that 'We live in a multifaith community and religion was not compatible with council meetings.</p> <p>The Mayor added that he had received mixed views amongst members when he had surveyed them earlier in the year, some for, some ambivalent, with a slight majority against prayers as meetings.</p> <p><b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Catherine Gibbons</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was <b>carried</b>. (<i>noting 28 for; 6 against and 2 abstentions</i>)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To be a Secular Town Council and the abolition of prayers at Council meetings.</p>
<b>207</b>	<p><i>To resolve under the Public Bodies (Admissions of Meeting) Act 1960 to exclude the public and press for the following item by reasons of the confidential nature of the business.</i></p>
<b>208</b>	<p><b>Review of the Somewhere to Go Service Level Agreement (SLA)</b></p> <p>The covering report the Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk, Appendix A – Somewhere to Go, Appendix B – KPI April 2024 – September 2024 supporting information and Appendix C – Flow chart to support SWTG SLA had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The purpose of the report was to progress and enable issue of a new and revised Service Level Agreement (SLA) to Somewhere to Go following various reviews and meetings held in the previous and current financial year that had not concluded the process.</p> <p>The CEO/Town Clerk advised that pages 20-23 were the areas that members needed to consider, as the rest of the detail had already been scrutinised by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The recommendation within the report was suggesting more governance around expenditure.</p> <p>Concern was raised with regards to the noticeable decline in the service due to a few individuals bringing the service down and the lack of supporting evidence on how this would be tackled.</p>

	<p>The CEO/Town Clerk advised that the comments could be taken back, however the the money would be spent as stated in KPI's.</p> <p>It was noted that there would be liaison with the Police, stated in the supporting documents.</p> <p>In response to members concerns regarding the monitoring of the SLA, the CEO/Town Clerk advised that robust monitoring of SLA's would be done via the new Grants and Governance Sub Committee (G&amp;GSC) on a quarterly basis, who would release funds based on KPI's met.</p> <p>The Chair of G&amp;GSC informed that the subcommittee were yet to scrutinise the SLA, due to the delays, but noted the concerns raised and would consider when monitoring the SLA in due course.</p> <p>The Chair encouraged all members to monitor the service and raise any concerns.</p> <p>Council officers, as neighbours to the service were also encouraged to monitor activity.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Ciaran Connelly  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Hugh Malyan</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To approve the revised SLA for Somewhere to Go with the following included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Restricted expenditure</b> detailed within the SLA to be paid as per the payment schedule,</li> <li>• <b>Unrestricted expenditure</b> detailed within the SLA will require full evidence and full details of the requirement prior to payment being release (paid in arrears).</li> </ul>
209	<p><i>Councillor Mike Bell left at 7.44 pm</i></p> <p><b>Devolution/ Transfer of Services – Proposals received for (Financial Year 2025 / 2026) and Opportunities for Future Years</b></p> <p>The covering report the Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk, Appendix A – WSMTC (Political Party consolidated list) for future Asset / Service consideration and Appendix B – NSC 'Delivering Together' Proposal for the 'transition year' 2025 / 2026 had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The purpose of the report was to:</p> <p>1.1. Provide information with regard to potential devolution of services from North Somerset Council (NSC) as a result of the ongoing financial pressures they were facing this current year and in future years. WSMTC was advised that current services would be impacted if solutions could not be found. This included multiple services provided to parishioners across Weston-super-</p>

	<p>Mare. There was undoubtedly opportunity to bring relevant services and assets that were currently provided by NSC of which directly benefited Weston-super-Mare into local control via WSMTC. However, how and when this occurred would need careful consideration and robust planning.</p> <p>1.2. NSC had openly reported they had already identified substantial savings within their revenue budgets, however they had advised considerable additional savings would be required in order to balance their books. (estimated at a further £8M for the year 2024/2025). This undoubtedly means that further difficult decisions would be needed in the coming months within NSC. As a result of the situation NSC were working with ALL Town and Parishes Council's across the district to explore how current services were delivered in future years to avoid cuts to current service levels, which would inevitably occur, if solutions could not be found.</p> <p>1.3. The Town Council (WSMTC) had in recent weeks (all political party Group Leaders and members of the Senior Managements Team) met with the Leader of NSC, Directors and Senior officers to undertake exploratory work on assets and services that were currently owned or operated by NSC that could be affected with the parish boundary of Weston-super-Mare.</p> <p>1.4. WSMTC had undertaken an <i>informal</i> (via political groups) exercise to identify areas that it felt would or could potentially benefit from being directly delivered by the town council in future years. Within this exercise, it was recognised that this would need to be phased and that a full financial appraisal would need to be undertaken as there would be no money from NSC for any devolvement or transfer. A considered list produced by informal agreement by WSMTC on that basis was included with the report. (Appendix A). The list was provided to NSC on 01.11.24 for its consideration and to allow further preliminary discussions.</p> <p>The Leader thanked group leaders for their collaboration on the matter and reinforced the point that this was an in-principle agreement to enable further discussions with NSC only and that no final agreements were being made at this stage.</p> <p>It was queried if the town council were paying NSC £141.4K in addition to agreeing to take on play areas at a cost.</p> <p>The CEO/Town Clerk advised that this was correct and that the reason for this was to allow the continuation of contracts in situ. All four towns needed to contribute to allow continuation of services at its current level.</p> <p><i>Councillor Marc Aplin left the meeting at 7.54pm and returned at 7.56pm.</i></p>

	<p>The Leader explained that the issue was time and that services needed to continue in year during transition.</p> <p>It was suggested that the town council needed to identify the parks an open space for inclusion within its Play strategy and also the Community Response funding. As there was a scheme that the Home Office was funding and a Start and Finish Group was suggested to be put in place to assist with the devolution process.</p> <p>The CEO/Town Clerk informed that this was entirely the decision of members and it was noted that group leaders did not have no authority to make recommendations on behalf of the council and would need to be discussed at committee level.</p> <p>In response to a question regarding NSC play area status and costs, this information had been requested from NSC and would come back through committee in the budget setting process (Dec) and confirmation was given that the council had requested from NSC.</p> <p>The CEO/Town Clerk confirmed that she had had discussions with Bridgwater regarding their recent devolution and it was noted that their situation differed in the fact that they had no transition year and took on whole services and were believed to have doubled their precept to do so.</p> <p>In response to a question regarding CCTV and Community Response funding, the CEO/Town Clerk advised that the funding of a second Community Response Officer was an additional cost and that CCTV, was for WSMTC only as other towns would be responsible for their element.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was <b>carried</b>. (<i>noting 1 abstention</i>).</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p>.1 To approve the details of Assets and Services provided in Appendix A (produced by WSMTC) to form the basis of, and allow future discussions (without obligation) with NSC with regard to potential devolvment and transfer of services and assets directly to WSMTC. Any outcomes or future proposal would require full approval by Town Council.</p> <p>.2 To approve the development of a relevant Asset and Land Adoption Policy to be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 to form the basis of any future transfers to WSMTC.</p> <p>.3 To consider the proposal received by NSC (Appendix B).</p>



	<p>➤ Approve in principle the terms and service / assets to be included in the 'transition year- 2025 / 2026' to allow both WSMTC and NSC to plan revenue budgets for the current year. (Subsidy up to £141.4K suggested and additional direct service transfer).</p> <p>➤ Confirm approval from the table provided in Appendix B – page 3 which elements WSMTC were willing to consider. (Subsidy up to £141.4K suggested and additional direct service transfer).</p> <p>➤ Note and approve the timescales suggested in Appendix B -page 7.</p> <p>➤ Confirmation be given to NSC that there will be <u>no guarantee of future commitment</u> past the year 2025 / 2026 for any increased subsidy made by WSMTC to NSC in the transition year. On this basis NSC are recommended not to enter into contracts passed 31.03.26 that require reliance on funding from WSMTC without future consultation with WSMTC (which would need further formal approval) to enable them to do so.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Peter Crew  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Helen Thornton</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That a Devolution Start and Finish Group be formed, reporting to the Finance and General Purposes Committee with members appointed at the 16<sup>th</sup> December meeting.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.13 pm.</p> <p>Signed: ..... Dated: .....</p>