



**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL ON
MONDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 2025**

Meeting Commenced: 7:00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 7.54 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Martin Williams (Deputy Town Mayor), Marc Aplin, Ray Armstrong, Roger Bailey, Joe Bambridge, 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, Alan Peak, Justyna Pecak-Michalowicz, Marcia Pepperall, Lisa Pilgrim, Caroline Reynolds, Robert Skeen, John Standfield, Tim Taylor, Helen Thornton and Richard Tucker.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Fay Powell (Director of Community Services-Deputy Town Clerk), Helen Morton (Director of Finance and Resources), Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Manager), Rebecca Saunders (Civic & Committee Officer), Evan Linde (Communications and Marketing Officer) and 5 members of the public.

252	<p>Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlie Williams, John Crockford-Hawley and Mike Bell in advance of the meeting.</p>
253	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were none received.</p>
254	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the previous Town Council Meeting held on 25th November 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting had been previously circulated.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.</p>
255	<p>To receive the Minutes of Youth Council Meetings held in</p>

	<p>The minutes of the September, October, November and December 2024 meetings had been previously circulated.</p> <p>There were no observations made.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.</p>								
256	<p>To receive announcements and communications from the Town Mayor</p> <p>The Mayor’s announcements and communications had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>There had been 49 engagements attended by the Mayor;8 by the Deputy Mayor and 1 by the Leader which was a total of 249 to date.</p> <p>Dates for diaries were highlighted as follows: <u>25th January RNLi Burns Night</u> <u>9th February Axe District Scout Gang Show</u> <u>22nd February World Girlguiding Think Day</u> <u>2nd March Ramadan Celebrations</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Town Mayor’s report be noted.</p>								
257	<p>To approve the Calendar of Meetings for the year 2025/2026</p> <p>The draft Calendar of Meetings had been previously circulated with a second draft issued to include the 2025 Youth Council Meeting dates.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Calendar of Meetings for the year 2025/2026 be approved.</p>								
258	<p>Town Council Budget and Precept for the year 2025/2026</p> <p>The Town Council Budget and Precept requirements for the year 2025/2026, the briefing report submitted to the Special Finance and General Purposes Committee on the 20th January and a further supplementary budget report, had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The budget for the year 25/26 had been produced and recommend via the Finance and general purpose cttee on meetings held concluding with a recommendation of</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="199 1736 1316 1960"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="199 1736 662 1803">Table 1 Detail</th> <th data-bbox="662 1769 885 1848">Net revenue Requirement</th> <th data-bbox="885 1769 1157 1848">BAND D (Annual amount)</th> <th data-bbox="1157 1769 1316 1881">BAND D (Weekly amount)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="199 1881 662 1960">Revised Revenue Proposals 20.01.25</td> <td data-bbox="662 1881 885 1915">£4,108,538</td> <td data-bbox="885 1881 1157 1915">£33.79</td> <td data-bbox="1157 1881 1316 1915">£0.65p</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Table 1 Detail	Net revenue Requirement	BAND D (Annual amount)	BAND D (Weekly amount)	Revised Revenue Proposals 20.01.25	£4,108,538	£33.79	£0.65p
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Revised Revenue Proposals 20.01.25	£4,108,538	£33.79	£0.65p						

A supplementary paper was provided for members consideration to reflect requirements from the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting on the 20th January, resulting in an alternative budget of:

Table 2

Detail	Net revenue Requirement	BAND D (Annual amount)	BAND D (Weekly amount)
Revised Revenue Proposals 03.02.2025	£4,100,668	£33.50	£0.64p
Difference from 20.01.2025 Proposal	£7,870		

Therefore, the draft budget shown in table 2 was therefore

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor

The Leader thanked all members for their collaboration and contribution to the generation of the draft budget.

The budget reflected positive initiatives to include improvements at Castle Batch; Grove Park toilets and an access ramp for 32 Waterloo Street, whilst acknowledging rises in National Insurance and Real Living Wage.

An amendment was then presented by

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

To increase the budget by £350.000 making provision to allow for devolution of services from NSC which the council has in principal,

Debate ensued for and against the amendment, summarised as follows:

Against

- Concerns that the money was not ringfenced for a specific purpose and was unnecessarily being kept in general reserves at risk of being spent elsewhere by a future administration and only benefiting residents of certain wards.
- Some members had been persuaded that the council's general reserves were adequate to take on the first phase of devolution and therefore the addition was not required.
- The council was in a position to be strategic and choose what it wanted to take on and when.
- There was uncomfortable feeling on increasing the budget further when the council had not had the opportunity to undertake pocket public consultation with residents on the impacts of devolution. It was noted that the Your Town Your Voice survey results were produced before the proposition of devolution.

- This was not the one any only chance for the council to consider devolution. The council was still not aware of what services it would be taking on and the budget was agreed once a year.
- Consider the cost of living crisis and residents not being able to afford increases. Councils progress history was very slow and that residents would not understand the increase and blame NSC.
- A recharge already was reflected in the grounds budget representing an increase for the transition year 2025/26. The Council had been very progressive in taking on projects in recent years and it was time to put the brakes on and consider increases to its tax payers.

For

- It was an extremely saddening situation that town councils were in the position of picking up the duty of NSC and the reasons of how this had come to be nationally, however the council must look to improve its town for the benefit of its residents and therefore, must provide budget provision to be able to do so.
- It was vital that the council replenished its general reserves to the required level and these should not be used for additional service financial needs.
- Castle Batch was considered an asset and should be an area for development.
- The Play Strategy did not include the additional play areas from NSC which would need capital spend to bring them up to standard, so therefore a provision to allow investment was needed.
- The draft budget was considered a good operational budget but not a strategic one, with no money for the play area/parks to come across which would stretch budgets and therefore timelines. NSC parks were in a poor state and the council needed to consider public liability insurance implications.
- Devolution was a huge opportunity for the council which would come to fruition within the next 2years and capital spend was needed to deliver. With this, was opportunity to have managed investment in the town for its residents.
- It was noted that the cross-party collaboration on the budget had been impressive and therefore was a good example of how the political system should work. The council needed to be realistic and listen to its residents.

Members requested clarity on whether the amendment funds of £350,000 would be earmarked reserves or general reserves was requested.?

The Leader advised that Group Leaders had met with the Leader and Chief Executive of NSC that morning where they were informed that the timescale for further phases of devolution would be received soon.

It was highlighted that the budget code for Signage (£15,000) needed to be capital and not revenue budget, to which this would be resolved at a future F&GP committee meeting.

Im summary, the proposer of the amendment responded as follows:

The amendment was for the purpose to make provision and address improvements to specific areas within the next 2years and the money would be earmarked specifically for devolution. The council needed to start looking at areas it could include concessions, to try and recover some money through revenue budgets. The town council had the officer expertise and flexibility to achieve and deliver much better and quicker than NSC.

A vote was taken and accordingly it was (12for; 11against) and therefore **carried**.

The amendment therefore became the substantive motion and a vote was taken and accordingly it was (16for; 6against; 2abstentions) and therefore **carried**.

RESOLVED: To approve:

1. The net revenue budget for the year 2025/2026, as reported, at **£4,450,668**;
This was an **annual council tax band D increase of £163.98** (£46.40 increase on the 2024/2025 budget);
Which equated to an **£0.89p** increase per week
and a **31.29%** overall budget increase.
2. The Town Council precept requirement value at £4,450,668 for submission to North Somerset Council.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 19.54 pm.

Signed: Dated: