



**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL ON
MONDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2025**

Meeting Commenced: 7:12 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.44 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Martin Williams (Town Mayor), Marc Aplin, Ray Armstrong, Roger Bailey, Joe Bambridge, Gill Bute, Mark Canniford, John Carson, Annabelle Chard, James Clayton, Jemma Coles, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, Catherine Gibbons (part attendance), 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, Richard Tucker and Charlie Williams.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Manager), Rebecca Saunders (Civic & Committee Officer), Warren Parker-Mills (Communications and Marketing Manager), Evan Linde (Communications Officer), Inspector Lee Kerslake (part attendance), BBC 2x press officers and 60 members of the public.

The Town Mayor informed that the meeting would be filmed and available for viewing the following day.

The Town Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting and advised that he would invite known speakers to address the council of which there were four, regarding item 11 – Recommendation by the F&GP committee to rescind the Council resolution (min no 325 – 24/03/25) under the public participation section of the meeting (allowing 5mins each) and would then formally open the meeting.

- Martin Slade addressed the meeting and publicly thanked the council all for their time through the 6 month long process, fully supporting the recommendation.
- Alison Bancroft addressed the meeting referring to the levels of misinformation and disinformation circulated on the purpose of the Council of Sanctuary accreditation process, associated costs, FOI's, public consultations and processes. The wider context of immigration was beyond the council's control to deal and it now needed to decide what path/direction it took next. It should consider what sort of town Weston should be and becoming a Council of Sanctuary was statement of Weston's stand. The decision will have far reaching affects and urged the council not to rescind its decision.
- Holly Law addressed the meeting informing that the initial resolution passed by council was reflective for three reasons. One, demonstrating leadership, two, misinformation and associated costs and 3, values. Petitions had been received from both sides of the public's

representations and the council needed to lead and enact on its original resolution and not back down to misinformed fear.

- Mark Kinsey – Chair of the WSM Trades Council presented a petition with over 1k signatures in support of Weston becoming a Council of Sanctuary.

The Mayor thanked members of the public for their address and reiterated that they were welcome to stay for the meeting, however were now not able to take part in discussion on the formal agenda items.

7.27 pm

158	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutions Apologies for absence were received from Councillors and Peter Crew in advance of the meeting. Also from Councillor Gibbons who may be late to the meeting.
159	Declarations of Interest There were none received.
160	To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Annual Meeting and Mayor Making Ceremony Meeting held on 15th May 2025 The minutes of the last meeting had been previously circulated. PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried . RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.
	At this point in the meeting, the Town Mayor proposed that item 11 be brought forward for discussion. PROPOSED BY: the Chair – Town Mayor, Councillor Martin Williams SECONDED BY: Councillor Crockford Hawley A vote was taken and carried and it was agreed. Item 11- brought forward:
161	To consider the Finance and General Purposes Committee recommendation (minute no 118) to rescind Council resolution (minute no 325 24/03/2025) and resolve that the Committee: 1: Notes the Council of Sanctuary Start & Finish Group's recommendations from 6 Aug 2025 2: Notes the diverse range of opinions expressed via the Town Council's public engagement sessions and is aware of comments made elsewhere and via petitions.

	3: Is pleased to note that the Task & Finish Group sees Weston-super-Mare to be a diverse and welcoming town with a range of communities, well supported by charities, community groups and individuals with which this Town Council works closely. 4: Notes the important work undertaken by this Council's appointed race relations champion and supports the councillor's devotion to the maintenance and enhancement of good relations between all sections of society now resident in Weston-super-Mare and reiterates the need for this work to continue. 5: Strongly emphasises the need for all currently engaged in public life, and all who aspire to become so engaged, to work for greater understanding and for the development of harmonious relations between people of differing backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, customs and experiences. 6: Though this Town Council has no statutory responsibilities or obligations in the realms of migration, housing, social services, education, employment or policing it nevertheless does concern itself with the well-being of all residents and in this regard recommends Council to further pursue harmony between people and to encourage the enjoyment and sharing of cross-cultural events throughout the town, without becoming part of the Council of Sanctuary. The Committee therefore requests that this is referred to the next scheduled Town Council Meeting for final decision on the basis detailed above. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute The Leader of council thanked the public speakers for their address and asked that the meeting remained respectful of people's views whilst Councillors conducted their decision making process and proceeded to propose the recommendation as stated on the agenda. Debate on the motion then ensued where the following points were raised by members: • That the initial resolution to pursue Council of Sanctuary status was considered unnecessarily destructive and out of place for the town. It was recognised that the community had and always would show kindness to others wanting to reside and it understands how to be a good neighbour. The council would be binding itself and the town to something that it could not control for nothing more than a box ticking exercise. The council only had so many resources to hand and it needed to put the needs of its residents first. • Everybody was guilty of prejudice and all Councillors were free to make up their own minds to vote either way and not according to their party line. The wording of the recommendation should be considered properly and not misconstrued into a wider contextual issue that the council had no power over. An Amendment to the motion was then PROPOSED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton SECONDED BY: Councillor Simon Harrison-Morse <i>That the Town Council encourages the formation of a local group made up of Refugees Welcome North Somerset, Race Equality North Somerset, Trade Unions, Churches and</i>

faith groups, along with other interested groups, including Schools and Colleges who want to work together to make Weston a welcoming place.

The proposer informed that the amendment had been previously circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting for their consideration and spoke of their disappointment about the segregation of the public views on the subject of becoming a Council of Sanctuary. The council had no power over immigration. However, there were other ways the council could support this, without becoming a COS. Councillors needed to consider what was best for the town and the views of its residents of which were 50/50 and also individual ward issues. Debate then ensued on the Amendment, where the following points were raised by members:

- Support for the amendment and its objectives was received, noting that there were flaws with the original motion to Council, which should therefore allow Councillors to reserve the right to vote against the original motion. The council needed to send a clear message that Weston was a welcoming place.
- The motion lacked tangible direction.

A vote on the Amendment was taken and accordingly it was **lost** (9 for /13 against)

Debate on the original motion continued, where the following points were raised by members:

- The town had three main community groups in operation, doing great work ensuring Weston was a welcoming place. The town does not need a governing body to take control of this. The public feedback received on the councils initial resolution must be recognised as well as the fact that other councils who had signed up to COS, were now trying to overturn this decision.
- The meeting was reminded of the opening line on COS website 'Wherever we come from, we all have the right to feel safe' and some Councillors reported that they had failed to hear any information as to why the council should rescind the decision.
- Reservations that were raised in March were reiterated. That the council already had an anti-racism policy in place, as well as an anti-racism champion. It did not need a charity to dictate. The public consultations have evidenced that the people do not want this. The motion was long winded and the last 5 words were the most important.
- It was felt Weston was already a warm, friendly and welcoming town and can do this by itself without being told what to do. A top down approach does not work.

A vote on the original motion was then taken and accordingly it was **carried** (16 for /9 against /3 abstentions)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Chair – Town Mayor, Councillor Martin Williams
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

Standing Orders were suspended at 8.03 pm to allow members of the public who wished to leave.

Standing Orders were resumed at 8.10 pm

	<i>It was noted that Councillors James Clayton, Alan Peak, Marc Aplin and Richard Tucker were absent from the meeting.</i>
162	To receive the Minutes of Youth Council Meetings held in March, April, May, June and July 2025 The minutes of the meetings had been previously circulated. There were no observations made. RESOLVED: That the minutes be received. <i>Councillors' Alan Peak and Richard Tucker rejoined the meeting at 8.10 pm</i>
163	To Approve the Year End Accounts for year ending 31st March 2025 as previously received by Finance and General Purposes Committee 16.06.25 As part of the Audit requirement Full Town Council are required to; a) Approve and complete the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) page 4 of the AGAR –by resolution of members as a whole (Chair and CEO/ Town Clerk to sign) It was noted that a full and detailed review of the AGAR, including the Governance statement and unaudited accounts had been done by the Finance & General Purposes Committee in June 2025. But for clarity the Chair read out the Governance Statement in full for members awareness ahead of the vote. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried. (26 for /2 against) RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) page 4 of the AGAR –by resolution of members as a whole be approved and signed by the Chair and CEO/ Town Clerk to sign. b) Approve the Accounting Statements (Section 2) page 5 of the AGAR by resolution (Chair to sign) <i>Councillor Marc Aplin rejoined the meeting at 8.11 pm</i> PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried. (27 for /2 against) RESOLVED: That the Accounting Statements (Section 2) page 5 of the AGAR by resolution be approved and signed by the Chair.
164	To receive announcements and communications from the Town Mayor The Mayor's announcements and communications had been circulated prior to the meeting.

	There had been 126 engagements attended by the Mayor; 8 by the Deputy Mayor and 1 by the Leader which was a total of 135 to date. Dates for diaries were highlighted as follows: <u>28th September RBL Memorial Service</u> <u>16th October Worle School Awards Evening</u> <u>18th October Past Mayors Reception</u> <u>1st November Somerset RBL Festival of Remembrance</u> <u>9th November Remembrance Service</u> <u>11th November Armistice Service</u> <u>15th November Christmas light switch on.</u> RESOLVED: That the Town Mayor's report be noted.
165	Neighbourhood and Response Policing in Weston-super-Mare Due to Inspector Lee Kerslake being disposed outside of the meeting, the report would be deferred.
166	To Adopt the revised Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and Financial Regulations The covering report the Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk and the following reviewed as attached had been previously circulated: .1 Standing Orders PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley <i>8.15 pm Councillor James Clayton rejoined the meeting and Catherine Gibbons joined the meeting.</i> It was noted that SO 3.14.5 needed to read 'or' instead 'of '. A vote was taken and carried. (28 for /1 abstention) RESOLVED: That with the above amendment, the Standing Orders as proposed stand for subsequent approval at the Town Council Meeting on the 24th November 2025. .2 Code of Conduct PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute A vote was taken and carried. RESOLVED: That the Code of Conduct be approved. .3 Financial Regulations PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

	A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried. (28 for /1 abstention) RESOLVED: That the Financial Regulations be approved.
167	Civility and Respect Pledge The Civility & Respect Pledge Statement for adoption following review had been previously circulated. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Owen James A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried. (24 for /3 against /2 abstentions) RESOLVED: That the Civility & Respect Pledge Statement be approved.
168	North Somerset Council's Community Governance Review The first draft recommendations and all other supporting documents were available via North Somerset Council's website. Members were requested to advise if they would like to submit a formal response to North Somerset Council as the Town Council, noting that individual councillors could do so separately also. A Councillor informed that they had responded with the suggestion that Uphill ward should be renamed to be more representative of the area 'West Ward'. Discussion ensued and whilst other ward members agreed that the name for Uphill ward was not representative of the whole area, the suggestion 'West Ward' would cause confusion. A further Councillor requested that Milton ward, was also not representative of the area which included lower Ashcombe. A Councillor wanted their disappointment recorded that St Georges had been discounted and would not be part of Weston. A vote was taken and accordingly it was carried. RESOLVED: That the first draft recommendations be received and Councillors comments be submitted to North Somerset Council.
	<i>At this point in the meeting, Inspector Lee Kerslake joined.</i> The Town Mayor welcomed Inspector Lee Kerslake and invited him to address the meeting. The Inspector gave an overview of the current policing situation across the Weston to include:

	• The introduction of the Neighbourhood tasking team which was an uplift from the previous Neighbourhood team, where officers were dedicated to high priority issues across the town including business theft and drug/ alcohol offences. This had resulted in 10/12 arrests so far and was making a profound effect on local issues. Examples of the Bournville knife crimes reported that day, Sand bay motor vehicle issues and campervan parking. • Other news was the recent change of Sergeant in the town centre team Joe Pitman, who had a history in operation remedy and was extremely proactive. Already, very positive effects had been seen. Also PCSO appointments were to start in November. Questions and comments were then noted as follows: • PCSO correspondence had been very good on reported ward issues, in particular racist graffiti in one of the towns parks. • A Councillor was interested to know the figures in relation to the recent flag painting/graffiti, specifically Devonshire Road by Proper Job and whether this was covered by CCTV. - The Inspector reported that the issue had been problematic for Police to deal with across the country and advised that If the crimes were rereported, then the CCTV would be looked at and offenders identified. Across Weston there has been a problem with racist/homophobic stickers of which the Police have identified an offender and they have been arrested. Other incident was at the Mosque on Friday, where somebody was arrested in breach of 13 offences and has now been charged. • Antisocial behaviour (ASB) complaints had been reported to Councillors by a known group taking place in the Italian gardens as well as persistent E- bike disruption. – The Inspector informed that the ASB was being looked into by the new Sergeant. The Police are looking at the problems caused by E-bikes, however aren't yet able to impact the scale of the problem. The Bournville team were looking heavily at E-bike enforcement. • Reports of continuing ASB taking place in the Italian Gardens and reoccurring problems at the Plaza which was impacting on cinema staff. The Councils and Police Need to work together on this. What can the police do to target these root issues aside arresting?. <i>The Town Mayor thanked the Chief Inspector for his report.</i>
	There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.44pm. Signed: Dated: