WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT 32 WATERLOO STREET
MONDAY 27TH JULY 2026

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm
Meeting Concluded: 8.45 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ciaran Cronnelly (C), Roger Bailey (S), Jemma Coles (S), Peter Crew, Robert Payne and John Standfield.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Helen Morton (Director of Finance & Resources & RFO) and Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Manager).

65	**Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes** Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gill Bute substituted by Roger Bailey, John Crockford-Hawley substituted by Jemma Coles, Mark Canniford, Robert Skeen and Charlie Williams with no substitutions.
66	**Declarations of Interest** Councillor Roger Bailey declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 15 as an Allotment plot holder.
67	**Committee Governance** .1 To note the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair by full Council at its Annual Meeting held on the 28th May 2026 *Note: The Council's Standing Orders would be consulted to confirm that a Councillor can be elected Vice Chair of more than one Committee and reported to Town Council if not.* **RESOLVED:** That the appointment of the Chair (Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly) and Vice Chair (John Crockford-Hawley) by Full Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026 be noted.

	.2 Confirmation of Committee Terms of Reference by Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee Terms of Reference by Council at its Annual Meeting held on 28th May 2026 be confirmed.
68	**To agree the accuracy of the previous Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 13th April 2026** The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Peter Crew **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was: **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 13th April 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair.
69	**To approve the Notes of the Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on held on 13th May 2026 and DRAFT Notes held on the 1st July 2026** The notes had been previously circulated. The Chair highlighted the recommendations of the Devolution Start and Finish Group requiring Committee approval. During discussion, it was proposed that the recommendation relating to the Alexandra Parade Weighbridge Hut be amended to enable the Devolution Start and Finish Group to further explore the opportunity to retain and repurpose the structure, recognising its heritage value and potential future use. The CEO/Town Clerk advised that North Somerset Council would only consider a 99-year leasehold arrangement, rather than a freehold transfer, which fell outside the agreed devolution framework. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and carried. **RESOLVED:** 1. That the Notes of the DRAFT Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on held on 1st July 2026 be approved. 2. To support carrying on under the expired licenses for 16 play areas the but request new ones be signed as freehold within 12 months. 3. That the Community Engagement Programme be approved and implemented accordingly. 4. To confirm that all safety records for the 3 land parcels be obtained before acquiring and that full maintenance records for each site also needed to be received. 4. To confirm that work package WP7C-Italian Gardens was no longer a priority. 5. To confirm that work package WP7B-Alexandra Parade Gardens was no longer a priority, with the exception of pursuing the Weighbridge Hut through the Devolution Start and Finnish Group.

70	**To approve the Minutes of the DRAFT Grants and Governance Sub Committee Meeting held on held on 16th April 2026** The minutes had been previously circulated. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor John Standfield **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the DRAFT Grants and Governance Sub Committee Meeting held on held on 16th April 2026 be approved.
71	**To receive the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in April and May 2026** The notes had been previously circulated. It was questioned about the replacement of light bulbs within the Museum. The CEO/Town Clerk advised that the heritage light fittings required access by cherry picker and that the uneven flooring presented operational and health and safety challenges. **RESOLVED:** That the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in April and May 2026 be received.
72	**To approve the Finance and General Purposes Committee Annual Work Programme 2026/27** The covering report of the Democratic Services Manager and CEO/Town Clerk, together with the proposed Annual Work Programme (Appendix A), had been previously circulated. The Committee noted that the Work Programme: • provided a structured framework for the Committee's business throughout the municipal year; • would remain a live document to respond to emerging priorities, legislative changes and referrals from Full Council; and • would require the provisional August meeting to include the consideration of the 32 Waterloo Street ramp project. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Peter Crew **RESOLVED:** 1. That the Finance and General Purposes Committee Annual Work Programme for the 2026/27 municipal year, attached at Appendix A, be approved. 2. That the Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to make minor administrative amendments to the Annual Work Programme during the municipal year, provided such amendments do not alter the Committee's delegated responsibilities or decision-making powers.
	FINANCE
73	**Standing Financial Reports** The report of the Finance Administration Officer had been previously circulated, requesting the Committee to:

1. Note the Standing Financial Reports for the reporting period to 30 June 2026, including the Budget Monitoring, Virement, Bank Reconciliation, Cash Flow, Investment, Debtors, Creditors and Earmarked & Capital Reserve reports.
2. Approve the Overspend Report and the budget overspends identified within the report.

73.1 Budget & Virement Reports
73.1.1 Income & Expenditure Budget Monitoring Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
The Committee noted:

- future budget monitoring reports would include a breakdown by service area;
- the Weston in Bloom planting budget remained subject to further expenditure during the financial year;
- any future review of Weston in Bloom arrangements or budget responsibilities should be considered by the Grants & Governance and Amenities, Culture & Leisure Committees.

RESOLVED: Noted with no virements.

73.2 Bank Reconciliation Reports
73.2.1 Bank Reconciliation Summary Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
73.2.2 Schedule of Receipted Income Summary at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
73.2.3 Schedule of Payments Summary at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)

RESOLVED: Noted.

73.2.4 Confirmation and Verification of Bank Reconciliations (Non-Signatory) (For Approval)

Councillors Robert Payne and Peter Crew were nominated as the two non-signatories.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

A vote was taken and **carried.**

RESOLVED: To authorise the signatories for approval of the bank reconciliations at 30 June 2026.

73.3 Cash Flow Forecast Reports (For Noting)

The Committee noted that:

- investments continued to perform well and were being managed in accordance with the Investment Strategy;
- the annual investment income target of £30,000 included £10,000 achieved during Quarter 1; and
- investments continued to be diversified across institutions to mitigate risk, with alternative banking providers also being explored.

RESOLVED: Noted.

73.4 Investment, Interest & Loans Reports
73.4.1 Investment and Interest Summary Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)
73.4.2 Loan Balances at 30 June 2026 (For Noting)

RESOLVED: Noted.

	73.5 Debtors Reports **73.5.1 Outstanding Balances Summary Report at 30 June 2026** (For Noting) **73.5.2 Write Offs / Bad Debts** (Nothing to Report) **RESOLVED:** Noted. **73.6 Creditors Reports** **73.6.1 Schedule of Direct Debits at 30 June 2026** (For Noting) Note: The Food Hub account name required updating. **RESOLVED:** Noted. **73.6.2 Overspend Report at 30 June 2026** (For Approval) The Committee noted that: • recent recruitment activity was beginning to deliver positive benefits; and • the CPI increase had been incorporated into the budget following the correction of a previous budgeting error (SWHT). **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** That the Overspend Report at 30 June 2026 be approved. **73.7 EMR & Capital Reserve Movement Report** **73.7.1 EMR Summary Report at 30 June 2026 (For Noting / Approval)** **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** That £231,986 be allocated to the Future Capital Projects Reserve (Code 901) in recognition of the approved Medium Term Financial Plan and the Council's agreed level of General Reserves.
74	**To appoint nominated Bank Signatories** Appointment of Nominated Bank Signatories The report of the Finance Administration Officer had been previously circulated. The Committee noted that, following the appointment of the Deputy Mayor for 2026/27, an additional member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee was required to maintain four authorised bank signatories in accordance with the Council's banking arrangements. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Roger Bailey A vote was taken and **carried.**

	RESOLVED: To recommend to Council that Councillor John Crockford-Hawley remain as the fourth authorised bank signatory.
	GOVERNANCE
75	**Outside Bodies Reporting Protocol** The report of the Democratic Services Manager had been previously circulated. The Committee supported the proposed protocol and agreed that: • Community Champions should be included within the reporting arrangements; • reports should be circulated with Full Council agendas and included as a standing item for noting, with Members able to raise questions where appropriate; and • a standard reporting template should be developed, with North Somerset Council's arrangements considered as a possible model. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Roger Bailey A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** To recommend to Full Council that: 1. The Outside Bodies Reporting Protocol be amended to include Community Champions. 2. Council representatives and Community Champions submit a report to the relevant Committee at least annually. 3. A standing agenda item entitled "Reports from Council Representatives on Outside Bodies and Community Champions" be included on Full Council agendas for reports to be noted. 4. A standard reporting template be developed to support the reporting process.
76	**To approve the following Policies and covering reports:** **Policies** The Director of Finance & Resources presented the report, previously circulated, setting out revisions to the Council's Data Protection and Records & Retention Policies, together with the introduction of a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy. **76.1 Data Protection Policy** The Committee noted that the revisions reflected legislative changes and Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidance. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** That the revised Data Protection Policy be approved. **76.2 Records & Retention Policy** The Committee noted that: • a minor typographical error would be corrected prior to publication; and

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the policy would continue to be updated to reflect legislative and operational changes.
PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Standfield
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
A vote was taken and carried.
RESOLVED: That the Records & Retention Policy be approved, subject to the correction of the typographical error.
76.3 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy
The Committee considered the draft AI Policy and agreed that:
further clarity was required regarding compliance with ICO guidance, automated decision-making and governance arrangements; and
Members' comments should be incorporated into a revised draft for further consideration.
The CEO/Town Clerk advised that the policy was based on an industry model and intended to provide an initial framework for the Council's use of AI, supported by secure platforms and appropriate officer oversight.
PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor Jemma Coles
A vote was taken and carried.
RESOLVED: That consideration of the Artificial Intelligence Policy be deferred to the August 2026 meeting to allow Members' comments to be incorporated into a revised draft.
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Digital Transformation Programme – Development of the Business Case
The Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk presented the report, previously circulated, outlining progress on the development of the Business Case for the Council's proposed Digital Transformation Programme.
The Committee noted that:
the report sought endorsement of the strategic direction while the detailed Business Case continued to be developed; and
the proposed transition to a Microsoft 365 environment could be supported in principle.
PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor John Standfield
A vote was taken and carried.
RESOLVED:
That the recommendations set out within the report be approved.
That Councillors John Standfield and Peter Crew be appointed to the one-off Councillor Digital Transformation Project Review Group, with one further Councillor to be nominated by Group Leaders.
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	In addition it was further proposed: **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Roger Bailey A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** That the Council's transition to a Microsoft 365 environment be approved and approximately £10,000 be allocated from the 2026/27 IT Support & Upgrade budget to fund any overspend associated with this work, acknowledging the full IT Business case review would be submitted to the August F & G P Meeting for consideration.
78	**Grove Park Pond Restoration** The Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk presented the report, previously circulated, updating the Committee on investigations into the restoration of Grove Park Pond and seeking a strategic direction on the Council's potential involvement. Members noted that: • revised restoration costs were approximately £17,100, plus associated plumbing works (£2,000); • North Somerset Council had identified a contribution of £7,000 and Weston Civic Society had indicated a willingness to provide financial support, with a Town Council commitment required to secure the partnership funding; and • given the Council's significant investment in Grove Park, discussions with North Somerset Council regarding the future transfer of the park should be brought forward through the Devolution Programme rather than waiting until the anticipated 2028 programme. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** 1. That a Town Council contribution of up to £10,000 towards the restoration of Grove Park Pond be approved, subject to partnership funding being secured from Weston Civic Society and North Somerset Council. 2. That discussions with North Somerset Council regarding the future transfer of Grove Park be brought forward as part of the Council's Devolution Programme.
79	**Allotments – Assignment of Multiple Plots** Councillor Roger Bailey declared an interest in the item and took no part in the vote. The Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk presented the report, previously circulated, outlining data received from the Allotment Club regarding multiple plot holders. The Committee noted that: • 106 plots were held across multiple tenancies and the consolidated waiting list stood at 311 applicants; • plot sizes varied across sites due to historical subdivision, meaning restrictions would need to recognise existing inconsistencies;

	• existing multiple plot holders should be permitted to retain their current plots, but no further entitlement to multiple plots would arise once those plots were surrendered or relinquished; and • multiple plot holdings should not transfer to family members, with future allocations limited to one plot per household alongside a review of plot sizes to achieve greater consistency. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor John Standfield A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** 1. That the Allotment Club be requested to amend its current policy, if this had not already been done, to limit future allotment allocations to one plot per household. 2. That existing tenants holding multiple plots be permitted to retain those plots until surrendered or relinquished, after which no further entitlement to multiple plots would arise, nor would such holdings transfer to family members. 3. That the Allotments Community Consultative Group consider the standardisation of plot sizes at its next meeting.
80	**Community Engagement Delivery Programme** The report of the Senior Development Officer, previously circulated, presented an evaluation of the Council's new Community Engagement Model, including the Armed Forces Day pilot event, and the proposed Community Engagement Delivery Programme for 2026/27. Members welcomed the programme and requested that a **"Becoming a Councillor"** engagement event be incorporated between September 2026 and January 2027 to promote public awareness and encourage participation ahead of the 2027 local elections. **PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly **SECONDED BY:** Councillor John Standfield A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** 1. That the evaluation of the Armed Forces Day Community Engagement Pilot be noted. 2. That the Community Engagement Delivery Programme for 2026/27 be approved. 3. That a **"Becoming a Councillor"** engagement event be included within the programme between September 2026 and January 2027.
81	**Data Protection Officer Appointment** The Director of Finance & Resources presented the report, previously circulated, seeking the appointment of an independent Data Protection Officer. The Committee noted that: • four quotations had been obtained, three from providers specialising in the local government sector; and • the Council's volume and complexity of data protection matters varied significantly throughout the year.

	PROPOSED BY: Councillor Jemma Coles **SECONDED BY:** Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly A vote was taken and **carried.** **RESOLVED:** That Naomi Korn Associates be appointed as the Council's independent Data Protection Officer for an initial 12-month term, with an approved overspend of £7,986.75 from the Audit and Accountancy budget for 2026/27.
	There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.45 pm Signed…………………………………………Dated ………………………… Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee