



WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT 32 WATERLOO STREET
MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.47 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ciaran Cronnelly (C), Gillian Bute, Mark Canniford, John Crockford-Hawley, Peter Crew, Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim, Robert Skeen and Charlie Williams.

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

379	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Thornton and Robert Skeen with no substitutions. It was noted that Councillor Mark Canniford would either be late or absent from the meeting, in which case apologies were given.
380	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest received.
381	To approve the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 16th February 2026 The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 16th February 2026 be approved and signed by the Chair.

382	To approve the Notes of the DRAFT Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on held on 11th March 2026 The Notes had been previously circulated. It was confirmed that a meeting with NSC regarding Grove Park was scheduled for that week, where the outcome would be reported to the next Amenities Culture and Leisure Committee meeting. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute RESOLVED: That the Notes of the DRAFT Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on held on 11th March 2026 be received.
383	To receive the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in February and March 2026 The Notes had been previously circulated. RESOLVED: That the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in February and March 2026 be received.
	FINANCE
384	Monthly Financial Reports January and February 2026 Which had been previously circulated. For Approval 1.1 Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Charlie Williams A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried. 384.1 RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure be approved. .2 For Noting Which had been previously circulated. 2.1 Bank Reconciliations 2.2 Budgetary Control Report 2.3 Bank Interest Report 2.4 Schedule of Receipted Income 2.5 Outstanding Balances report 2.6 Overspend report 384.2 RESOLVED: That the financial reports be noted. 2.7 Cash Flow Movement between Approved Council Bank Accounts

The RFO advised that the addition of the report was as a result of the recently adopted Investment Strategy and therefore, regular reports would be submitted. Any reports for previous investment, prior to the meeting, would be brought to the meetings for noting as all the appropriate authorisations will have been obtained in line with signatory requirements.

384.3 RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

385 Internal Audit

.1 To review the Effectiveness of the Internal Auditor for the year 2025/2026

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources /Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and internal audit form 7.1a for completion had been previously circulated.

The RFO confirmed that the internal audit had been effective and that the review was in accordance with good governance.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor Charlie Williams

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**.

385.1 RESOLVED: To approve the review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit 2025 / 2026 and the Chair to sign as such.

.2 To approve the following Internal Audit Documents for the year 2025/2026:

1.1.1 Auditing Solutions Letter of engagement

1.1.2 Auditing Solutions 5- Year Strategic plan (Years 2021-2026 rolling programme)

Which had been previously circulated.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**.

385.2 RESOLVED: To approve the following Internal Audit Documents for the year 2025/2026:

1. Auditing Solutions Letter of engagement

2. Auditing Solutions 5- Year Strategic plan (Years 2021-2026 rolling programme)

.3 To receive the Second Internal Audit Report for the year 2025/2026

The report from Auditing Solutions and Supplementary action report (internal) had been previously circulated.

385.3 RESOLVED: To receive and note the Second Internal Audit Report for the year 2025/2026

.4 To approve the Audit programme of works for the internal audit for 2026/2027

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources /Responsible Financial Officer ;

1.1.3 PATAS (Parish and Town Auditing Services) letter of engagement

	1.1.4 PATAS (Parish and Town Auditing Services) Audit Plan 2026-2029 Which had been previously circulated. The RFO advised that due to the retirement of the current internal auditor, the council must appoint a new one. The appointment of PATAS has previously been approved after going out to procurement. The 5 Year Audit Plan was being brought to the committee for approval at this point, for the year ahead, 2026/2027. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried. 385.4 RESOLVED: To approve the following Internal Audit Documents for the year 2026/2027: 1. PATAS (Parish and Town Auditing Services) Letter of engagement 2. PATAS (Parish and Town Auditing Services) Audit Plan 2026-2029
386	External Audit-Conflict of Interests Declaration The report of the Director of Finance and Resources /Responsible Financial Officer and conflict of Interest form 8.1a for completion had been previously circulated. The committee noted that this was a reminder to all Councillors to update their Declarations of Interest forms regularly. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried. RESOLVED: To approve the CEO/ Town Clerk and the Chair to sign the conflict of Interest form declaring that there are no conflicts of interest with BDO LLP.
387	To Approve Final Earmarked Reserves and Capital Reserves for the year 2026/2027 Final updates reports for the Final Earmarked Reserves and Capital Reserves for the year 2026/2027 had been previously circulated. The RFO advised that the council had a comfortable level of reserves £756,255 which was approximately 3 months revenue in line with good financial governance and practice. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried. RESOLVED: To approve the Final Earmarked Reserves and Capital Reserves for the year 2026/2027.

388 Vehicle Lease update

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources/RFO provided a Vehicle Lease update and for the provision of an additional vehicle for the Grounds Team. This had been previously circulated.

It was noted that the request was in response to the council's expansion and providing adequate level of resource to meet business need.

Councillors were assured that the parks and play areas were maintained as a Health & Safety priority and it was the other service areas such as the Town Centre Street Vitality, increased Bin collections, Allotments and Old Town Quarry programmes that meant the current vehicle resource was no longer adequate (previously vehicles were shared across all services). There are enough funds in the maintenance programme to fund this vehicle, noting the council's previous decision taken to only lease vehicles. Branding costs would be minimal and vehicles were kept on council sites.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**.

RESOLVED: To approve the lease of a new dedicated vehicle for the maintenance of the parks and play areas with costs coming from the EMRRP budget at £400 per month.

389 Insurance Services Contract for Approval

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources/RFO had been previously circulated which advised that the councils current insurance broker first 3 years of a 5 year procurement expire on the 30th June 2026, under the current contract and noting that there had been problems in recent years with increased costs and a lack of suitable cover from providers in a complex sector. A procurement exercise was completed in 2023 appointing the current broker for an initial period of 3 years with options to extend annual to a maximum of 5 years (1year + 1 year with further approval).

The committee discussed the impact of devolution and agreed that extending the current insurance arrangement would be appropriate at this time. Concerns were raised about the limited number of suppliers in the sector, particularly given the challenges of securing insurance for assets located within a flood plain. It was noted that this significantly restricted available options and increased flood excess costs.

Members were advised that procuring a new contract within the current timescale would require considerable resources, approval to extend within the current procured contract (max 5 years) would allow sufficient time to begin a procurement process within 6 months. It was also acknowledged that the matter could have been brought to the committee earlier, and that future procurement scheduling should better reflect such timelines, although the current process remains within the agreed schedule.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**.

	RESOLVED: To approve the exercise of the first one year extension to the existing insurance broker contract, in accordance with the original contract terms, extending the contract to 30th June 2027 and to begin to plan the procurement process within 6 months.
	GOVERNANCE
390	To receive the Report of the Anti-Racism Champion The report of the Anti-Racism Champion had been previously circulated. The Committee expressed its thanks to the Councillor for their regular reports. It was noted that Champion reports should be reviewed at the Annual Meeting in May, alongside committee memberships and representation on external organisations. RESOLVED: That the report be noted.
391	To approve the following Policies and covering reports: .1 Community Engagement Plan – New Which had been previously circulated. The importance of holding ward meetings and engaging with residents beyond the town centre was emphasised. Members highlighted the need to be mindful of engagement fatigue, stressing that a balance should be struck, with a focus on quality rather than quantity of interactions. The Castle Batch initiative was noted as a positive example of effective engagement and that ‘Conversation’ was the key word as opposed to Engagement which was recognised as correct using the example of Quarry Conversations. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried. 391.1 RESOLVED: To approve and adopt the Community Engagement Plan. .2 Procurement Guide – Review Which had been previously circulated, noting the amendments highlighted in red following an audit. Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact on local businesses with regard to Social Value requirements within the document, with Members expressing that some of the proposals were not considered helpful and that the Council should provide as much support as possible. In particular, the discussion on the Social Value requirements within the policy, led to a preference for a proportionate approach of 1–2 relevant criteria rather than the initial nine, at the CEO’s discretion. It was noted that this was already in place as a system. It was noted that reviewing the Social Value element, including contract value thresholds and scaling, fell within the Committee’s remit. However, any changes would have implications for the Council’s Financial Regulations, which were due to be reviewed at the Annual Meeting.

Members suggested increasing the current £65k threshold to £80k in line with inflation, or potentially to £100k, acknowledging that this would have a consequential impact on the thresholds table within the report, and that this could not be implemented until the financial regulations were changed as the master document to the procurement guide.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**.

391.2 RESOLVED: To defer the adoption of the Procurement Guide pending review of the Financial Regulations and Social Value provisions at the Annual Meeting which should include the recommendations from this committee that:

- The threshold for full Social Value requirements within procurement be raised to £100k with the financial regulations and procurement guide.

.3 Flag Flying Protocol – New

Which had been previously circulated.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**.

391.3 RESOLVED: To approve and adopt the Flag Flying Protocol with the amendment, that the review period be changed in line with local government legislation.

.4 Bad Debt policy – Review

Which had been previously circulated.

Discussion ensued on the payment reminders.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**.

391.4 RESOLVED: To readopt Bad Debt policy.

392 Annual review of the councils Risk Register for the year 2026/2027

The report of the CEO/Town Clerk seeking approval of the Annual Review of the Council's Business Risk Register (LCRS – Local Council Risk System) and Action Plan had been previously circulated.

The Risk Register was reviewed annually and updated throughout the year as new risks were identified. Members were informed that, following consideration during the 2025/2026 review,

	the timing of the review process has been moved to April to allow for forward planning and more effective risk mitigation, rather than retrospective evaluation. As the full review had already been completed and approved in February 2026, a light touch update was presented for 2026/2027, with no changes to identified risks or actions. The Action Plan was provided, with the full report available on request. RESOLVED: 1. To note the 2026/2027 action plan mitigation report. 2. To adopt the risk register for 2026-2027 to meet Town Council Governance requirements, noting the action plan attached.
393	Town Council Strategy Evaluation (2025/26) 2020 – 2030) The Committee considered the Town Council Strategy Evaluation (2025/26), together with the supporting appendices, which had been previously circulated. A Member raised concerns regarding the language within the Marketing Strategy (referencing P181), noting that the three key elements living and working, visiting, and tourism were not fully reflected in the Council's stated ambitions. Members were advised that any amendments to the wording of the Strategy would require approval by Full Council. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried. RESOLVED: 1. To note the report of the Senior Development Officer; 2. To note the evaluation of the strategy (appendix 1); 3. To note the Strategy Appendix 1 - Statutory & Best Practice requirements - Resolution Analysis (appendix 2); 4. To note the Suggested additions to the strategy in line with council resolutions (appendix 3); and 5. To approve the additions to the strategy which included new "Ambition/Objective 4.8" (detailed in section 3.1 above), and the successes and milestones listed in appendix 4. 6. To recommend to Town Council in June, a change to the Strategy wording with regarding the Marketing Strategy.
394	8.26 pm Exclusion of Public and Press <i>To resolve, under Section 100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.</i>
395	(Commercial matter – paragraph 3, Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972)

	Old Town Quarry Grant Update The report of the CEO/Town Clerk providing an update to Council on the Community Ownership Fund grant claim process and to seek that the position be formally noted, had been previously circulated RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that a further report be brought to the following meeting.
	There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.47 pm Signed.....Dated Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee