



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 OCTOBER 2025

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 7.51 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ciaran Cronnelly (Chair), Gillian Bute, Ray Armstrong (S), Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Owen James (S), Robert Payne, Robert Skeen, Charlie Williams and Martin Williams (S).

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Catherine Gibbons, Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Helen Morton (Director of Finance & Resources), Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Manager) and Martin Slade (member of the public).

Public Participation – Address by Mr. Martin Slade

The Chair welcomed Mr. Martin Slade, who thanked the Council for improving openness and transparency in its documentation and decision-making.

Mr. Slade raised concerns regarding the current AGAR process and ongoing discussions with the external auditor. He noted the absence of any publicly available Terms of Reference or meeting notes for the former Anti-Racism Group or Champion. While welcoming the recent report from the Anti-Racism Champion, he expressed concern that there was no public record of discussions or agreements made in the Council's name.

Mr. Slade referred to the proposed meeting with Race Equality North Somerset (RENS) and outlined residents' concerns regarding the organisation's statements and its continued role as an advisor to the Council.

The following questions were posed:

1. How many councillors were aware of and have read the 2022 report "*Time for Change – Developing an Anti-Racism Strategy for Weston*" led by RENS?
2. Why would the Council wish to create "disequilibrium," as referenced within that document?
3. Did the Council pay £2,000 for security for the Council of Sanctuary public meetings?
4. What was the Council's policy regarding the use of security at public meetings?
5. Can the meeting notes of the Weston Town Council Working Group, referenced in the *Time for Change* document, be made publicly available?

6. What was the content of the “Responding to Hostility” training undertaken by the Champion, why was it provided by a race relations charity rather than a government body, and how inclusive and unbiased was it?
7. What was the Council’s approach to responding to hostility following this training?

Mr. Slade concluded by encouraging the Council to continue upholding the Nolan Principles, particularly openness and transparency, in addressing residents’ concerns.

169	<p>Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lisa Pilgrim substituted by Martin Williams, Mark Canniford substituted by Ray Armstrong and Helen Thornton substituted by Owen James.</p> <p>Councillor Peter Crew thanked everybody for their kind wishes.</p>
170	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received from committee members.</p>
171	<p>To approve the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 18th August 2025</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Special Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 18th August 2025 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>
172	<p>To receive the Notes of the Civic Matters Consultation Group held on 4th September 2025</p> <p>The Notes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>Members were advised that the Civic ribbon that would be worn with the pendant by future Mayors Consorts, was supplier approved.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Notes of the Civic Matters Consultation Group held on the 4th September 2025 be noted.</p>
173	<p>To receive the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in July and August 2025</p> <p>The notes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in July and August 2025 be received.</p>
174	<p>To receive the report of the Anti-Racism Champion</p> <p>The report had been previously circulated.</p>

	<p>RESOLVED: That the report of the anti-racism champion be received.</p>
175	<p>To receive the verbal report of the Armed Forces Champion</p> <p>The Chair invited Councillor Catherine Gibbons to report to the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Champion has attended the VE Day celebrations in Portishead and Parliament visit where the Covenant was discussed to be full law. • Is working with schools and on how they can support service families with education. • Visited the MOD Lyneham which was an extremely important and integral unit in maintaining all the equipment and the most decorated service for its exposure to danger zones. • Attended the awards for the Cadet force. • Will be attending the Poppy train on 11/11. • Chairs the NSC Armed Forces Covenant Board meetings • Attends Armed Forces meetings for Wessex. <p>RESOLVED: That the report of the Armed Forces Champion be received.</p>
176	<p>To receive the report of the Armed Forces Covenant from the Civic Officer</p> <p>The report had previously been circulated which advised that:</p> <p>WSMTC signed North Somerset Council's (NSC) Armed Forces Covenant back in June 2013 and since then NSC have updated their covenant (December 2023) and have encouraged parish and town councils to sign their own Covenant.</p> <p>The committee were asked to consider and recommend to Full Council the adoption of a standalone Armed Forces Covenant specific to Weston-super-Mare Town Council, following North Somerset Council's decision to make their Covenant exclusive to their authority.</p> <p>The Armed Forces Champion was in support of the recommendation recognising that Weston has a significant military history. The wording of the Covenant, was based on Taunton's Covenant template which was acceptable and was in support of an exhibition at the Museum, to tie in with an official signing.</p> <p>An amendment to the draft Covenant was suggested as follows:</p> <p>P72 – Update with Kings Crown. Sec 2 – To include members of the council volunteers.</p> <p>The Committee were in support of the recommendation, where it was noted that Weston's history was connected with all three Armed Services in some way.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that any associated costs in reference to special treatment as per section 1, would be determined by committee approval and it was noted that there were already discounts for armed forces and emergency services in place at the Museum.</p> <p>PROPOSED: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: To Full Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Weston-super-Mare Town Council adopts its own Armed Forces Covenant, reflecting its continuing commitment to the Armed Forces community;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. That the Town Clerk/Chief Executive Officer be authorised to finalise the wording of the Covenant in consultation with the Chair of Council and relevant partners; to include the above amendments and 3. That arrangements be made for a formal signing ceremony with local Armed Forces representatives and community stakeholders.
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177	Monthly Financial Reports July and August 2025
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	<p>.1 For Approval</p>
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	<p>1.1 Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure</p>
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	<p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly</p>
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	<p>SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute</p>
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	<p>A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried.</p>
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	<p>RESOLVED: That the financial reports be received.</p>
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	<p>.2 For Noting</p>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Bank Reconciliations 2.2 Budgetary Control Report 2.3 Bank Interest Report 2.4 Schedule of Received Income 2.6 Overspend report 2.5a Bad Debt general report
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	<p>The committee noted that the income at both the Museum shop and the Waterpark kiosk was very positive.</p>
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	<p>RESOLVED: That the financial reports be noted.</p>
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	<p>2.5b Bad Debt report (Visit Weston write off)</p>
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	<p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p>
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	<p>SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly</p>
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	<p>A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried.</p>
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	<p>RESOLVED: Write off debts to the value of £550.80.</p>
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178	To review the Effectiveness of the Internal Auditor for the year 2024/25
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	<p>The report of the Director of Finance and Resources/Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulated which provided members with the necessary information included within the agenda pack. Due to an anomaly this report (whilst on the agenda in June) had not been fully available to members so was bought again to ensure complete transparency.</p>
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	<p>The requirements for the effectiveness of the internal auditor had been checked against the updated Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide, and have been updated as indicated within the report.</p>
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	<p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit 2024 / 2025 for the Chair to sign.</p>
179	<p>To receive the Final Internal Audit Report for the year 2024/25.</p> <p>The report of the Director of Finance and Resources/Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulate which advised that the final year end internal audit report for the financial year 2024-2025 was received from Auditing Solutions Limited in June 2025 where recommendations were identified and specified.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the findings from the internal auditors report for 2024-2025 and the remedies identified for each recommendation be noted.</p>
180	<p>Investment of Council Funds</p> <p>The report of the Director of Finance and Resources/Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulated. Which was seeking approval to invest a portion of the Council's current account balance, which currently stood at approximately £2.1 million, in accordance with Section 14 (Loans and Investments) of the Financial Regulations and the Council's adopted Investment Strategy. The balance significantly exceeded the four-month operating reserve required under Financial Regulation 4.7, which would enable investment of up to £1.3 million while maintaining adequate liquidity for day-to-day operations.</p> <p>The committee noted that it was a local government nationwide difficulty accessing banks and experiencing delays, which were being discussed by SLCC NALC to try to improve the situation faced within the sector. A short term treasury report would come back for consideration in line with the council's Investment Strategy.</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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the investment of £1.3 million of surplus funds from the Council's current account, allocated as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £500,000 in a 6-month fixed-term deposit with Lloyds Bank. • £500,000 in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund (instant access). • £300,000 in a 90-day notice account with Nationwide Building Society. 2. Authorise the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk, to execute these investments with two authorised signatories approving each transfer. 3. Require the RFO to report all transactions to the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting and to include performance updates in quarterly monitoring reports.
181	<p>Budget setting considerations</p> <p>The report of the Director of Finance and Resources/Responsible Financial Officer had been previously circulated which informed that a review of the budget setting process was taken to the Finance & General Purposes on 18th August 2025, whereby it was recommended that during September and October each year that Committees and Sub Committees were to</p>

provide recommendations/considerations to budget areas in line with set strategic aims of the council only (having regard for the councils Medium Term Financial Plan). (Available on the council's website).

Therefore budget areas as identified within the report were reviewed as part of the first draft review for the 2026/2027 budget and identified income and expenditure that needed consideration against the budgets that were set in 2025/2026.

A further budget summary 2026/2027 report was circulated which as directed by the committee at its last meeting, gave 2x budget options (yellow = CPI /green = standstill).

The committee were requested to indicate any elements for inclusion within DRAFT budget, considering the appendices.

It was noted that:

- The Democratic Services (DS) budget was inclusive of investment to improve the council's (DS) processes.
- The Capital elements was inclusive of Cemetery wall repair costs.
- The Street furniture budget was utilised by TC signs/transfer of NSC bins /street cleaning and bus shelters, noting that TC signs was the largest cost which would fall to AC&L committee to monitor.
- Bus shelters – NSC were looking at TC bus shelters for advertising income opportunities.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

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

RESOLVED: To approve in principal, the costs and income identified within the budget holders reports for inclusion in the draft budget for 2026/2027 and that the direction for budget setting from the committee was that the budget presentation in December 2025 for the year 2026/2027 should be representative of a standstill budget (against 2025/26) with only a CPI increase applied.

GOVERNANCE

182 To approve the following Policies:
a) Twinning Strategic Plan

The committee were advised that the Plan was produced and approved by a start and finish group and welcomed by Hildesheim.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford - Hawley
SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

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

	<p>RESOLVED: To approve and adopt the Twinning Strategic Plan.</p>
183	<p>Under Standing Order 23. Execution and Sealing of Legal Documents</p> <p>15.1 To approve the sealing of the following document (prior resolution passed to enter into agreements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement between Weston-super-Mare Town Council and Weston-super-Mare Allotment Club. <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly, it was carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the sealing of the Agreement between Weston-super-Mare Town Council and Weston-super-Mare Allotment Club and two signatories as Councillors 1.Charlie Williams 2. Peter Crew.</p>
	<p>There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 7.51 pm</p> <p>Signed.....Dated</p> <p>Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee</p>