



WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT 32 WATERLOO STREET
MONDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2026**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.20 pm

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

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Helen Morton (Director of Finance & Resources & RFO) and Samantha Bishop (Democratic Services Manager), Warren Parker-Mills (Communications and Marketing Manager) and one member of the public.

319	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Thornton substituted by Tim Taylor.
320	Declarations of Interest Councillor Tim Taylor declared a non-pecuniary interest as an employee of Lloyds Bank.
321	To approve the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 15th December 2025 The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 15 th December 2025 be approved and signed by the Chair.

322	<p>To receive the Minutes of the Grants and Governance Sub Committee (DRAFT) held on 22nd January 2026</p> <p>The Minutes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Grants and Governance Sub Committee (DRAFT) held on 22nd January 2026 be received.</p>
323	<p>To receive the Notes of the DRAFT Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on 14th January 2026</p> <p>The DRAFT Notes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the DRAFT Notes of the Devolution Start and Finish Group Meeting held on 14th January 2026 be noted.</p>
324	<p>To receive the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in December 2025 and January 2026</p> <p>The Notes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Notes of the Health and Safety Meetings held in December 2025 and January 2026 be received.</p>
325	<p>To receive the report of the Anti-Racism Champion</p> <p>The report had been previously circulated and it was noted that further information had been emailed to the committee ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>It was questioned what the specific subject matter was that the Anti Racism Champion interviewed on , as mentioned within the report. The CEO/Town Clerk would clarify this and email the committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report of the Anti-Racism Champion be received.</p>
FINANCE	
326	<p>Monthly Financial Reports</p> <p>.1 For Approval</p> <p>1.1 Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure</p> <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: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure be approved.</p> <p>.2 For Noting</p> <p>2.1 Bank Reconciliations 2.2 Budgetary Control Report 2.3 Bank Interest Report 2.4 Schedule of Receipted Income 2.5 Overspend report</p>

The committee requested clarity in the issues with Natwest, to which the RFO advised that there was an ongoing issue with signatories and accessing council accounts to which she was now taking action to address, and that there was a nationwide issue with banks and councils access and mandate systems – the issues are not just with WSMTC.

The following queries were raised:

- 2.2 (Page 35) – Lack of expenditure for Strategic Planning and Environmental budgets. The CEO/Town Clerk advised that expenditure from the Environmental budget would be utilised or Earmarked before the yearend for the purchase of solar panels at the Quarry and also the Strategic Planning with regard to professional fees.
- 2.5 Overspend report – overspend on the utilities at 32 Waterloo Street. The RFO advised that this had been due to contract balancing issues.

RESOLVED: That the financial reports be noted.

327 To receive & note Interim Audit 2025/26

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources (RFO) and Audit Report 2025/26 had been previously circulated.

The interim internal audit report for the financial year 2025-2026 received from Auditing Solutions Limited in December 2025 outlined findings (x4) and the remedies identified for each recommendation.

- A query was raised regarding R4 (finding 4 Reviewing staff salaries) and why this continually was picked up and did the council need to address this. The RFO informed that this was due to National insurance implications.

RESOLVED: To note the findings from the interim internal auditors report for 2025-2026 and the remedies identified for each recommendation.

328 Investment of Council Funds for Approval

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources had been previously circulated which provided an update on investment as requested by the committee on a bi-monthly basis.

Three options were provided for members to consider within the report

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

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

RESOLVED: To approve the investment of £400,000 of surplus funds from the Council's current account, allocated as follows: £400,000 in the Lloyds Bank 6-month fixed-term deposit (early access subject to penalty).

329 Professional Services Contract for Approval

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources / Senior Development Officer had been previously circulated, which requested the committee to approve the exercise of the first one-year extension option, in accordance with the original contract awards approved in June 2023.

The CEO/Town Clerk reported the performance overall of each of the contracts had been satisfactory and recommended to extend for another year based on the activities of the council and resources to review the contacts at present.

It was noted that the council needed to factor in the time to review and evaluate contacts and realistically procure within the next 15-18months.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Skeen

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

RESOLVED: To approve the exercise of the first one-year extension to the existing professional services contracts, in accordance with the original contract terms, extending the contracts to 31 July 2027.

GOVERNANCE

330 Devolution

1. Devolution Programme Framework – February 2026

The previously circulated Devolution Programme Framework was introduced by the Chair, who explained that the Devolution Start & Finish Group’s (S&FG) terms of reference require review to progress the project, and that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NSC should be developed.

Members were asked to endorse the Framework for approval by Council.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor

SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

330.1RESOLVED:

1. To approve and adopt the Devolution Programme Framework – February 2026.
2. To draw up an MOU with NSC.

2.Transfer of Land Parcels and Waterpark Lease

The report of the Devolution Programme Manager/CEO/Town Clerk (following the S&FG meeting of 14 January 2026) was noted.

Key discussion points included:

- WP7: Proposed transfer of 5 land parcels (clarified as 4 due to duplication), including land adjoining St John’s Church, which remains in dispute between the Church and NSC.
- Clarification was sought regarding Spider Lane (awaiting boundary maps).

- Confirmation that Clarence Park East and West, and the entirety of Grove Park, were included.
- Boundary maps had been requested from NSC.
- Positive feedback was given regarding town centre street cleansing under the Town Vitality programme.

Members discussed whether pursuing the parcels aligned with existing priorities. While concerns were raised about potential distraction, advantages to community wellbeing were highlighted, subject to boundary checks and resolution of disputes. It was noted that access to NSC's Earthlight mapping system would assist in clarifying addresses and boundaries once training had been completed.

The Chair outlined options: to agree in principle and refer back to S&FG for further investigation, or not to pursue.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

330.2.1 RESOLVED: To approve inclusion of the land parcel transfers under a licence or MOU with NSC ahead of eventual freehold transfer, subject to boundary checks and resolution of land disputes.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

SECONDED BY Councillor Peter Crew

330.2.2 RESOLVED: To note that the Waterpark will remain leasehold (25-year term from 25.06.2010), with 9 years remaining.

It was further noted that the S&FG's terms of reference require review, as it cannot make decisions on land or assets.

PROPOSED: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED: Councillor Peter Crew

330.2.3 RESOLVED: That the CEO/Town Clerk prepare revised terms of reference for the Devolution S&FG for Council approval.

331 AGAR 2025–26: Assertion 10 – Digital and Data Governance Compliance for noting compliance requirements

The report of the Director of Finance and Resources (RFO) was previously circulated and provided assurance on the Council's preparedness to make a positive declaration under the new Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance Statement.

Assertion 10 requires councils to confirm that appropriate digital and data governance arrangements are in place. To support compliance, a new Password and Device Security Policy has been drafted.

It was noted that this applies to the AGAR for the financial year 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

332 To approve the following Policies:

a) Investment Strategy (Review)

Which had been previously circulated.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute

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

332.1 RESOLVED: To readopt Investment Strategy.

b) Password and Device Security Policy (New)

Which had been previously circulated.

Councillor Peter Crew left the meeting at 7.49 pm

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

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

332.2 RESOLVED: To approve and adopt the Password and Device Security Policy.

c) Risk Register (Review) and Annual Review of the (LCRS – Local Council Risk System) covering report of the CEO/Town Clerk

Which had been previously circulated.

The following points were noted:

- Play areas – underbudget overambition
- Social media and Tourism scoring confirmed at 4 which was above 3.
- Failure to publish the newsletter was confirmed as a governance duty risk.

Councillor Peter Crew rejoined the meeting at 7.52 pm.

332.3 RESOLVED:

1. To note the 2024/2025 action plan mitigation report.

2. To adopt the risk register for 2025-2026 to meet Town Council Governance requirements, noting the action plan attached.

3. To note the intention for the risk register to be reviewed in within the first quarter of the year moving forward to better align Town Council responsibility.

333	<p>Allotments – Remedy Notice Confirmation of Outcomes for formal Acknowledgement</p> <p>The report of the CEO/Town Clerk had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The report informed the Committee of the response received from Weston-super-Mare Allotment Club following the issue of a Formal Notice to Remedy dated 5 January 2026, and to confirm whether the matters identified had been satisfactorily addressed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To formally note the contents of the report and confirm that the matters raised within the Formal Notice to Remedy dated 5 January 2026 have been satisfactorily addressed.</p>
334	<p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>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></p> <p><i>7.56 pm members of the public left the meeting.</i></p>
335	<p>Super Weston Website for consideration and Approval</p> <p><i>(Commercial matter – paragraph 3, Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972)</i></p> <p>.1 The report from the Communications & Visitor Experience Manager</p> <p>The report had been previously circulated which advised that there was opportunity to take ownership and strategic control of the Super Weston website from North Somerset Council and recommended options for councils consideration. The reason for the recommendations was to note that the current Weston-super-Mare website was built on outdated WordPress architecture and was difficult to navigate, particularly on mobile devices. There was also significant untapped potential to better engage and inform new audiences, especially those who were new to the town.</p> <p>The proposal was to develop a more engaging Super Weston website and integrate it with the Weston-super-Mare Town Council website, creating a single, authoritative platform that showcased all the benefits of living, working and enjoying life in Weston-super-Mare.</p> <p>It was noted that the current WSTMTC website was going to struggle to meet accessibility standards. The following points were raised:</p> <p>Concern regarding future investment from the BID in terms of partnership for Visit Weston and potential loss of income and the use of SEO within the proposal. The Communications and Marketing Manager informed that SEO would be built into the architecture of the site and organically grown as opposed to an additional outlay.</p> <p>The CEO/Town Clerk clarified for the benefit of confusion, that the proposal to merge WSMTC’s website with Super Weston, would remain completely separate from the tourism website (Visit Weston). If the council did not embrace the opportunity of utilising the Super</p>

Weston platform to improve its own website, then it would be turned off and the opportunity lost.

For the benefit of the whole committee, they were informed that the background and initial purpose of the Super Weston website was built as part of the historic Placemaking concept, attracting developers and businesses to the town and creating a website for the people who lived and worked in the town, not visitors to the town which was the purpose of the Visit Weston website.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor

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

335.1 RESOLVED:

1. To approve the initial development and transition to live phase only; any ongoing hosting, maintenance or support arrangements will be subject to separate approval.
2. To approve transfer of the content that's applicable from both Super Weston and the Town Council website following appointment of Squarebird to do so.

.2 The report from the CEO/ Town Clerk (Financial)

The report had been previously circulated, which requested the committee to consider the financial ability of the Council to enter into a contract for the development of the "Super Weston" website and to approve expenditure within the approved budget, in line with the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

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

335.2 RESOLVED:

1. To note the outcomes of the recent Visit Weston Website procurement and confirm that the relevant digital market has been sufficiently tested.
2. To approve the appointment of Squarebird Agency Ltd for the £15,900 contract to support the website merger and development of the Town Element.
3. To agree that further competition would be disproportionate and records the justification in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. As such the Committee formally agrees to waive the requirement for three quotations, in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.20 pm

Signed.....Dated
Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee