

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE BLAKEHAY THEATRE ON
MONDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2023**

Meeting Commenced: 7:00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8:57 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak (Chairman) , Peter Crew, Dave Dash, Peter Fox, Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter, Tim Taylor and Helen Thornton.

IN ATTENDANCE: The Town Mayor (Councillor Sonia Russe), Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearce (Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Samantha Bishop (Committee & Office Manager) and Molly Maher (Senior Development Officer).

297	To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sarah Codling who was substituted by Councillor Peter Crew.
298	To receive Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest received. <i>Councillor Robert Payne arrived 7.01 pm</i>
299	To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on the 12th December 2022 The minutes had been previously circulated. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ian Porter SECONDED BY: Councillor Dave Dash A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman. To approve the minutes of the Special Policy & Finance Sub Committee held on 4th January 2023 PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ian Porter SECONDED BY: Councillor Alan Peak A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman. The Deputy Town Clerk informed that following the resolution she had been unable to

<p>Policy & Finance 20th February 2023</p>	<p>award the JCT contract within the agreed budget and that a sperate meeting was required to do this. The shortfall in budget was £35k which included £30k for contingency works as cautioned by the contactor and surveyor for works to the tower.</p> <p>The Town Clerk aired caution on protocol and advised that a separate agenda item and further report was needed for members to make an informed decision and suggested either a special P&F subcommittee be called or a recommendation to Town Council on 20th March.</p> <p>It was agreed that the project could not afford delay and that an agenda could be issued as early as the following day with the report from the Surveyor.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That a Special P&F Sub Committee Meeting comprising the same members as before be arranged for 27th February at 5pm , to consider the revised tenders to enable the JCT award issue for (32 waterloo Street, WSM Internal refurbishment, M & E and roof works).</p>
<p>300</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 1st December 2022 (unapproved)</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.</p>
<p>301</p>	<p>To receive the minutes and recommendations of the Climate Change Working Party Meetings held on the 1st December 2022</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.</p>
<p>302</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the HQ Working Party Meetings held on the 18th November 2022</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.</p>
<p>303</p>	<p>Monthly Financial Reports: November & December 2022</p> <p>a) For Approval Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>.1 RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for November & December 2022 be approved.</p> <p>b) For Noting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Bank Reconciliations ii. Budgetary Control Report

- iv. Schedule of Received Income
- v. Bad debt report
- vi. Overspend report

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

.2 RESOLVED: That reports 5b i – vi be noted.

304 To approve amendments to the Committee Terms of Reference

The current Terms of Reference with outlined proposed changes had been previously circulated.

The Town Clerk advised that the changes were purely a tidying up exercise to reflect what was already in place and highlighted the additions in red.

The Chairman of the Climate Change Working Party commented that the committee membership allocation was minimal in comparison to other working parties and would like to review its membership.

The Town Clerk informed that there was a meeting taking place that week with committee chairman to review the committee structure before the next council administration, where this point could be considered.

An AMENDMENT was

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton

SECONDED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To approve and adopt the proposed changes to the Committee Terms of Reference, with the amendment of increasing the Climate Change Working party membership to 5.

305 Medium Term Financial Plan and outcomes for Reserves

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the reports of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised as per the request from the E&G WP and recommended by the auditor, members were requested to:

- a) To adopt the Medium-Term Financial Plan (5 Years) to be reviewed annually
- b) To receive the movement of Reserves report (introducing Capital Reserve and Revenue Surplus Reserve) ahead of final approval by Town Council March 2023

It was advised that this would be good to have in place for the next council administration and would be reviewed annually before budget setting (Oct P&F). The MTFP included provision for the splitting of the council reserves into General Reserves, earmarked Reserves and Capital Projects Reserves which would be really helpful for budget setting.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED:

1. To adopt the Medium-Term Financial Plan (5 Years) to be reviewed annually
2. To receive the movement of Reserves report (introducing Capital Reserve and Revenue Surplus Reserve) ahead of final approval by Town Council.

306 Civic Budget Spending request

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.

The report was a financial procedural matter requested by the Town Mayor to approve alternative use of allocated monies within the 2022/2023 budget provisions.

The Deputy Town Clerk had produced a report following talks with the Mayor where the following had been suggested for members approval:

- Allocation of funds from 2022/2023 would be to hold a cream tea event to celebrate the King's Coronation (max £1,000)
- Purchase a high-quality clock for the meeting room at Waterloo Street Council Chamber with the balance to commemorate the King's Coronation Year. The funds would need to be put in an Ear Marked Reserve as the coronation would not be until the next financial year.

The Mayor was in attendance and presented her case for doing so which was purely a personal preference and not to set any type of precedent for future Mayors.

Discussion took place around the plans for marking the King's Coronation and it was advised that this would be decided upon by the Mayor in consultation with the Civic Consultation Group.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Fox

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To approve alternative use of allocated monies for a celebration event for the Kings Coronation 2023 and a Clock for the Council Chamber at Waterloo Street. Budget provision of £1,700 to be placed in an EMR accordingly. Details of the event to be confirmed via the Civic Consultation Group.

307 Old Town Quarry

All supporting documents had been previously circulated.

Members were requested to:

- To receive and approve the draft strategy and programme and renovation plans (0-10-year vision)
- To receive the update report from the Deputy Town Clerk in relation to planning applications and building plans

The council had already approved the funds for the project and building works and the draft strategy would evolve as the council progressed.

There was an opportunity to put in planning applications at this stage and the committee was informed that the planning appeal on the illegal structure had been rejected.

Members were advised that the project would fall under the council's operational services to maintain. There were approximately 20 occupiers who would likely be transferred over to the council, noting there was frustration from the occupiers with years of uncertainty. The biggest challenge would be renegotiating their licences via North Somerset Council (NSC) as their landlord before the town council could take over the site. The town council are in ongoing discussions with NSC on this area.

It was noted that the Civic Society did not have copies of many of the occupiers' licences and it was thought that any in place were not consistent. The Town Clerk advised that it was important that all occupiers' status be regularised before the town council took a lease of the site and members had previously so resolved.

Members were informed that the council would not need to budget significant sums for the project until April 2024 onward, details of which are contained in the Medium term financial plan which the council had adopted.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor David Dash

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the 0-10-year strategic plan for the Old Town Quarry.
2. To approve the submission of any necessary planning applications to enable works contained in the 0-5-year phase of the strategic plan including the production of any other plans and surveys required. (Noting the intention to ask NSC to share any surveys they have commissioned on the site to avoid duplication within the planning process). Planning application to be submitted prior to lease transfer to WSMTC.

308 Cleaning Contract – Weston Museum

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.

Following changes to cleaning services across the council, inconsistencies across sites were recognised. It was felt that there was a need to review the current service at Weston Museum.

Members were recommended by the DTC to consider Quote 3 of the report, as the company had a proven track record with the council through cleaning the Blakehay Theatre, who have trialled their services and found them of good quality.

Discussion ensued regarding the need to know the identity of the contactors in order to be able to declare an interest if needed. Members were advised that the contactors remained anonymous as advised by NSC to avoid Freedom of Information and Subject Access requests. However, the comments were taken on board and it was agreed that for commercially sensitive reasons, red papers could in future be issued to members only.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed that a full tender and procurement exercise which included Real Living Wage and Social Value had been undertaken but could appreciate the difficulty for members with limited information. As such it was suggested that the

tender process revert back to how it was previously reported but would the agenda item would be on red paper to have regard for contractual and commercial sensitivities in the first instance. This would happen with immediate effect for all future tenders.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor
SECONDED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton

Councillors Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter, Peter Crew and Peter Fox abstained from voting and declared a personal interest as they knew one of the tenderers.

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: That Quote 3 of the report at an annual cost of £14,491.48 be approved and the contactor be awarded the contract.

309 Cycle to Work Scheme

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.

The council had committed to take part in the Bike2Work Scheme. The initial suggestion had been brought up through the Climate Change Working Party, and referred to the Personnel Committee for approval.

The scheme allow ed staff to purchase a bike through the council, up to the value of £1,000. The council would pay for the initial purchase of the bike, with repayments made automatically through the payroll system. This would ideally be rolled out from the 1st April 2023 and available for contracted staff only (not seasonal or casual staff).

Members were requested to approve the ability for the Town Council to purchase bikes (upfront full cost of bike Max of £1,000) for contracted members of staff, after having obtained a signed loan agreement, which would then result in repayment in full over the period of time (max 12 months).

Members recognised that this was a national scheme and were in favour of its launch on 1st April 2023.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton
SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To approve the use of general reserves (and necessary accounting entries) to enable the Town Council to purchase bikes for contracted members of staff, after having obtained a sign loan agreement, to the maximum value of £1,000, which would then result in repayment in full over the period of time (12 months).

310 Payroll and HR service review

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.

Members were requested to approve that the Senior Management Team (SMT) should continue to work with and identify a contractor to create a Payroll and HR system to meet the council's requirements with the aim of transition to any new system within 2023/2024.

The council currently used North Somerset Council (via Liberata) to produce its payroll, a

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contact which started in April 2013 and currently cost £3,700 approximately, based on the following staff numbers: Contracted Staff: 40; Casual Staff: 26; Seasonal Staff: 3

The service provided, used Itrent but this was via the finance team having to process each individual staff data on a monthly basis and staff currently had no access to this system. Itrent by its design was a system used by large public sector organisations to enable staff to upload and have access to their payroll information such as: submitting timesheets, mileage, changing address or bank details and also to book holiday and sickness. All of which was currently having to be done manually on the system for individuals via the finance team.

Currently, all HR systems and processes were done manually. Following changes in staffing in central services, an opportunity had arisen to review and ideally simplify systems that were in place with the aim of minimising the risk to the council of data being held on the council's servers. The council currently used Worknest for HR advice but this did not include in house processes and systems.

NSC had confirmed that they are able to continue payroll for the council but would be reviewing the costs associated with doing so ahead of April 2023.

The report outlined the opportunities to improve current practices and options for members to consider:

1.1 NSC Payroll Services - Continue with NSC payroll services – it has been confirmed that the council are not able to get its staff access to the Itrent system, because of the server set up at NSC. Therefore, payroll processing for all staff individually would remain with WSMTC finance team (2 x people). The cost of this option would be a minimum of £3,700 per annum but would be likely to increase with the review being undertaken.

1.2 Itrent Direct – The DTC has explored the option of using Itrent directly, however the platform whilst ideal in what it can do, was aimed at much larger organisations and payroll bureaus who processed payroll for a number of clients. A cost review for this as an estimate going direct to Itrent would cost in the region of: Initial cost £8,000, Annual cost £9,000, Setup £54,000, Managed payroll setup £2,500, Managed payroll annual cost £7,729. This option was not felt to be a viable option for the council with its current size.

1.3 MHR – People First Software- The DTC has sourced a company who specialised in bespoke software that was based on the Itrent system, but with more functionality, particularly aimed at small public sector organisations. It combined HR with payroll and would create a robust system for HR alongside all the current requirements The council currently had for running its payroll (pension / HMRC and year end needs).

A copy of the People First proposal had previously been circulated for reference.

The senior management team had attended a presentation and demonstration of the software and in addition, had been provided with references from current customers which included police services and other councils.

Budget provision had been put in place to allow for a changed and improved service, with associated one-off first year costs. There would need to be some allocation of staff resource to undertake any changes and it was anticipated future years' annual costs would be a saving on the current costs.

All costs would come back to members once finalised for final approval, but as quoted stood at £31,920.00 to include upfront costs, over 5 years.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor David Dash

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To approve that officers continue to work with MHR People First, to create a Payroll and HR system to meet the council's requirements with the aim of transition to any new system within 2023/2024 giving necessary notices to the council's existing payroll provider as required (6 months).

311 Marine Lake Installation of Showers

The quotation from North Somerset Council (NSC) and report from the Deputy Town Clerk had been previously circulated.

The council had made a provision of £10,000 held in an Earmarked Reserve with the aspiration of providing showers on the seafront.

Meetings had been held with the Head of Open Spaces, Natural Environment and Leisure at NSC to understand the viability of doing so with a limited budget of £10,000. Initial discussions were on the installation of showers at Marine Lake.

NSC had confirmed that following the recent Levelling Up Fund awarded to them, they would be making improvements to the leisure facility at Marine Lake. This would include the provision of showers at this location and so the £10,000 from the council was not needed for this particular project.

NSC had then asked if the town council would like to use the £10,000 towards a shower unit at a different location along the seafront (near the Victorian Café). The town council would have to pay for the utility costs for this provision (water). During the height of the summer season this could be a high cost. NSC had promised to advise an estimate of this cost for consideration, as there was currently no budget for this.

NSC had confirmed that they would pick up the maintenance costs for an additional shower which would include compliance testing as required and that the cost of the shower including any alterations to existing mains supply) would be in the region of £8,290.

The town council currently operates and maintains the Waterpark facility on the seafront so an alternative option for consideration would be to replace the current wooden structure with a basic shower facility within the area. Further exploration works / surveys would be needed to confirm if this could be achieved. The work to build the structure could be done by the council's in-house grounds team and there was already mains water to the area. An upgrade to the structure would benefit the park's users and all water and utility costs associated with the area were already included in the council's revenue budget for 2023/2024.

Debate ensued. Some members argued that the money had been allocated for the Marine Lake and if that was no longer required they supported the proposal to spend the money at the Water Park and were of the opinion that if showers at the Water Park were not feasible then the monies should be put back into EMR. Other members argued that

showers on the beach would be beneficial and requested that the running cost figures be provided before a decision could be made.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne
SECONDED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To postpone a decision until the running costs have been clarified.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.57 pm.

Signed.....Dated.....
Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee