

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE MUSEUM ON
MONDAY 19TH JUNE 2023**

Meeting Commenced: 7:02 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.31 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak, Gill Bute, Mark Canniford John Crockford-Hawley, Hugh Malyan, Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim, Robert Skeen, Tim Taylor, Helen Thornton and Martin Williams.

IN ATTENDANCE : Councillor Peter Crew, Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk), Molly Mah er (Senior Development Officer), Rebecca Saunders (Civic & Committee Officer) and Steve Matthews (SJ Surveyors).

30	<p>Election of Chairman</p> <p>Nominations for the position of Chairman were invited.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Skeen</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried, and accordingly it was</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Councillor Alan Peak be elected Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee for the year 2023-24.</p>
31	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Thornton substituted by Councillor Robert Skeen.</p>
32	<p>Election of Vice Chairman</p> <p>Nominations for the position of Vice Chairman were invited.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried, and accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Councillor Mark Canniford be elected Vice Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee for the year 2023-24.</p>
33	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were none received.</p>

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34	<p>To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on the 17th April 2023</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Alan Payne SECONDED BY: Councillor Mark Pilgrim</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.</p>
35	<p>To approve the Committee Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Policy & Finance Committee Terms of Reference had been previously circulated.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Alan Peak SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Policy & Finance Committee Terms of Reference be noted.</p>
36	<p>To receive the minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 30th March 2023</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 30th March 2023 (unapproved) be noted.</p>
37	<p>To receive the minutes and recommendations of the Climate Change Working Party Meetings held on the 30th March 2023</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Climate Change Working Party Meetings held on the 30th March 2023 (unapproved) be noted.</p>
38	<p>To receive the minutes of the HQ Working Party Meetings held on the 24th March 2023</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the HQ Working Party Meetings held on the 24th March 2023 (unapproved) be noted.</p>
39	<p>Monthly Financial Reports: March & April 2023</p> <p>a) For Approval Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p>

Policy & Finance 190623	<p>.1 RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for March & April 2023 be approved.</p> <p>b) For Noting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Bank Reconciliations ii. Budgetary Control Report iii. Bank Interest Report iv. Schedule of Receipted Income v. Bad debt report vi. Overspend report <p>A member enquired as to why the interest rate being received was low compared to the current national rate. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that investment accounts were being explored but there was an issue with setting accounts up.</p> <p>It was suggested that the overspend was the result of a number of factors, including but not limited to the current cost of living crisis, inflation, increased utility and staffing costs.</p> <p>.2 RESOLVED: That reports 5b i – vi be noted.</p>
40	<p>To receive the Final Interim Audit Report for the year 2023-24</p> <p>The Audit report had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk reported that there were no major concerns, with a minor discrepancy due to a timing issue of financial reports being printed before the final payment run had completed. Overall it was felt that the accounts had been kept well.</p> <p>There were concerns raised by members regarding the level of general reserves being too low. The recommended level was three times the average monthly expenditure, however there was no statutory level to adhere to. Staffing cost increases had been budgeted at 2.5%, but following the local government pay award this was closer to 10%. Insurance and utility costs had also increased beyond budgeted amounts. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that there would be a need to have much tighter budget controls in place this year, with a need to work closely with each service.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Final Interim Audit Report for the year 2023-24 be received.</p>
41	<p>Year End Accounts for the year ending 31/03/23</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Year End Accounts for the year ending 31/03/23 be approved.</p>
42	<p>As part of the Audit requirement members are requested to</p> <p>Members proceeded through the accounting statements line by line to agree the Town Council was fulfilling its responsibility.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne SECONDED BY: Councillor Martin Williams</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the Accounting Statements (AGAR – Annual return) by members as a

Policy & Finance 190623	<p>whole,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. To approve the Accounting Statements (AGAR – Annual return) by resolution; and Sign and date as required (AGAR – Annual return) 3. That the Chairman sign and date as required (AGAR – Annual return) 4. To receive and note the accompanying Statement of Accounts (not audited) as supporting documents to the (AGAR – Annual return)
42.1	<p>Year end Position and effects on capital programme 23/24</p> <p>The report of the Deputy Town Clerk / RFO had been previously circulated.</p> <p>A Medium-Term Financial Plan was in place, having been adopted by the committee in February 2023. The Deputy Town Clerk had recognised at previous meetings that there would be a need to review reserves following an increase in capital projects. Castle Batch was now fully funded and nearing completion, with funds from General Reserves previously agreed to cover a funding shortfall. There was, however, a challenge with works due to take place at 32 Waterloo Street, for which the contract for works had already been awarded. There was a funding shortfall of £195,000, with £100,000 currently allocated for contingency. This was a result of the unprecedented year end position and increased costs having had to use a considerable amount of general reserves which had been identified to be used to support the project at Waterloo Street– this could no longer be the case.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk / RFO advised the committee that general reserve levels were now critically low and the council could not afford to have another year of such high expenditure especially as there was not a budgetary provision in 23/24 to replenish General reserves. The committee were advised that the situation meant that in order to proceed with project commitments already awarded to contractors, all revenue and capital expenditure would need to be reviewed. It was further advised that the council must be very cautious about when and how any future capital projects were undertaken (planned or unplanned) as the council’s financial position was very tenuous at the current time.</p> <p>Senior Management had reviewed budgets and reserves in order to find cost savings which were included in the report provided to identify potential savings for members consideration. If deemed appropriate these collectively could bring the funding shortfall down to £71,000.</p> <p>Members were provided with four options to proceed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring additional PWLB Loan • Redirecting of CIL funding currently earmarked for the Quarry • Grant funding opportunities • Reducing building works scheme <p>Additional context was given to the options provided, including the prolonged length of time the PWLB loan process would take, and the fact that the building works scheme had already been reduced substantially, and any additional exclusions would not offer the total savings required.</p> <p>A member enquired how much money had been put aside for The Quarry project. The Deputy Town clerk informed that £200k was assigned for this project. It was suggested that this should be repurposed at this point in time as the Quarry had not</p>

actually come over to the Town Council yet and as such, a revised programme could be considered when this eventuality was needed.

Debate ensued. Members asked if the decision was required immediately, noting that this could be reviewed when the position of the contingency sums were clearer. Members were also reluctant to remove any funding from the Quarry. The Deputy Town Clerk and the councils appointed contract administrator advised that the contingency sums were required due to the unknown condition of the roof and tower and may be required in full. A member queried if there was £71,000 worth of savings within the contract, to which it was reiterated that a reduction in the scheme had already been carried out and this was not felt to be possible.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

A vote was taken and **carried** (8For; 1Against; 1Abstention) Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED: To approve virements of monies from revenue budgets & EMR to the Capital Reserve budgets as per the report, summarised as follows:

Revenue (previously approved for use by P & F 10th April 2023)	Amount £'s
Capital Provision in Revenue (For HQ)	£145,000
Environmental Budget (for Road Map to Zero improvements to Assets)	£50,000
PPM Provision (towards upgrades)	£42,829
Museum NNDR provision (not required)	£57,000
EMR Provision – reallocation (recommended to Town Council for final approval)	Amount £'s
EMR Provision for Plant Room (monies to be taken from revenue budget 23/24 instead)	£51,105
EMR Provision for Grit Bins (Monies no longer needed due to service change and ability to supply GRIT)	£3,735
EMR WIB Provision for planter at Weston Station (Planter now been provided by Wessex Water so no longer needed)	£5,000
EMR Community Projects – provision for upgrade of changing facilities at Waterpark (This will not be done in 23/24 so can be included in next years budget provision or EMRRP)	£7,200
TOTAL	£124,040

1. The remaining balance of £71,037 required for capital works at 32 Waterloo Street should be taken from the councils General Reserve balance, in the event that the contingency sums included in the tendered sum be fully required. (The project total was noted as £818,406 (awarded to contractor) which includes a total contingency of £100k). It was further noted that should future capital work projects (The Old Town Quarry) require funding that cannot be funded by CIL provisions or ability to gain grant funding the council would need to apply for a PWLB loan to facilitate this or

Policy & Finance 190623	<p>other future capital projects noting the depletion of general reserves at the current time.</p> <p>2. That the budget setting process for 2024/2025 would need to include robust monetary provisions to be put place to replenish General reserves to reflect requirements of the MTFP and recommended reserve levels, considering predicted financial positions at the end of 2023/2024.</p>
43	<p>To appoint fourth bank signatory as advised by Council on 18th May 2023</p> <p>The report of the Deputy Town Clerk / RFO had been previously circulated.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne SECONDED BY: Councillor Alan Peak</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Mark Canniford as the fourth bank signatory for the Council's bank mandates</p>
	<p><i>To resolve under the Public Bodies (Admissions of Meeting) Act 1960 to exclude the public and press for the following item by reasons of the confidential nature of the business.</i></p>
44	<p>Procurement of various Town Council Contracts</p> <p>The tender analysis reports for the Town Councils professional services had been previously circulated.</p> <p>It was explained that for the majority of the contracts the recommendation followed the tender scoring, however, for two of the contracts the hourly rate had been taken into consideration as this would have a significant impact on council budgets.</p> <p>A member noted that it was disappointing to see a lack of local companies applying for these tender opportunities, and asked if it would be possible to go back out to tender.-It was explained that in order to go back out to tender, there would need to be a significant change in the tender specification.</p> <p>.1 Building, Mechanical & Electrical Services Contract</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Gill Bute</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: John West Contractor Ltd to be appointed as the Building, Mechanical and Electrical services contractor to be reviewed after the first six months and thereafter at a period of 3 years with the potential of two, one-year extensions giving rise to a total contract period of 5 years.</p> <p>.2 Building Surveying Services</p>

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

RESOLVED: Currie & Brown to be appointed as the Building Surveying Services contractor to be reviewed after the first six months and thereafter at a period of 3 years with the potential of two, one-year extensions giving rise to a total contract period of 5 years.

.3 Quantity Surveying Services

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Martin Williams

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

RESOLVED: Currie and Brown to be appointed as the Quantity Surveying Services contractor to be reviewed after the first six months and thereafter at a period of 3 years with the potential of two, one-year extensions giving rise to a total contract period of 5 years.

.4 Structural Engineering Services-

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Martin Williams

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

RESOLVED: Clarkebond to be appointed as the Structural Engineering Services contractor to be reviewed after the first six months and thereafter at a period of 3 years with the potential of two, one-year extensions giving rise to a total contract period of 5 years.

.5 Arboricultural and Environmental Services

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Gill Bute

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

RESOLVED: Jack Pine Trees Ltd to be appointed as the Arboricultural and Environmental Consultant to be reviewed after the first six months and thereafter at a period of 3 years with the potential of two, one-year extensions giving rise to a total contract period of 5 years.

.6 Insurance

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk was previously circulated with the agenda.

A full procurement exercise had been carried out in order to have insurance cover in place by 1st July 2023, however only two companies expressed an interest in the contract. Both companies used the same underwriter and would be unable to quote against each other. With this in mind a tender extension was provided and an additional company was approached. In order to ensure the contract was awarded prior to the expiration of the current insurance cover, there was a need to delegate the decision to the Town Clerk.

A member suggested increasing the voluntary excess and allocating provisional funds in case there was a need to make a claim. 7

Policy &	Finance 190623 PROPOSED BY: Councillor Alan Peak A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: Authorise for appointment to be made under standing order 29.3 by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee.
	There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.31 pm Signed.....Dated..... Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee