

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE MUSEUM ON
MONDAY 25th APRIL 2022**

Meeting Commenced: 7:00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8:13 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak (Chairman), Mark Canniford, Pete Crew (S), Dave Dash, Pete Fox, Pete McAleer (S), Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter and Tim Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer/Officer Manager), Fiona Walsh (Finance Officer), Molly Maher (Development Officer), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk Operational Services) and Steve Matthews (SJ Surveyors).

403 To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sarah Codling who was substituted by Pete Crew and Helen Thornton who was substituted by Pete McAleer.

404 To receive Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

405 To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 21st February

The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.

An amendment was requested to the resolution of minute number 333 – Waterloo Street Issues and Proposals, to reflect that:

*That option a. of the report be approved, namely that the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman ~~and Vice Chairman~~ of the Policy & Finance Committee and the Chairman **and Vice Chairman** of the HQ Working Party, seek to renegotiate the purchase price, being prepared to walk away from the transaction. Should agreement be reached then contracts to be exchanged.*

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

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.

Councillor Mark Canniford joined the meeting at 7.03 pm.

406 The minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 10th March 2022 (unapproved) (attached)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 10th March 2022 (unapproved) be noted.

407 Monthly Financial Reports: February 2022

a) For Approval

Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter

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

408.1 RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure for February 2022 be approved.

b) For Noting

- i. Bank Reconciliations
- ii. Budgetary Control Report
- iii. Bank Interest Report
- iv. Schedule of Receipted Income
- v. Bad debt report
- vi. Overspend report

It was clarified that the overspend for the toilet cleaning was an increase due to a slight increase in the contract costs.

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

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

408 Grove Park Toilet Doors – Reference from the Town Council meeting

The minute extract from the Town Council Meeting, joint report of the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk and the report of the Surveyor had been previously circulated.

The Surveyor, Steve Matthews, advised that the main issue was with the coin pay management system and if this was to be taken out, the whole system and the doors would need to be changed to enable automatic lockable doors with handles. He had not been able to find an alternative supplier who offered a free of charge management system and that, out of 2 of the 3 quotes received, Healthmatic was the recommended option as their price included fitting and installation. There was an 8-10 week lead time for door installation.

Steve was thanked for his explanation of the complexity of the issue.

Debate ensued. Members felt that they had a duty to follow through with making the toilets a free provision after two democratic votes had been taken.

The suggestion was made to better utilise the 2x CCTV cameras already in situ and increase signage that they were in operation, in the hope of deterring future vandalism. Also when they were closed to add signage to advise members of the public why.

Steve advised that £2,800 could be saved by not replacing service the doors.

In response to a suggestion made regarding changing one of the toilet cubicles at Grove Park to urinals, Steve advised that this would not be a cost neutral option. If doors were used not on a management system and not able to lock/unlock remotely, this would increase costs in other ways.

A strong view was expressed that the council had a moral responsibility to protect the safety of the contractor's staff, which was why the toilets had been closed in the first place. The council should be investing in a long term solution with North Somerset Council to resolve the problem, which unfortunately would be a 4-year plan.

Members responded that the decision to reopen the toilets free of charge had already been taken and that it was the committee's responsibility to agree the financing of it rather than to debate the original decision.

In response to a question regarding the budget for toilet vandalism, the Finance Officer advised that there was an additional £10,000 in the budget for other sites within the planned maintenance budget.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Dave Dash

SECONDED BY: Councillor Pete McAleer

A vote was taken and **carried** (*1 against Councillor Ian Porter and 1 abstention*). Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: To approve the quotation from Healthmatic to supply and install replacement doors and adaptations to allow free of charge entry to current management systems at all sites, to exclude the replacement of the service doors.

409 Waterloo Street – Issues and Proposals

The notes of the HQ Working Party meeting held on 20th January 2022 had been previously circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk verbally reported that the purchase price had been negotiated down to £400,000 with the vendors, subject to contract. This had been agreed by all the relevant Chairmen and Vice Chairmen via email. He had been assured by the vendors that the contracts would exchange imminently.

The Vice Chairman of the HQ Working Party suggested that HQ Working Party members met soon to discuss the planning implications of the reception area, in order for the Surveyor to pursue.

The Town Clerk requested members to approve the £400,000 purchase price.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter

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

RESOLVED:

1. To receive the notes of the HQ Working Party meeting held on 20th January 2022.

2. To approve the final £400,000 purchase price.

A member queried the further costs associated with the project. The Town Clerk advised that these had been reported and budgeted for and could be spread over several financial years and included accessibility and environmental improvements as well as repairs.

410 Contract for HR, Legal and Health and Safety Support

The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk advised that the cost of the advisory and support service from Worknest had increased due to an increase in usage. However, the service provided was still much more cost effective than paying hourly solicitors' fees on a case by case basis. This contract provider was an industry specialist in the parish and town sector and is very familiar with the Green Book as well as our local terms and conditions of contract who understood the town council's specific needs. He therefore recommended renewal of the contract as an exception to SO's as reported.

The Town Clerk added that the contract as well as providing advice the contract covered not only the cost of court fees and process but also any compensatory awards made, as long as their advice had been followed.

A suggestion was made that, before future contact renewals, the council consider pairing with other parish and town councils to receive a better offer.

The Town Clerk informed that contact provider worked with many other councils and agreed to consider this before contract renewal.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Fox
SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

A vote was taken and **carried**. (one against), Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED: That in accordance with SO 39.2(d)(ix), to renew the contract on the terms reported.

41 Ear Marked Reserves (EMR) for 2022 to 2023

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

The Town Clerk added that in this case, COVID had had a positive effect as there was not a lot of lost income and more of a delay in projects.

There were no areas of concern to highlight.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Pete Fox
SECONDED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor

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

RESOLVED: To approve the Ear Marked Reserves (EMR) for 2022 to 2023 as reported at £1,148.458.

412 Evaluation of the Town Council Strategy

- 1.1 Covering report – explaining the works carried out and resolutions required
- 1.2 Appendix 1 – updates strategy for approval
- 1.3 Appendix 2 – strategy evaluation

These had all been circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Development Officer highlighted that out of 74 resolutions made by council, 66 had either been implemented or were ongoing. The proposed amendments to the Strategy were highlighted in yellow for members' approval.

Appendix 3 was a video for use on the website and social media outlets for member's approval and was played at the meeting.

Members thanked officers for their work in producing the video and felt it put Weston in a good light.

The Town Clerk commented that members should also praise themselves as the video demonstrated how progressive the town council was.

Points raised by members were to change the stated date of the election to 2019 and some other factual changes would be communicated to officers separately.

It was the strong view of a member that the video should have featured a councillor and not an officer.

Other members would have liked the opportunity to have been consulted before its production.

The Development Officer responded that only points that were contained to in the Strategy and which had been resolved by committees were referred to in the video.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Pete McAleer

SECONDED BY: Councillor Pete Crew

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

RESOLVED:

1. To note the evaluation of the strategy (appendix 2)
2. To approve additions (in yellow) to the strategy (appendix 1)
3. To note the video and approve use on the website and social media outlets (appendix 3) subject to amendments provided to Officers.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.13 pm

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