

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT GROVE HOUSE ON
THURSDAY 11TH JANUARY 2024**

Meeting Commenced: 6:57 pm

Meeting Concluded: 7.50 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak (Chair), Gill Bute, Mark Canniford, John Crockford-Hawley, Owen James (S), Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim, Tim Taylor and Helen Thornton and Martin Williams.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Peter Crew, Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer), Samantha Bishop (Committee & Office Manager), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk – Operational Services) and Molly Maher (Senior Development Officer).

286	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hugh Malyan who was substituted by Owen James.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Tim Taylor with no substitute.</p> <p>It was noted that Councillor Peter Crew was in attendance.</p>
287	<p>To receive Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were none received.</p>
288	<p>To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on the 18TH December 2023</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Gill Bute SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>
289	<p>Old Town Quarry – Community Ownership Fund Grant Award</p> <p>Congratulations were conveyed to the Deputy Town Clerk and Development Team for securing the grant from the Town Clerk which was concurred by the members.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk reported that it had been an extremely tight two-week turnaround. The business plan was community focused based on the council's Strategy. The £700k grant, plus £200K match funding would give a buffer for project overspends. It was noted there were many wildlife and environmental aspects to manage and that this project was phase 1 of a bigger project.</p>

The grant stipulated that the money needed to be spent by the 20th December 2024 and a meeting was to be held with the new surveyor to progress refurbishment works as per the business plan and previously adopted strategy. It was noted that a meeting with North Somerset Council's Place team had been held the previous day and they had been briefed on the successful grant application.

It was explained that 4.3 of the agenda was to consider staffing requirements, recommending to outsource to a Project Manager as project management ability would be very tight inhouse with the retirement of the Town Clerk. It was noted that the council had 21 other projects going on between now and June, including the move to 32, Waterloo Street.

Members advised that time sensitive projects must be the priority and suggested that as part of the council decision making process review, a 'Project' committee consisting of committee Chair's maybe worth considering.

Concerns were raised regarding the project management costs swallowing the grant funding and employing staff and suggested that current staffing structures may need to be reviewed. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the grant included a specific amount for professional fees and that costs would need to be contained within this sum only.

The Deputy Town Clerk accepted members' concerns and advised that the project management specification would need to be very clear and in post very short-term. The second part of the recommendation, to reinstate the Climate Change Officer position would also be a short-term position of a suggested, 2year appointment. The position would predominantly work on the Quarry but would also cover other climate and wellbeing projects and monitoring the Roadmap to Zero. Once, the Quarry was developed, the council could then review this position.

Further discussion was had with regard to the £5,000 suggested for a consultant for the café. The council has experience of running a café at the Museum and it was suggested that the business who runs it needs to incur these costs. Flexibility in the business plan was needed to enable opportunities. The Deputy Town Clerk advised it was to establish a viable business model suitable for the Quarry and what a café would require.

289.1 To receive the grant application and adopt the Business Plan

Previously circulated with the agenda.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Owen James

SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

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

RECOMMENDED: To receive the grant application and adopt the Business Plan.

289.2 To note and approve the timescale for Lease completion and procurement for the Quarry restoration and improvement in accordance with the Business Plan

The Town Clerk reported that the lease completion would be as soon as practicably possible and anticipated early February; procurement needed to begin forthwith.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute

	<p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the timescale for Lease completion and procurement for the Quarry restoration and improvement in accordance with the Business Plan</p> <p>289.3 To consider staffing requirements: Project Management and Development The report of the Deputy Town Clerk/RFO had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that when the grant application was submitted it was based on the council having a Climate Change Development Officer in place to undertake the project under the guidance of a Project Manager. This post had been removed by the Policy & Finance Committee in December’s budget setting meeting and the report was requesting members to reinstate the post.</p> <p>Further discussion ensued regarding the role of the Climate Change Development Officer and the Deputy Town Clerk was happy to take away the concerns raised by members that the requirements of the post be investigated and give members options on staffing structure and costs.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>289.3.1 RESOLVED: To approve the provision of £20,000 recognised for professional fees to appoint an external project manager/ consultant with immediate effect to undertake the project works and evaluation for the COP grant. This would still sit under the supervision of the DTC whilst working alongside the Senior Development Officer to enable the grant to be completed within required timescales and provide the essential continuity to the project. The successful applicant would need to have demonstrable experience in grant aided project delivery of this kind and ideally knowledge of council procedures.</p> <p>289.3.2 RESOLVED: That the recommendation of reinstating the Climate Change Officer post be deferred pending investigations and options on staffing structure and costs.</p> <p>289.4. To recommend acceptance of the grant award to the Town Council</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Martin Williams SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: To recommend acceptance of the grant award to the Town Council.</p>
<p>290</p>	<p>Authorised Bank Signatories – update of existing staff signatories The report of the Deputy Town Clerk / RFO had been previously circulated.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne SECONDED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p>

	<p>RESOLVED: To approve the Town Clerk Secretary to have administration set up for <u>payment release</u> only on the council's bank accounts to make the 3rd Authorised internal person for online banking. This should be reviewed following any changes made to the senior management team and replacement of current staffing positions as required.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.50 pm</p> <p>Signed.....Dated..... Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee</p>