

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT
THE TOWN HALL ON
MONDAY 20TH JANUARY 2020**

Meeting Commenced: 7.04 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.50 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Mark Canniford (Town Mayor), Dot Agassiz, Marc Aplin, Ray Armstrong, Roger Bailey, Mike Bell, Gill Bute, James Clayton, Sarah Codling, Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, David Dash, Peter Fox, Catherine Gibbons, David Hitchins, Jan Holloway, Daniel Marcos-Ashworth, Pete McAleer, Robert Payne, Marcia Pepperall, Alan Peak, Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter, Sonia Russe, Tim Taylor, Helen Thornton, Richard Tucker and Roz Willis.

IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearce (Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer), Chris Millard (Mayors Civic Officer), Joel Austin (Finance Officer), Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Becky Walsh (Communications Officer), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Officer), Matt Hardy (Visitor Services Manager), Reverend Peter Ashman (Town Mayor's Chaplain), Vicky Angear (Weston & Somerset Mercury) and Jocelyn Holder.

The Town Mayor invited his Chaplain to say prayers.

311	To receive Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ella Sayce.
312	Declarations of Interest Councillor Roger Bailey declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Citizens Advice Bureau.
313	To approve the accuracy of the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on the 18th November 2019 The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Alan Peak SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter A vote was taken and carried . RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman.
314	To receive announcements and communications from the Town Mayor The Mayor's announcements and communications had been previously circulated with the agenda. The Town Mayor and Mayoress had attended 32 engagements and the Deputy Mayor had attended 3 on his behalf; which was a total of 148 to date. The Town Mayor highlighted on the upcoming future events:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayors Charity Ball – 28th March 2020 – Members were encouraged to buy their tickets promptly. • The Community Notable reception – 20th February 2020. Members were encouraged to nominate worthy candidates from their wards.
315	<p>To receive the Notes of the Youth Council Meeting</p> <p>The notes of Youth Council meetings held in October, November and December 2019 had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Youth Champion member reported that she had clarified to the Youth Council that Town Councillors were non-voting members.</p> <p>The Town Mayor extended a welcome to the newly appointed Youth Council Officer, Alli Waller.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Noted.</p>
316	<p>Reference from the Expenditure and Governance Working Party held on 6th January 2020</p> <p>The Minute extract had been previously circulated with the agenda which recommended the Council to consider implementing a town orderly scheme and make suitable provision within the 2020/2021 budget.</p> <p>Councillor Mike Bell was invited to present the item. The Mayor advised that it would not be voted on until item 8 on the agenda.</p> <p>Councillor Mike Bell reported that the broad consensus of the Working Party was that a scheme was needed to clear cycle paths/walk ways of weeds and litter in the town and was happy to propose the recommendation under agenda item 8.</p> <p>The Chairman of that Working Party meeting highlighted that the need for a village orderly scheme had been recognised some time ago and so he was in support of the proposal. However, felt this should be funded from the climate change budget and not as an additional item.</p> <p>Debate ensued both for and against the proposal.</p> <p>These issues were very much the most common complaints received by residents and that North Somerset Council did not have the funds to address them. The scheme should have its own budget item as it would otherwise utilise the entirety of the climate change budget along with the council's rewilding plans.</p> <p>Some members argued that funding a scheme was double taxation and that more investigation of projects needed to be undertaken and more collaborative working with North Somerset Council was required.</p> <p>In response it was stated that the purpose of the scheme was to address the issues not provided by North Somerset Council which could be by supporting/enabling community organisations. The Town Council needed to step in and address this like other councils have around the country. North Somerset Council had cut their funding for this over 15 years ago which was why there was such a difference in the state of the town. These problems should not be linked to</p>

	<p>the climate change emergency. Residents were very unhappy and the Council needed to address this.</p> <p>The proposal was based on employing up to four posts but the specifics of their remit would be dependent on further investigations by the Grounds Manager.</p> <p>The Town Mayor advised that the scheme would need a budget heading to be discussed under item 8. Speaking in his role as a ward councillor, he had witnessed an increase in the amount of litter and unmaintained areas in the town which needed to be addressed. North Somerset Council had stopped addressing these issues over 16 years ago due to their budget cuts.</p> <p>It was asked if the Council could take on these lower level issues with the posts recruited for taking the dog bin contact in house instead of new posts? The Chairman of the Community Services Committee advised that the appointed posts were fully utilised and there would be no capacity for any other work. The Council needed to act sensibly and collaborate with North Somerset Council to address the issues.</p> <p>In response to comments made in relation to dog fouling, a member explained that this was a minimal issue committed by a very small number of offenders. If monitored by Town Council staff, enforcement action could be applied by North Somerset Council.</p> <p>The Town Mayor then ended discussion and advised that the proposal would be voted upon under item 8 on the agenda.</p>
317	<p>To approve the Recommendations of the Climate Change Working Group</p> <p>The recommendations of the Climate Change Working Group Working Group had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton SECONDED BY: Councillor Alan Peak</p> <p>1. Terms of Reference for the Working Group be adopted as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the objective is the Town Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. 2) That there is a requirement to understand our current carbon footprint in order to benchmark progress going forward 3) That we must address issues in all council activities and promote this to the community. 4) Areas of re-wilding should be considered within the council's portfolio 5) The work of the Working Group will cover all town council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buildings -Operations -Activities -Vehicles (both town council and staff) <p>2.To approve the appointment as detailed in 2 above of an environmental consultant to ascertain the Council's current carbon footprint and to make recommendations for reduction to net zero by 2030</p> <p>An AMENDMENT was suggested that the remit of the Working group needed</p>

	<p>to be more strategic and that the wording of point 2 be changed to include 'relevant processes and policies of the Council'. There was a concern that the appointment of an environmental consultant would use up the majority of the Climate Emergency budget.</p> <p>It was suggested that the Council could utilise the expertise of the 'consultant' appointed by North Somerset Council (NSC).</p> <p>The Town Clerk clarified that the officer appointed by NSC would not be in post until late February. He had already made contact with three other environmentalist consultants who would be able to conduct desktop assessment with the information the Council provided but would also visit all council premises and make specific recommendations for a road map to reduce the council's net carbon footprint to zero by 2030. The cost was estimated at only approximately £6,000.</p> <p>In response to this suggestion, a dual hatted member explained that NSC had appointed a project manager which was not the same skill set as a chartered environmentalist. The council needed to take a wider approach and cooperation with NSC was essential.</p> <p>The AMENDMENT was accepted by the proposer and became the substantive motion.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>317.1 To approve the Terms of Reference of the Climate Emergency Working Group with the amendment that the wording of point 2 be changed to include 'relevant processes and policies of the Council'.</p> <p>317.2 Approve the appointment as detailed in 2 above of an Environmental Consultant to ascertain the Council's current carbon footprint and to make recommendations for reduction to net zero by 2030.</p>
318	<p>To approve the budget for the year 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021 and set the precept for the same period</p> <p>.1 Tourism Budgets 2020 / 2021</p> <p>The report of the Deputy Town Clerk with options for reduction in budget, as per committee resolution, had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council was invited to propose the motion. He thanked officers and the Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee for investigating into and presenting the 3 options before members for consideration and therefore</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Alan Peak SECONDED BY: Councillor Ian Porter</p> <p>That option 2 to allow the VIC to remain open by way of modified staffing model and allow marginal growth in website and VIC income, with advertising campaigns improved Expenditure £183,907 with net costs of £137.307 be approved.</p>

The seconder supported the proposal but was unhappy as to how the situation had been handled by members, which had caused members of staff concern and distress over the Christmas period.

The Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee stated that the reckless decision to cut the budget by £50,000 would have a dramatic effect on the tourism services. Option 2 was equivalent to a standstill budget, meaning a reduction in marketing that affects all town council services such as the water park, Museum and Blakehay Theatre. Tourism brought visitors into the town who spent money and therefore supported local businesses. The proposal made at the Policy and Finance Committee to cut the budget had been handled very badly. If there was no option to revert back to the initial draft budget, then option 2 was the only viable option available.

The Town Clerk clarified in response to a question that option 2 would secure current officers' jobs but would reduce the opening hours of the VIC, resulting in reduced staff hours overall.

A vote was taken and **carried**.

RESOLVED: That option 2 to allow the VIC to remain open by way of modified staffing model and allow marginal growth in website and VIC income, with advertising campaigns improved Expenditure £183,907 with net costs of - £137,307 be approved.

.2 To approve the Revenue budget for the year 2020 /2021

.3 To approve the precept rate for the year 2020/2021 for submission to NSC

The Revenue budget for the year 2020 /2021 had been previously circulated with the agenda.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton

SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter McAleer

That the budget as circulated be approved with two amendments:

1. To increase the Community Services budget by £50,000 to address crime reduction.
2. To include a capital provision of £100,000 for capital expenditure, including but not limited to CCTV, which be monitored by the Policy & Finance Committee.

Debate ensued. Some members opposed these additions as it was felt an irresponsible use of tax payers' money when North Somerset Council were recruiting for Community Response Officers to address crime prevention. The CCTV budget had been cut on the advice that the cost would be recovered over a 3-4-year period.

An **AMENDMENT** in accordance with the recommendation from the Expenditure and Governance Working Party as previously debated was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mike Bell

SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne

	<p>To make provision of a sum of £100,000 within the 2020/2021 budget to enable the implementation of a town orderly scheme to clear cycle paths/walkways of weeds and litter in the town.</p> <p>Members sought clarity on the increase to the budget and whether this was considered value for money as the council must govern responsibly.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Amendment with the first two additions in the Proposal this was a 22.8% increase on the budget.</p> <p>A vote on the AMENDMENT was taken and carried. (15 for; 13 against)</p> <p>RESOLVED: To increase the Community Services budget by £100,000 to consider implementing a town orderly scheme.</p> <p>Debate then ensued on the Proposal and in particular the two additional items of expenditure proposed.</p> <p>There was concern that putting money into crime prevention would be duplication when Avon and Somerset Police were responsible for this and North Somerset Council were advertising Community Support Officer posts.</p> <p>In response it was stated that the purpose of the first amendment was to target the ever increasing crime in the town. Weston was the second largest town or parish council in the country and its only contribution towards crime prevention was the funding towards CCTV. The Council needed to be more proactive and support initiatives.</p> <p>A member explained that the role of a Special Constable was the same as a PCSO but without enforcement powers. There was also a risk that PSCO's could be pulled off these jobs by the Police to deal with emergencies.</p> <p>In response to a request to defer the debate to committee the Town Mayor clarified that there was no time for this as the Town Council's precept needed to be agreed and set by the end of January.</p> <p>The Deputy Town Clerk then confirmed the budget figure including the two amendments which stood at £2,567.270 which reflected a 27.81% budget increase and equated to a £1.78 per week increase on a Band D property.</p> <p>A vote on the substantive motion was then taken and carried. (15 for; 14 against)</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the revenue budget for the year 2020/2021 and b) the town precept at £2,567.270 for submission to North Somerset Council. <p><i>Councillor Mike Bell left the meeting at 8.27 pm</i></p> <p><i>Councillor Lisa Pilgrim left the meeting at 8.29 pm</i></p>
319	<p>North Somerset Council: Corporate Plan and Budget Consultations</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p>

	<p>The Town Clerk referred to section 5 of his report 'Assessment' which required member's attention. This recommended that NSC be specifically asked to request North Somerset Council in the section 'An Open and Enabling Organisation' to aim to devolve local facilities wherever possible, and to engage with town and parish councils to seek devolution opportunities.</p> <p>Members agreed with this recommendation and wished the following comments also to be included within the consultation response to North Somerset Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reflect that resources were scarce and to work with parish and town councils avoid duplication of services. • That something needed to be included to address the quality of housing by private landlords. • To clarify the definition of 'Strategic' sites such as parks. <p>A vote was taken and carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk respond to the consultation on NSC Corporate Plan for 2019-2023 and Budget for 2020-2021, to include the above members' comments within the response recommended within his report.</p>
320	<p>North Somerset Council: Climate Change Strategy Consultation</p> <p>To receive the report of the Town Clerk which outlined a recommendation for member's consideration.</p> <p>Councillor Helen Thornton was invited to propose the recommendation and added that support and engagement with NSC was crucial and that lobbying of central government was missing from their strategy. She then encouraged individuals to respond separately to the council's motion.</p> <p>A member referred to the orderly scheme that the Council had just approved within their budget and how this contributed towards the climate change emergency.</p> <p>A further member asked for clarification on the council's strategy on encouraging visitors into the town, particularly around parking.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Helen Thornton SECONDED BY: Councillor Alan Peak</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Council were in support of NSC's Climate Change Emergency consultation but would like to see more lobbying of central government for funding within NSC's Strategy.</p>
321	<p>Motion to Council under SO11 from Councillor Roz Willis</p> <p>Councillor Roz Willis was asked to propose her motion to the Council as follows:</p>

	<p>'I ask Members to support my request as Armed Forces Champion for Weston Town Council and on behalf of the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership North Somerset.</p> <p>As Members will be aware from media coverage the Royal British Legion (RBL) are planning to close Weston-super-Mare Somerset House, Beach Road from April 2020. Redundancies for staff are already in progress from the end of February 2020.</p> <p>I ask that this Council write to the RBL and give support to the continuation of a much respected and needed business that is Somerset House.</p> <p>This Council supports all serving personnel past and present and under the signed Armed Forces Covenant, as a partner, Weston Town Council have a duty of care to this community. The Royal British Legion Somerset House is a vibrant part of Weston-super-Mare's community and helps the town maintain its important links with the armed forces. It is also a big part of the economy and tourism for the town.'</p> <p>Councillor Willis informed that she had a signed petition from residents supporting the proposal and that Weston College, also an Armed Forces Covenant partner were also in support.</p> <p>The Town Mayor voiced his support of the motion and said he would ask the RBL to reconsider as he had concerns regarding the damaging effects to the community and the town.</p> <p>Members were in full support of the motion and were very disappointed at the decision to close it. Unfortunately, Weston was not the only place struggling and experiencing closure and it was very sad to see.</p> <p>A meeting with the RBL was suggested and it was also suggested that the town's Member of Parliament should be asked to endorse the Council's motion and reply independently.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Town Mayor on behalf of the Council, write to the RBL indicating their grave concerns over the decision to close Somerset House.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.50 pm.</p> <p>Signed: Dated: Town Mayor</p>