

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL ON  
MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022**

**Meeting Commenced:** 7.00 pm

**Meeting Concluded:** 9.06 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors James Clayton (Town Mayor), Dot Agassiz, Mark Aplin, Ray Armstrong, Mike Bell, Jill Bute, Mark Canniford, Gillian Carpenter, Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, Ciaran Cronnelly, David Dash, Peter Fox, Catherine Gibbons, Pete McAleer, Clare Morris, Robert Payne, Alan Peak, Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter, Sonia Russe, Tim Taylor, Richard Tucker and Helen Thornton.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk), Samantha Bishop (Office Manager /Committee Officer), Rebecca Saunders (Mayors Civic Officer/Committee Officer), Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk – HR/Administration), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk – Operational Services), Becky Walsh (Communications Officer), Reverend Peter Ashman (Town Mayors Chaplin), Inspector Graeme Hall (Avon and Somerset Police) and Mr John Christopher (Member of the Public).

The Town Mayor invited his Chaplain to say prayers. It was noted that former Councillor Robert Cleland had sadly passed away and so a minute's silence was undertaken in remembrance of him.

The Town Mayor invited members of the public to address the meeting.

The Town Mayor congratulated Councillor Clare Morris on her recent election and welcomed her to the Town Council and the meeting.

<b>290</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutions</b>  Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Hitchins, Roger Bailey, Sarah Codling, Jan Holloway and Roz Willis.
<b>291</b>	<b>To receive Declarations of Interest</b>  There were none received.
<b>292</b>	<b>To approve the accuracy of the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 2021</b>  <b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Tim Taylor <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Ray Armstrong  <b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.
<b>293</b>	<b>To receive announcements and communications from the Town Mayor</b>  The Mayor's announcements and communications were circulated prior to the meeting.

	<p>There had been 141 engagements attended by the Mayor, 7 by the Deputy Mayor, which was a total of 149 to date.</p> <p>Significant upcoming events were included within the report.</p>
<p><b>294</b></p>	<p><b>To receive the Notes of the Youth Council Meetings held in October and November &amp; December 2021 and January 2022</b></p> <p>The notes of the Youth Council meetings had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Members noted that notes received were for meetings held in September, October, November 2021 and January 2022.</p> <p>It was also noted that the reference to Councillors in attendance at the January meeting should record CSR.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the notes of the Youth Council meeting for September, October, November 2021 and January 2022 be received.</p>
<p><b>295</b></p>	<p><b>Neighbourhood and Response Policing in Weston-super-Mare</b></p> <p>The Town Mayor welcomed Inspector Graeme Hall to the meeting.</p> <p>Inspector Graeme Hall introduced himself and his 20 years' experience in the Police.</p> <p>His aim was to engage with as many town and parish councils as possible on neighbourhood policing and he therefore embraced the opportunity to attend the meeting. If members found the attendance beneficial, he would be more than happy to frequently attend future meetings and encouraged members to highlight areas for discussion.</p> <p>Graeme informed that there were two front line elements of policing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Response – 999 calls where the team were now based at Weston Gateway.</li> <li>2. Neighbourhood Policing – 5 beat teams; Weston town centre, Bournville, Clevedon, Portishead and Nailsea.</li> <li>3. A new neighbourhood team had been developed and led by him which would respond to challenges in WsM and tackle local problems.</li> </ol> <p>An overview of vacancies and staff turnover within the police teams was given and it was advised that at full capacity there were 66 Police officers. Avon and Somerset recruited 300 police offers annually. Graeme informed of the 3 main priorities set since he took on the post:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nigh time economy – Tackling associated violence and antisocial behaviour and improving the perception. Seasonal population was a factor, however it could be argued that for a town of Weston's size, the statistics were not horrendous. 5 hot spot areas in North Somerset had received central government funding to tackle spiking.</li> <li>2. Drugs &amp; County Lines – Lots of plans were in place to tackle this, focusing on the young people involved and making Weston a hostile place for drug dealing.</li> <li>3. Antisocial behaviour – Tackling persistent antisocial behaviour across the town. linking in with the missing children's initiative and increasing safeguarding and following up victims of domestic abuse.</li> </ol>

Members thanked Graeme for his attendance and said they would welcome regular reports to full council meetings.

Graeme was asked what plans were in place to keep the town centre policing team at full strength and what could the town council do to help the Police. Graeme informed that recruitment to the team had started as soon as he came into post back in November and it was hoped to be at full strength by the end of the year. In response to a question as to how the town council could help, this could be achieved by improving communications, future attendance at meetings and consistent reporting of any issues.

In response to a question regarding drug dealing and what the plans were to make WsM a hostile place, Graeme informed that there were many strategies in place to tackle this which he could bring back in detail at a future meeting. He did report that ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) funding had been secured which would help target dealers driving in and out of the area and pick up on offences such as no insurance, license etc. which would help slow activity.

Members were reassured to hear that more officers were being recruited and there would be more of a Police presence in the town. It was hoped that a more persistent and aggressive approach to drug dealing would be undertaken and more stop and searches demonstrated. Graeme explained that drug dealing was a very sensitive and complex issue that would be targeted and officers made more visible. An intelligence picture also needed to be developed as part of the strategic plan.

It was queried by a member where areas such as Worle, Bournville, Milton and Kewstoke that were outside of the town centre were covered. Graeme informed that these areas were covered by a beat team that he had close links with and covered 38 parishes in total. All parishes would be visited by the beat team.

In response to a member, Graeme reported that reports of hate crime were reported and that he was confident that these reports were followed up. The perception that they were not followed up was frustrating and therefore forging relationships with community groups was being actively pursued to help combat this.

Members highlighted the rise in anti-social behaviour in the town centre and were pleased to hear that this would be actively tackled.

The Mayor, speaking in his capacity as a street warden, reported that unfortunately there was not a great response received from the town centre policing team and that the links with the community response team were better. He would really like to see the response improved from officers. Graeme noted the report and would take it back as a point of action for the town centre team.

A member reported that she worked with a number of young vulnerable people including care leavers and that their experience of police presence was hostile. Relationships needed to be built with them to improve this as drug dealers seemed more approachable to them. It was also said that many drug dealers travelled by train. Graeme noted the report and informed that police were working on a list of vulnerable people to follow up and this was very much a priority.

It was highlighted that the request for the police's attendance at the council meeting was originally as a result of a motion put forward regarding the problems experienced at Grove Park toilets. It was therefore requested to know what the police were doing to tackle this. Graeme explained that a team of officers had attended the site over past days, with

	<p>nothing to report and that he would look at targeting the problem specifically, altering patrol times.</p> <p>Once again members thanked Graeme for his attendance.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the report be noted.</p>
<p><b>296</b></p>	<p><b>Town Council Election and Committee Allocation</b></p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated which recommended members to note the election of Councillor Clare Morris and the current vacancies to be filled (Community Services Committee, Planning Committee and Youth Council) and to make any other changes to committee memberships if required.</p> <p>It was requested to replace Councillor Gillian Carpenter with Councillor Peter McAleer on the Tourism &amp; Leisure Committee.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Robert Payne  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Alan Peak</p> <p>A vote was taken and <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To note the election of Councillor Clare Morris.</li> <li>2. That the current vacancies on committees be filled (Community Services Committee, Planning Committee and Youth Council) by Cllr Morris.</li> <li>3. That Councillor Gillian Carpenter be replaced by Councillor Peter McAleer on the Tourism &amp; Leisure Committee.</li> </ol>
<p><b>297</b></p>	<p><b>Visit Somerset</b></p> <p>The recommendation from the Tourism &amp; Leisure Committee held on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 had been previously circulated. This recommended that the Town Council do not renew its Visit Somerset membership.</p> <p>Debate ensued for and against the decision not to renew.</p> <p>A member said he found the decision very disappointing and short sighted. The Chairman of the Tourism &amp; Leisure Committee responded that Visit Somerset's focus seemed to be international advertising which was not Visit Weston's focus. Visit Weston already worked well with its partners in Somerset destinations. He felt that Weston did not receive the same promotion by Visit Somerset that other Somerset destinations did and that perhaps a better deal could be negotiated for the following year.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED-</b>Councillor Peter Crew  <b>SECONDED-</b> Councillor Alan Peak</p> <p>A vote was taken and <b>carried</b>. (11 for; 10 against; 1 abstention)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Town Council do not renew its Visit Somerset membership.</p>

## 298 Town Council Budget and Precept for the year 2022/2023

The Town Council Budget and Precept requirements for the year 2022/2023, the report of the Deputy Town Clerk including Policy and Finance Committee (P&F) resolutions in the budget for approval and the Band D figures from North Somerset Council had been previously circulated.

Band D Properties for Weston super Mare – **26,269.2** (increase of 169.8 properties)

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that an area that required members' attention was the Civic Catering budget and whether the Deputy Mayor should work with the Civic Officer to reduce the budget within £7,000.

The suggested budget at P&F was £10,250 and following discussions with the Civic Officer this figure had remained as it would require a council decision to reduce it back to an amount of £7,000. A breakdown of the £10,250 was outlined within the report.

When questioned why the budget had been increased, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that it would have been set by the Deputy Mayor at the time and that costs had possibly increased as a result of general cost increases and venue hire of the Museum due to Grove House being unavailable to host events through the pandemic which was unlikely to change.

In response to a member the Deputy Town Clerk clarified that £11,000 was the year end prediction for the Community Events Grants budget.

It was therefore

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Alan Peak

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Richard Tucker

To approve the budget and precept for the year 2022/2023 as reported.

An AMENDMENT was then

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Helen Thornton

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne

Details of which were circulated to members at the meeting:

1. **Litter Bins** – To create an earmarked reserve of £10,000 from the underspend in the Community Wardens budget to provide up to 20 litter bins in locations to be determined, and approved by Community Services Committee. The bins would be emptied by the Community wardens
2. **Homelessness Support** – Increase the Annual funding from £25,000 to £50,000. The Town Council currently provided £25,000 annual funding to Somewhere to Go for the Night Assessment Centre. It was proposed to double the funding to include a Service Level Agreement with Somewhere to Go outlining the day services they can provide, and working with North Somerset Council and other partners on hiring a Homelessness Outreach worker.
3. **Climate Change Officer for 2 year fixed term** – Ringfence £30,000 per year for 2 years (Total of £60k) from the Climate Change budget to employ an officer to work specifically on Climate Change projects, thereby freeing up the current

Development Officer to work on other projects including new town council headquarters, town quarry, and projects identified for feasibility studies in last year's budget including new allotments, a plant nursery, showers on the beach, public toilets, making one of our parks disability friendly, and a central Weston community centre.

4. **Public Toilets at Bus Interchange** – To create an ear marked reserve of £10,000 to part-fund a toilet at the new bus interchange in partnership with North Somerset Council, First Bus and large businesses in the area.
5. **Public Toilet charges** – To remove the entry charge on all our public toilets – the loss of income was likely to be about £5000. In addition, there would be a cost to change the door entry mechanisms - cost to be confirmed by DTC - The cost was likely to be offset by reduced maintenance costs.

The Deputy Town Clerk in response to amendment item 5, advised that she had researched the door mechanism costs and reported that to change all doors at all sites would cost between £24,000 – 28,000 or between £3,000 - £4,500 per door. The current spend to date on maintenance costs was £14,830 and there may be a reduction. An expert at Health Matic had also been consulted whose recommendation was to not make a blanket decision on all toilet sites on whether they should be free/not free, but consider on an individual basis.

Concerns were raised regarding the doubling up of resources as some of the amendments included funding services already resourced by North Somerset Council.

It was highlighted that the council's initial decision to charge for the use of the toilets was to recover some of the costs of taking them on. There was no justification for this now and so they should be free.

The town council should be seen to work collaboratively with agencies including NSC to support and tackle rough sleeping in Weston as this was an investment for the town.

Members raised concerns over the employment of a Climate Change Officer and would like to see the achievements of spending £60,000 after the two years reported back.

The Deputy Town Clerk highlighted points for consideration:

That the Climate Change Working Party were waiting for confirmation of a 2year funded Development Officer.

That as was reported to the Community Services Committee, the council had been ring-fenced £40,000 funding as part of the welcome back fund which would include street furniture and specifically litter bins.

The Deputy Town Clerk clarified the budget implications the amendments had on the budget, which equated to a 1.73% budget increase and £100.17p for a Band D property.

Robust debate ensued and concerns were raised regarding the increasing of council tax for what was considered a wish list, when constituents would be facing high increases in energy bills.

The amendments resulted in an increase of 13p to the tax payer which was minimal in comparison to the increases in national tax and insurance.

To summarise, it was clarified that not all the proposals required new money and that this only applied to amendments 2,4 & 5.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed that £25,000 had been paid to Somewhere to Go in August 2021 and was concerned to hear during debate that this had not been received and needed urgent clarity.

A vote on the **AMENDMENT** was taken and **carried** (16 for; 6 against)

This then became the substantive motion and a vote was taken and **carried** (16 for; 5 against) and was therefore:

**RESOLVED:** To approve

1. The net revenue budget for the year 2022/2023 £2,631,385 and
2. The Town Council precept at £2,631,385 ,for submission to North Somerset Council.

**299 Motion to Council from Cllr John Crockford-Hawley**

Councillor John Crockford-Hawley was invited to propose his motion which was specified on the agenda.

A supporting document outlining the history of Alexandra Parade was circulated to members, prior to the meeting.

It was noted that 2 million bus passengers had been lost in North Somerset over the past year, due to the effects of the pandemic and Climate Change. This was a huge loss of income for the district and the Town Council needed to be seen to encourage bus patronage.

Members were in full support of the motion.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

**RESOLVED:** That Weston-super-Mare Town Council invites First Bus and North Somerset Council to hold tri-partite discussions, as and when deemed necessary, to discuss local public transport needs, especially before significant timetable alterations are brought into effect.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 9.06 pm.

Signed: .....  
Town Mayor

Dated: .....