

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT
THE TOWN HALL ON
MONDAY 18TH JULY 2016**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.12 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak (Town Mayor), Clive Webb (Leader of the Town Council), Raymond Armstrong, Roger Bailey, Mark Canniford, James Clayton, Robert Cleland, Sarah Codling, John Crockford-Hawley, Peter Crew, Clive Darke, James Davis, Peter Fox, Jocelyn Holder, Jan Holloway, Steven Kane, Michal Kus, Michael Lyall, Derek Mead, Richard Nightingale, Frederick Parsons, Lisa Pilgrim, Robert Payne, Richard Tucker and Martin Williams.

IN ATTENDANCE: Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer) Chris Millard (Civic Officer), Tricia Brabham (Communications Officer), Helen Morton (Finance Officer), Sally Heath (Theatre Manager), Reverend Julie Birkett (Town Mayor's Chaplain), Steve Townsend (Town Centre Manager/BID), Paul Batts (BID/Retailer) and Sarah Robinson (Weston & Somerset Mercury),

The Town Mayor invited Reverend Julie Birkett to say prayers.

The Town Mayor invited questions and observations from parishioners present. There were no questions raised.

59.	<p>To receive Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors James Davis, David Hitchins, Catherine Gibbons, Ian Porter, Len Purnell, Anita Spencer-Johns and Roz Willis.</p>
60.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
61.	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 19th May 2016.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Clive Webb SECONDED BY: Councillor Michal Kus</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be signed and approved.</p>
62.	<p>To receive announcements and communications from the Town Mayor</p> <p>Between 20th May and 18th July 2016 there had been 46 Mayoral engagements of which the Mayor and Mayoress had attended 41 events and the Deputy Mayor 5.</p> <p>The Mayor highlighted the visit from the Mayor of Hildesheim which included visits to Wells Cathedral, Weston College and North Somerset Council and thanked the Civic Officer for putting together the visit itinerary. The Mayor read aloud a letter from the Mayor of Hildesheim thanking the Mayor and Mayoress for an enjoyable visit to Weston.</p> <p>The Mayor thanked all the councillors who hosted the VIPs on the Sunday of the Armed Forces Day weekend which went very well. Other events included the Picnic in the Park to celebrate the Queen's Birthday, 40 Commando reception at the campus and Weston In Bloom judging day.</p>

	<p>Finally, the Mayor thanked councillors for attending his Civic Service.</p>
<p>63.</p>	<p>Renewal of Weston Business Improvement District</p> <p>The Town Mayor invited Steve Townsend and Paul Batts to present their ‘Back the Bid Renewal 2016’ presentation to the meeting.</p> <p>Steve Townsend introduced himself as the current Town Centre Manager and Paul Batts a member of the Business Improvement District (BID) and retailer.</p> <p>The presentation began by explaining that a BID was an opportunity for businesses to come together, decide what additional improvements they want to make in their location, how they are going to manage and deliver those improvements and what they were prepared to pay. This would all go into a formal business plan which would be voted on by all businesses that would have to pay. If a majority of those balloted vote yes then the BID would come into effect. A BID can last for a maximum of 5 years and must be able to demonstrate how it has benefited businesses who have funded it.</p> <p>Background information on the formation and introduction of the Weston BID was communicated. Voted for in 2012, the number of businesses in BID was 738 with the BID levy and income of £281,000pa (£20,000 income lost due to Dolphin Square). The key objectives were Event-led Marketing, Love Weston Brand, street scene, safety and helping business procurement.</p> <p>The Street Warden Service had provided over 10,000 hours of patrolling within the BID area per year. Shop theft had reduced by 22% for some businesses and over 16,000 incidents, interactions were attended per year. The child safe wristband scheme had seen over 150 repatriations. Over 18 tonnes of black bags had been removed with over 2 acres of jet washing within the town centre undertaken and over 2 tonnes of fly tipping removed per year.</p> <p>The Street Scene consisted of 2000 bedding plants (sponsored) and replanted on an annual basis. The 70 hanging baskets installed per year were watered and fed 3 times per week. The town had been Gold Award winners of Britain in Bloom for 3 years and had won the prestigious Tesco’s Cup (best in region) in 2015.</p> <p>Security consisted of 124 members using an Intel Database on a daily basis. There were 250 known offenders on the database, 1501 incidents having been submitted to date, and 34 persons on an exclusion list with 170 under observation.</p> <p>The BID evening and night time economy working group had achieved Purple Flag status for Weston in 2015.</p> <p>Provision had been made for various events such as Armed Forces weekend, Christmas Lights switch on and installation, Halloween in the Park and the Carnival.</p> <p>Other achievements included: supporting businesses by voice and representing the views of over 700 town centre businesses; a social media platform to promote businesses, events and promotions; successful lobbying on issues that would have disadvantaged the BID area e.g., on-street parking; being involved with town centre regeneration plans at all levels; having secured external funding, successfully obtaining 3 years of support from the Business in the Community Healthy High Street scheme, working with Boots, M&S, Greggs and Santander; helping more than 70 businesses save over £90k in procurement and being the lead promoter of Small Business Saturday.</p> <p>The Weston BID area will be renewed in 2017 to incorporate Grove Park in order to address the alcoholism and anti social behaviour issues.</p>

The BID renewal's potential was 420 businesses with a rateable value (RV) of £7,500 or above, total RV circa £17 million, @1.5% RV of circa £250,000 per year. This represented a total investment over five years of circa £1.2m, and 50% of businesses would pay less than £300 pa.

The next steps would be to agree the project spends, to write the new BID business plan (Jul /Aug 2016), present the plan (Sept/ Oct 2016) and complete the legal agreements. The vote for the BID would be in November 2016 and delivery of the scheme April 2017 – March 2022.

The general feeling of the business owners was that the next two to three years were going to be exciting in terms of development of the town and change, and that the vital elements of the BID were the Street Warden Service and the Green Team.

Debate ensued. A question relating to the key milestones – drug operations presented under the Purple Flag section was posed and Steve Townsend explained that this was information shared by the police.

In response to a question, Steve Townsend advised that the rubbish collected was measured by the average weight of a black bag and that was where the 2 tonnes of rubbish was estimated.

In relation to engagement with businesses not in the BID, Steve Townsend informed that there would be plans to reach out to these businesses and that he would like to engage with the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

Steve Townsend was asked if he could gauge the outcome of the vote on general feedback from businesses. He replied that he felt that if businesses were to vote for the clean and safe element that the BID provides then he was confident of a 'yes' ballot.

Further debate ensued regarding the Green Team, what it consisted of and its effectiveness and response time.

A member expressed the view that the BID had an advantage over the local authority with their response times as they were free from the bureaucratic systems and processes and could provide almost an immediate response. The member also highlighted that once the BID renewal area came into effect, the Town Council would have four properties within the BID zone and would be a major contributor. In response to this, The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council currently pays £1,200 and would have a vote which was one reason why it was on the agenda.

In response to a question regarding reaching out to the European and Asian community businesses, Paul Batts confirmed that the BID were actively trying to engage with these communities but found that they seemed to operate mainly within their own communities rather than wider.

A member questioned whether Baker Street should be included. Steve Townsend responded by saying this was an area that needed to be looked at but maybe under another BID.

Reference the 2 tonnes of rubbish removed, a member was concerned that there was no gathering of evidence and, therefore, no mechanisms in place for prosecution of offenders. Steve Townsend reported that gathering evidence was difficult as the offenders were covering their tracks. There had been a few cases pursued where fixed penalties were issued but the Street Wardens did not have the remit to issue fixed penalty fines. The member felt that some multi agency collaboration was needed to target the offenders and prosecute.

	<p>A member who was also a business owner was pleased to see that the BID had seemed to listen to the concerns and needs of the businesses. He reported that the town at 5am in the morning was a completely different town by 8am due to the effectiveness of the Street Wardens and the Green Team and was therefore in support of renewing the BID.</p> <p>The Town Council were informed that there was a North Somerset Council working party looking at the possibility of Street Wardens issuing on the spot penalty fines and that North Somerset Council were also in support of the renewal of the BID.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Clive Webb SECONDED BY: Councillor Michal Kus</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To support, in principle, the renewal of the BID.</p> <p>Steve Townsend thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to present BID’s case for renewal.</p> <p><i>Steve Townsend and Paul Batts left the meeting at 7.50 pm.</i></p>
<p>64.</p>	<p>Armed Forces Steering Group</p> <p>A copy of the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group meeting held on the 7th June 2016 had been previously circulated to members.</p> <p>Councillor Jan Holloway as Town Council representative on the Steering Group was available to answer any questions.</p> <p>A member questioned whether the properties in the ‘Train to Build’ scheme would be rented. Councillor Jan Holloway explained that primary intent was to give the veterans a trade and the opportunity to live in the property they had worked on.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report from the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group be noted.</p> <p>The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Jan Holloway for the report.</p>
<p>65.</p>	<p>North Somerset Local Plan 2018-2036: Pre-commencement Document</p> <p>A copy of the Pre-commencement Document had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Town Clerk referred to paragraphs 6 and 7 which set out the scope of and timetable for the North Somerset Local Plan upon which the Town Council were invited to make comment.</p> <p>Debate ensued. It was felt that the Town Council should comment especially in relation to the housing element, but felt that a full council meeting was not the appropriate forum to do so and suggested that a working party be formed to recommend a response to the council. The Town Clerk informed that the consultation period for the Local Plan Pre-Commencement Document finished on 21st July, 2016.</p> <p>A dual hatted member reported that there was a North Somerset working party formed to look specifically at housing in the town centre. It was estimated that by 2026 there would be a housing shortfall of 44,000, with a developer’s estimate of 55,000. The Town Council may be too late to have an input on this particular document but should still set up a working party to look at the content of the Local Plan including any future housing proposals.</p>

	<p>Some members suggested that this matter could be delegated to the Planning Committee. However an alternative view expressed was that the Planning Committee was occupied dealing with planning applications and was not strategic enough to deal with future housing proposals.</p> <p>The Town Clerk enquired as to how many members would be on the working party and how they would be appointed?</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Clive Webb SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Leader would consult other group leaders with a view to forming an informal working party to discuss further housing plans for the town.</p>
66.	<p>Blakehay Theatre Business Review</p> <p>The recommendations from the Expenditure & Governance Working Party Meeting held on 11th July 2016 had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Expenditure & Governance Working Party presented the recommendations and advised that they had been in consultation with the users of the Blakehay Theatre including Weston College and the RAFA Band.</p> <p>Debate ensued. A member was very pleased to see that the Blakehay Theatre had finally been put through a review process and had a way forward, and commented that this should have been done six years ago. Thanks were given to the Expenditure & Governance Working Party and to all the staff and councillors involved in the review. It was commented that the RAFA Band should remain as the resident band and that the Town Mayor and Leader should make sure the situation was dealt with correctly.</p> <p>A member raised his continued concerns regarding the Blakehay and its deficit on the Town Council but advised that he was ‘on board’ in trying to promote the Blakehay to its full potential and was reassured by the Town Clerk’s prediction that, with the implementation of the changes and actions proposed, the Blakehay would be out of the ‘red’ within five years.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michal Kus SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Webb</p> <p>A vote was carried and accordingly it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve and adopt the recommendations from the Expenditure & Governance Working Party Meeting held on 11th July 2016 as follows:</p> <p>4.1 COMMERCIAL USE OPTIONS</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Webb</p> <p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was:</p> <p>RECOMMENDED:</p> <p>4.1a To keep the theatre as a community theatre. 4.1b To programme live events with a dedicated budget</p>

4.1c To build on the Community classes.

4.2 COLLEGE USE

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michal Kus

SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Webb

A vote was taken and accordingly it was:

RECOMMENDED:

4.2a To compile a Service Level Agreement for the College, to take effect in 2017 (noting that the current booking extended to June 2017).

4.3 UPPER STUDIO OPTIONS

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Webb

A vote was taken and accordingly it was:

RECOMMENDED:

4.3a To create the corridor in the Upper Studio through to the backstage

4.3b To re-instate the stage in the Upper Studio

4.3c To install a removable partition wall in the Upper Studio

4.3d To re-name the Upper Studio as the Jill Dando Suite with the two separate spaces to be named.

4.3e To remove the RAFA Band from their storage space to enable the above work and the smaller space remaining to become an office for the theatre manager.

4.3f To consult with an architect to ensure the sound proofing was as good as possible.

4.4 BUDGET & CHARGES

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michel Kus

SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Darke

A vote was taken and accordingly it was:

RECOMMENDED:

4.4a To change the layout and reporting of the Blakehay Budget

4.4b To remove the 'commercial rate' charges and the discount system

4.4c To approve the new charges to be set for a fixed period of 3 years (appended).

4.5 VOLUNTEERS

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Clive Webb

SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

A vote was taken and accordingly it was:

RECOMMENDED:

4.5 To agree to the free use of a space for a maximum of eight hours per month for use by the theatre volunteers to create fundraising events for the theatre.

4.6 LIVE EVENTS

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michel Kus

SECONDED BY: Councillor Clive Webb

A vote was taken and accordingly it was:

RECOMMENDED:

4.6 To assign a budget of £12,000 in the 2017/2018 budget setting process for buying-in live events for the theatre. NOTE –the deposits are required to be paid 1 year before the event to secure the booking. Therefore the income for that show would not be received until following year. The intention would be to start these type of shows from 2018/2019.

4.7 PUBLICITY

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Clive Webb

SECONDED BY: Councillor Michel Kus

A vote was taken and accordingly it was:

RECOMMENDED:

4.7 That Councillors Clive Darke and David Hitchins in conjunction with the Theatre Manager form a working party dedicated to publicising the Blakehay; and that their recommendations be costed and included in the proposed marketing and publicity budget for the Blakehay in 2017/18.

Members thanked the officers for producing the review report.

7.2 The RAFA Band

The Town Clerk read out a letter he had received from a councillor expressing that she had some deep concerns regarding the review of the Blakehay in respect to the RAFA Band. The letter read that the Town Council had signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant along with many other partners and also had given the Freedom of the Town to RAF Locking and 40 Commando RM. How can the council now say that they are not prepared to support a resident band association with a services band which has former serving officers alongside supporters of our military services? The profile the Band had given to the town is huge as we are known all over the country because of the concerts they are asked to do out of area and the Band Master always without exception mentions how proud they are to be Resident Band and the association with this Council. Many dignitaries and even Royal patronage have great pride and loyalty to this Band so for us to take them out of Blakehay is very poor judgement. She is very disappointed that the idea is even being considered after all the work they do on our behalf.

At the request of the Chairman the Theatre Manager explained to members where the RAFA Band used the building and in what areas they stored their equipment. They had booked and paid for over 200 hrs and it had been recorded that they had used the building for over 240 hrs. The RAFA Band put on 3 concerts per year. Other storage areas had been looked into but they were not deemed practical or secure.

Members noted that the RAFA Band were not charged for all their use of the theatre and received additional benefits including a 20% discount and the free use of the storeroom. They were not being asked to leave the theatre but only to give up the storeroom. The new scale of charges would give them a slightly lower charge fixed for the next three years.

The Town Clerk informed that the decision to let the RAFA Band use the storeroom was made in 2009/10 by the Council in a very different time when the Blakehay was used mainly by community groups and there were relatively few public shows.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Michel Kus

SECONDED BY: Councillor Roger Bailey

	<p>A vote was taken and accordingly it was:</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: To write to the RAFA Band to advise them that the Council wants them to stay as the 'Resident Band' of the Blakehay Theatre, that their charges will be fixed for the next three years, but that changes needed to take place in the light of the wider review of the Theatre; and that they be formally informed of this decision after the Town Council Meeting on 18th July 2016.</p> <p><i>Councillors Clive Darke and David Hitchins left the meeting at 11.46 am.</i></p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.12 p.m.</p> <p>Signed: Dated: Town Mayor</p>