

# **WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL ON MONDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> JANUARY 2018**

**Meeting Commenced:** 7.02 pm

**Meeting Concluded:** 8.54 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Jocelyn Holder (Town Mayor), Clive Webb (Leader of the Town Council), Raymond Armstrong, Roger Bailey, Mark Canniford, James Clayton, Robert Cleland, Sarah Codling, Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley, James Davis, Clive Darke, Peter Fox, Catherine Gibbons, David Hitchins, Jan Holloway, Denise Hunt, Michal Kus, Michael Lyall, Richard Nightingale, Frederick Parsons, Robert Payne, Alan Peak, Lisa Pilgrim, Ian Porter, Anita Spencer-Johns, Richard Tucker, Roz Willis and Martin Williams.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Sarah Pearse (Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer) Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer), Helen Morton (Finance Officer), Tricia Brabham (Communications Officer), Chris Millard (Mayors Civic Officer), Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Alison Ashford (Administrator/Secretary), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Manager), Matthew Hardy (Acting Visitor Services Manager), Sally Heath (Theatre Manager), Ellie Allen-Somers (Tourism Marketing Officer) Reverend Andrew Alden (Town Mayor's Chaplain), Vicky Angear (Weston & Somerset Mercury).

The Town Mayor invited Reverend Andrew Alden to say prayers and to remember Ken Lacey, MBE, who had sadly passed away. Ken Lacey MBE was a Weston-super-Mare Town councillor and a North Somerset councillor as well as Charter Trustee. He served as Charter Trustee Mayor in 1988 and campaigned for the creation of a Town Council for Weston, which he achieved in 2000. He was an honorary Alderman of the Town, a former Weston Borough Town Mayor and Councillor who would be sadly missed.

The Town Mayor invited questions and observations from parishioners present.

Sharon Malone, local business owner addressed the council in relation to on street parking and enforcement in the town centre and the knock on effects to business owners. One parking enforcement officer in particular was causing huge unnecessary stress to her business, employees and other businesses. The conduct and training of the parking enforcement officers needed to be urgently addressed by North Somerset Council before the damage to the town centre economy was irreparable.

Ken Perrett, local resident of 54 years had seen Weston's population double in size and was concerned over the number of empty shops in the town, due to the knock on effects of on street parking and enforcement in the town centre. North Somerset Council's parking rules were not enhancing tourism or the town centre.

Beverly Simmons, Eat Festivals, thanked the council for allowing her to update them and for their continued support and encouragement. Events were planned for 7<sup>th</sup> April, 22<sup>nd</sup> September, and 15<sup>th</sup> December. They had partnered with Thatchers Cider who would be sponsoring them and involvement with the Literacy Festival. In support of the Cleaner Coastline initiative all events will be plastic free.

Ann Bunn, Chairman of the Heart of Weston group and also the Friends of Grove Park and Weston-super-Mare Homeless groups was disgusted by the level of destitution within the town and was in attendance to give the council an opportunity to target the problem of homelessness in the name of the late Alderman Ken Lacey, without whom there would be no Town Council. Voluntary groups were working together to acquire a mobile night shelter like the one working the Isle of White. The Town Council needed to do something where North Somerset Council were failing.

Val Doneghen, organiser of the Weston-super-Mare Homelessness group which was run on volunteers, explained that within 3 hours of setting up a Facebook page, the page had over 1,000 friends. There were far more than seven homeless people in the town, the volunteers go out and speak with them on a nightly basis, please help and give these people a night shelter, it is their human right.

The Town Mayor thanked those who addressed the meeting.

<b>308</b>	<p><b>To receive Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Len Purnell and Steven Kane.</p>
<b>309</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
<b>310</b>	<p><b>To approve the accuracy of the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Clive Webb  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Michal Kus</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes be approved.</p>
<b>311</b>	<p><b>To receive announcements and communications from the Town Mayor</b></p> <p>The Town Mayor reported that she and the Mayoress had attended 156 engagements to date and that the Deputy Mayor had attended 6 engagements on her behalf and the Leader 1.</p> <p>The Town Mayor then highlighted the following significant events:</p> <p>100th anniversary of Finland's independence celebration in Bristol on 25th November 2017          War Widows Association of Great Britain Christmas Lunch on 27th November 2017          Romanian National Day Reception at Embassy In Bristol on 7th December 2017          Children's Christmas Party held at St Paul's Church on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018</p> <p>The Town Mayor was looking forward to her visit to Hildesheim on 26<sup>th</sup> January.</p>
<b>312</b>	<p><b>On Street Parking and Enforcement and Residents Parking</b></p> <p>The response from Councillor Elfan Ap Rees Deputy Leader North Somerset, declining the invitation to attend the meeting, had been previously circulated.</p> <p>Debate ensued. A member voiced her exasperation that after 4 months since the original motion was passed, nothing had been reviewed or changed. Councillor Ap Rees should have attended the meeting without hesitation. Meetings between managers and parking officers to address conduct had had no impact. Why was it that parking in Clevedon was being reviewed before Weston when Clevedon had no parking enforcement. The 10 minute grace period required in legislation was highlighted as not being adhered to. North Somerset Council was using Weston as a cash cow. Charges should be reduced and free on Sundays. There should be a residents parking scheme and road markings should be reviewed. Businesses and tourists will avoid Weston if this was not addressed.</p> <p>Dual hatted members were urged to take this matter to the next full North Somerset Council meeting for urgent review before the summer.</p>

	<p>The response was outrageous and the suggestion that the parking manager was better paced to answer questions regarding the policies was unacceptable.</p> <p>A member was amazed that Councillor Ap Rees had not attended the meeting and therefore proposed a motion of censure.</p> <p>Officers were only carrying out decisions made by the executive members and should not be forced to publicly account for this. However, North Somerset Council were guilty of not diffusing the anger that parking enforcement was creating. The issue with regulations was that they were dated and had been enforced without review. An example of this was the many unused disabled parking bays outside unused buildings like the old library and yellow lines in inappropriate places. The scheme was unfair to businesses and residents who lived within the town centre. North Somerset Council had not responded properly and it was not fair to send an officer to address the council.</p> <p>Further concerns were expressed. A dual hatted member voiced that he had challenged the policies at North Somerset Council meetings and that as a business owner himself, he had been affected. Unless the culture within North Somerset Council's majority party was to change then nothing would change.</p> <p>It was stated that members did challenge the policies. A working party was looking at footfall on Sundays and there was a petition for removal of yellow lines in Worle High Street. The working party needed to be looking at residents' parking, a review of charges and the removal of yellow lines but this needed to be done carefully.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor John Crockford-Hawley  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Mark Canniford</p> <p>That there be a vote of no confidence in Councillor Ap Rees.</p> <p>A vote was taken and was <b>carried</b>. (14 for; 7 against)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the Town Council has no confidence in Councillor Ap Rees.</p>
313	<p><b>To receive the Notes of the Youth Council Meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017</b></p> <p>The notes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>Councillor Sarah Codling clarified that she had given her apologies and was not in attendance at the meeting.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the notes of the Youth Council be noted.</p>
314	<p><b>To amend the Terms of Reference of Weston in Bloom Working Party</b></p> <p>The reference from the Community Services Committee and the proposed Terms of Reference had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that there had been a request from the Weston-in-Bloom Working Party to review their terms of reference in relation to membership. The changes were highlighted and attached.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Weston-in-Bloom Working Party reported that the roles and terms of office of co-opted members was unclear, hence the need for a review.</p>

	<p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Roger Bailey  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Clive Webb</p> <p>A vote was taken and was <b>carried</b>.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To approve the changes to the proposed Terms of Reference as circulated.</p>
315	<p><b>Town Council Budget and Precept for 2018/19</b></p> <p>The proposed budget recommended by the Policy &amp; Finance Committee at their meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017 had been previously circulated with the agenda along with an accompanying report to indicate the necessary income (Museum) that had not been included in the final figures agreed at Policy and Finance 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017. This amendment did affect the budget and precept requirement to:</p> <p>Total Budget £1,967,205  Total Precept £1,905,441</p> <p>Budget amendment proposals had been circulated by both the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader of the council thanked minority group leaders for their amendments to the budget in advance of the meeting. This had enabled his group to consider them in advance of the meeting, and he proposed an adjustment to the budget recommended by the Policy and Finance Committee as follows:</p> <p>An adjustment to the budget to reduce the amount going into general reserves by £25,000 (page 14, code 4999) and to add a new budget line under Community Services (page 7) of £25,000 towards work with the community to combat homelessness within the town. The total budget requirement and precept requirement were therefore unchanged.</p> <p><b>PROPOSED BY:</b> Councillor Michal Kus  <b>SECONDED BY:</b> Councillor Clive Webb</p> <p><b>MOTION:</b> To approve the proposed budget of £1,967,205 and a precept value of £1,905,441 for the year 2018/19 with the adjustment reported above. The precept figure acknowledged the Council Tax support grant as advised by NSC of £61,763.50.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader then commented on some of the amendments put forward by minority groups. The logic of delaying the play area refurbishment programme to release funds was understood, however this would have a knock on effect in later years which was not prudent. A full review of the Museum could not be undertaken until it had been open and running for a full year.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council felt that the council should be proud of its achievements and services it provided to its constituents. It had taken over and improved cultural services such as the Blakehay Theatre and the Museum, funded community events and initiatives like Weston in Bloom, YMCA and Citizens Advice Bureau and the community grants. Funded a play area refurbishment scheme, provision of the Water Park and adopted Tourism for the benefit of the town. The council will endeavour to be as efficient and effective as it possibly could on behalf of its constituents.</p> <p>The leader of the Labour group was very pleased that the Conservative group had considered and allocated £25,000 towards combating homelessness with the town. The Labour group did have a specific project in mind for the £25,000 and would like it to be used to investigate the</p>

possibility of a mobile homeless shelter. The council needed to be seen to help target the problem. There were many agencies and volunteers working together already to target the problem who would be able to help the council move the project forward.

The Labour group also proposed a reduction of £10,000 in Capital Projects, the resulting saving to be used as grants for a community group to extend daytime services for the homeless (£8,000) and grants to establish play areas community groups (£2,000). The council should enable community groups to be formed and help them apply for grant funding.

The Labour group had also proposed an amendment to reduce the Tourism budget in order to source the £25,000 for the cost of a homeless shelter but were satisfied to retract this amendment now that the proposition was to source this money from General Reserves.

Debate ensued.

It was felt that a more practical approach to target homelessness was to convert Locking Road toilets into a shower block and this could be discussed at the next meeting of the Community Services Committee.

Local business owners had raised £10,000 of funding to fund an emergency shelter and were working towards a permanent solution. The £25,000 would immediately help with this.

A member was happy to second the proposed amendment and supported it by reading aloud a letter received from a constituent in relation to homelessness.

Weston had been recently featured on national news for the homelessness problems and the actual number of homeless people reported was in fact 30, as opposed to North Somerset Council's statistic of 5.

The Leader of the Labour group said she would like the proposed £25,000 allocated for combatting homelessness to be ring fenced for a specific project. It needed cross party involvement to set up a working group and make sure the project comes to fruition within the 2018/19 financial year. In addition her group wished to reduce the capital projects budget in order to provide grants for daytime services for the homeless and for play areas community groups.

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Catherine Gibbons

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Michal Lyall

**AMENDMENT:** to reduce the Capital Projects budget by £10,000 to be used as grant for a community group to extend daytime services for the homeless (£8,000) and grant to establish play areas community groups (£2,000)

A vote was taken and the amendment was **lost**. (9 for; 16 against)

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat party informed how unhappy his group were with the proposal for an 11.37% precept increase. Taking into account the proposed reduction in General Reserves by £25,000 to fund work to combat homelessness he therefore wished to propose amendments:

**PROPOSED BY:** Councillor Robert Payne

**SECONDED BY:** Councillor Mark Canniford

The following **AMENDMENTS** to the draft budget:

1. To form new special grant heading under Community Services:  
Grants for friends groups of parks and other open spaces, to include the Adopt-a-Street scheme, for equipment (£5,000)  
  
Savings:
2. Capital Projects  
Reduce play area refurbishment to £45,000, in order to spread spending over two years
3. Civic Support  
Reduce chauffeur/travel costs to £3,000
4. Milton Road Cemetery  
Reduce overall costs by £6,000 in line with reduced interments
5. Other costs & income  
Reduce the amount put into general reserves to £20,000
6. Street furniture  
Change bus shelter repairs to zero, earmarking the amount collected in the current year and not spent for any required next year
7. Toilets  
Recognising that both Locking Road car park and Maltings toilet blocks will be closing in the following year as a result of the redevelopment of those sites, close these blocks at the end of this financial year, saving £15,000.
8. Tourism  
Remove the Visitor Information Centre, moving the tourism manager costs into Love Weston, saving £44,760.

Debate ensued and members made the following points.

Re amendment 7 to close the Worle toilets, the closure under the break clause in the lease would actually not happen until 2020/2021 and it would upset many people to close them sooner. This was supported by a letter, read aloud, from a Worle constituent.

The figures provided by North Somerset Council and Homelessness Link contradicted the figures reported by local community groups and social media. With regard to proposed amendment 3 it was felt that a budget of £3,000 for chauffeur/travel costs was more than ample as Mayors should be able to drive themselves to engagements within the county and not travel further a field. In finally, in reference to amendment 7 toilets the council needed to seriously review the provision of toilets as it equated to costing £3.68 to use them.

The council needed to continue with the provision of the toilets until alternative facilities had been provided via a proposed multi storey car park at Locking Road and in case the sale of the Worle Library did not complete. Regarding the suggested reduction in the budget for play area refurbishment the council needed to be mindful of the possibility of accidents due to very old equipment and the financial repercussions that would incur. With regard to the removal of the Visitor Information Centre, since it had been open it had increased the number of business signed with Love Weston by 50% and it therefore increased income shown under another heading.

	<p>The play areas due for refurbishment were not in a dangerous state and could wait further. The initial decision to take on the toilets from North Somerset was wrong and the toilets were far too expensive and this needed to be addressed immediately.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour group explained that the statistics for homelessness were a very complex issue and fluctuated and regardless, the need to target this problem was there. With regard to the toilets, she had mentioned a creative alternative at a previous Policy &amp; Finance meeting.</p> <p>Concerns were expressed regarding the closing of the toilets. Until there was an alternative solution, toilets could not be removed as this would impact heavily on the community. In reference to the reduction in Civic Support, the budget for travel was there in case it was needed and that members needed to take into account the impact of disability on a mayor.</p> <p>A previous Mayor added that the mayor's role was undertaken voluntarily and that Weston's mayoral allowance was far less than other smaller towns.</p> <p>The council were reminded the reason for the majority of the budget increase was to fund the newly reopened Museum. It was crucially important that the council rectifies its problems and runs it effectively and efficiently in future.</p> <p>A vote on the <b>AMENDMENT</b> was taken and was <b>lost</b>. (6 for; 20 against)</p> <p>A vote on the substantive motion was then taken and overwhelmingly <b>carried</b> and it was therefore:</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To approve the amended revenue budget for the year 2018/2019 at £1,967,205</li> <li>2. To approve the amended precept at £1,905,441 for submission to North Somerset Council.</li> </ol>
	<p>There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.54 p.m.</p> <p>Signed: ..... Dated: ..... Town Mayor</p>