



WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT 32 WATERLOO STREET
MONDAY 19TH MAY 2025**

Meeting Commenced: 7.01 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.31 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ciaran Cronnelly (Chair), Gillian Bute, Mark Canniford, Peter Crew, John Crockford-Hawley (VC), Robert Payne, Robert Skeen, John Standfield(S), Tim Taylor(S) and Charles Williams.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Chief Executive Officer/Town Clerk), Helen Morton (Director of Finance & Resources), Fay Powell (Director of Community Services/Deputy Town Clerk) Molly Matthews (Senior Development Officer), Rebecca Saunders (Civic & Committee Admin Officer) and Luke Rovira (Member of the public).

1.	Election of Chair The CEO/ Town Clerk invited nominations for the position of Chair. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor SECONDED BY: Councillor Peter Crew A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly be elected Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee for the year 2025/26.
2.	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lisa Pilgrim and Helen Thornton substituted by Councillors John Standfield and Tim Taylor.
3.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest received.

<p>4.</p>	<p>Election of Vice Chair</p> <p>The Chair invited nominations for the position of Vice Chair</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Councillor John Crockford-Hawley be elected Vice Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee for the year 2025/2026.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>To approve the Minutes of the previous Special Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 14th April 2025</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Robert Payne SECONDED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor</p> <p>It was raised that minute number 349- sentence contained the word ‘Dog’ too many times and minute number 351 Councillor Connelly’s name had been misspelt.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: Subject to the above amendments that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 14th April 2025 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>To receive the Minutes of the Grants and Governance Sub Committee Meeting held on the 16th April 2025</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Grants and Governance Sub Committee Meeting held on the 16th April 2025 be received.</p>
<p>FINANCE</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Old Town Quarry Project and Budget Update</p> <p>The CEO/Town Clerk informed that following the previous meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (14th April 2025), a sum of £155,125 was predicted as an overspend on the Old Town Quarry build project. At the request of the meeting a value engineering exercise had been carried out by council officers, John West Contractors Ltd (Build team) and Currie & Brown (Building Surveyors), resulting in a reviewed figure for the committee to consider.</p> <p>There were multiple factors leading to the total overspend on the project including (but not exclusive to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased professional fees, • unforeseen costs incurred such as Weston power to upgrade the fuse board • extensive works required on the roof and structural engineering requirements <p>It was recognised that factors to be considered with regard to this position include;</p>

- This had been the first project with the new Project Contract Manager and as such there was a differing approach to the project than had previously been the case on past projects undertaken by the council.
- The previously circulated overall overspend report was shared providing 5 different potential options.

A lengthy discussion ensued across the following areas:

- Implications of reducing the project such as the Grounds team not being able to relocate to the quarry, which would in turn not free up any protentional new burial plots at the cemetery.
- Confirmation of the strict guidelines had to be met to keep the project within the grant guidelines.
- Consideration of areas within the council's current budgets which could possibly be delayed to reallocate funds to the Quarry project. Ie; additional front ramp at 32 Waterloo Street (noting that the planning permission did not expire until Jan 2027) and planned IT system update was another project that could be delayed or reallocated.
- The need to balance and scale down the project, still future proofing the additional electrical cabling, requiring a cost of £2,500,00 if the works were to be delayed noting that the cost would increase considerably, to dig the floor back up if it was postponed to a later date.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

SECONDED BY: Councillor Gillian Bute

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was **carried** (For-7/Against- 3)

RESOLVED: That option 5 to include item C from table 4 (additional electrical cabling) at a cost of £100,535 over spend and retender other options be approved.

Further discussion ensued around avenues of funding the overspend and getting best value for money.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

SECONDED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

A vote was taken and **carried**. Accordingly, it was (For- 6 /Against - 3 /Abstention-1)

RESOLVED- To fund the overspend by the reallocation of the following budget areas:

- a) £60k allocated for the ramp at 32 Waterloo Street – Capital projects
- b) £30k of IT update funds to now come from the Devolution budget releasing this budget to the Quarry as an alternative – Capital projects
- c) and the remaining £10,535k from General Reserves.

At this point in the meeting, members of the public left the meeting.

GENERAL PURPOSES

8. Blakehay Theatre Management Tender Award

It was reported all three of the tender bids had now supplied the extra information requested at the last meeting which had been previously circulated to committee members and was shared on the screen along with the original scores, which had not changed with the updated information.

The Senior Development Officer explained how the scoring matrix worked and how one applicant in particular (Weston Hub CIC) score was so much higher than the other two, due to their low subsidy request.

A member shared concerns around conflicts of interest due to Councillor's involvement with the Stables who would be forming Weston Hub CIC independent to The Stable if they were successful.

The CEO/Town Clerk highlighted that page 48 of the previously circulated report which clarified the Councillors interest in the tender had now been superseded with new information and clarity on the position. It was confirmed that independent legal advice had been sought by the Councillor in question with regard to her role and interest in the project. Full details and all necessary polices advised as a result of this advice had been submitted to the council and in readiness for this meeting and had been made available in the reports sent to members with the agenda for this meeting.

A member suggested that the high scoring tender should not be discriminated against due to a councillor's involvement.

The Chair recommended seeking legal advice, demonstrating due diligence to ensure that the advice was not conflicting with the advice The Stables had been supplied with.

It was suggested that all members of the Liberal Democrat Party should abstain from voting, to which was agreed by members.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Peter Crew

SECONDED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly

A vote was taken and accordingly, it was **carried**. (For- 4(Councillors Ciaran Cronnelly, Peter Crew, John Standfield & Robert Skeen)/Against – 2 (Councillors Charles Williams & Tim Taylor)/ Abstention -1 (Councillor Gillian Bute)

RESOLVED: To accept The Stables CIC tender, pending legal advice to check the council's procurement processes with particular regard to the potential conflict of interest arising from a councillors involvement going forward with this appointment.

- The Director of Community Services/Deputy Town Clerk reinforced the confidential nature of the item which affected staff and asked members not to discuss with anyone until after legal advice had been sought.

9. **Rectors Way Allotments Site**

The CEO/Town Clerk reported that during some routine maintenance of the fencing at Rectors Way, the contractor cleared the adjacent rhyne to dig footings for the replacement of some fence pots. As a result of this maintenance work debris had been removed from the rhyne which required testing before it could be removed from site. Subsequent toxicology reports had been received by the council which confirmed that specialist contractors would be needed to undertake the removal of the debris fully. It was confirmed that the area had been fenced off and the environment agency and North Somerset Council had been contacted for specialist advice. Initial enquiries (verbal) with regard to costs indicated costs could run into 10's of thousands of pounds, if not more.

A discussion ensued regarding the responsibility of the Town Council, as the rhyne did not fall within the parish boundary, however a Town Council contractor had disturbed the waste.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly
SECONDED BY: Councillor John Crockford-Hawley

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

RESOLVED:

1. To take legal advice on the responsibility of the rhyne.
2. To authorise emergency expenditure to address the issue of hazardous waste at Rectors Way, and in the event that the quotations received did not fall within the existing set budget, the decision be delegated to the CEO/Town Clerk and Chair/Vice Chair of the committee to authorise.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.31 pm

Signed.....Dated
Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee