

**WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT THE MUSEUM ON
MONDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2024**

Meeting Commenced: 7:02 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.16 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Peak (Chair), Marc Aplin (S), Gill Bute, Mark Canniford, John Crockford-Hawley, Catherine Gibbons (S), Hugh Malyan, Robert Payne, Lisa Pilgrim and Tim Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Pearse (Town Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer), Fay Powell (Assistant Town Clerk – Operational Services) and Samantha Bishop (Committee & Office Manager).

329	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Thornton who was substituted by Catherine Gibbons and Martin Williams who was substituted by Marc Aplin.
330	To receive Declarations of Interest There were none received.
331	To approve the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on the 11th January 2024 The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda. It was noted that Councillor Tim Taylor was not present at the meeting. PROPOSED BY: Councillor Gill Bute SECONDED BY: Councillor Robert Payne A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That with the above amendment, the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair.
332	To receive the minutes of the Working Party to Review Expenditure & Governance held on 18th January 2024 (unapproved) The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda. It was noted that Councillor Robert Payne was present at the meeting. A vote was taken and carried . Accordingly, it was: RESOLVED: That with the above amendment, the minutes be approved.

<p>333</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the HQ Working Party Meetings held on the 2nd February 2024 (unapproved)</p> <p>The minutes had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>It was reported that the top level of scaffolding had come down, this was set to continue. It was confirmed the council were still anticipating to be relocated to the building by 30th June.</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved.</p>
<p>334</p>	<p>Monthly Financial Reports November & December 2023</p> <p>a) For Approval Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor March Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Catherine Gibbons</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>334.1 RESOLVED: That the Schedule of Unapproved Expenditure be approved.</p> <p>b) For Noting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Bank Reconciliations ii. Budgetary Control Report iii. Bank Interest Report iv. Schedule of Receipted Income v. Bad debt report vi. Overspend report <p>It was noted that once council signatories were in place, a more competitive bank interest rate could be sought.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That reports bi to vi be noted.</p>
<p>335</p>	<p>Recommendations from other Committees and Working Parties</p> <p>.1 Community Services Committee 15th January 2024 The report of the Finance Officer had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Policy & Finance Committee were requested to award the outstanding money of £705 to Donate for Defib (DFD)– working in partnership with Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) to fully fund one Defibrillator.</p> <p>The location of the defib would be overseen by the Assistant Town Clerk and the Museum had been suggested. There should be a 3min walk between defib locations and it was noted that there was already one in situ on the Boulevard.</p> <p>A further location suggestion was made for Whitecross Road as this was now a busy high street.</p>

Members were concerned about the concept of stealing and public training around the use of a defib. The Assistant Town Clerk informed that there was not a problem with stealing, more that the defibs were not put back after use. They could only be accessed by a code given by the emergency services.

Members queried information on feedback and the Town Clerk reported that an in-depth presentation was given at the Community Services meeting based on these types of questions, proving that the use of defibs did save lives and that access to them was needed. (90% of lives saved/ 40% of people not knowing how to use them). The GWA were supporting this, recognising that more information and education was needed. The presentation could be circulated to members on request.

It was clarified that the defibrillators required minimal electricity supply and would be maintained by DFD.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

SECONDED BY: Councillor Marc Aplin

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

335.1 RESOLVED: To approve the additional funding of £705 for a defibrillator, with the location to be overseen by the Assistant Town Clerk.

.2 Expenditure & Governance Working Party 18th January 2024

The recommendation to reintroduce a Grants Sub Committee as detailed and attached under item 4 had been previously circulated.

The Chair of the E&G working party explained that the recommendation was a result of grants taking up time at meetings which should be given a better forum for consideration.

The Town Clerk advised that the suggested Grants Sub Committee would consider all town council grants to include; Small & Voluntary, Community Event, Youth Council (over £500) and Weston In Bloom and that any proposed changes to the committee structure would need to be ratified by full council.

Discussion ensued regrading meeting terms of reference, memberships and quorums.

Members noted that the council had two major projects which would sit under the remit of the HACC committee once established.

The Town Clerk informed that a grants sub committee was once in situ consisting of 4 members meeting quarterly, during the day which worked well where grants were considered in depth. Any subcommittee formed, would need its own terms of reference that linked to the council's strategy.

Members were advised that a subcommittee had the power to make its own decisions as opposed to a working party who could only recommend to a governing committee, which would defeat the object of streamlining the process and incur more staff time and resource.

	<p>It was suggested to include the review of the council’s service legal agreements under the remit of the grants subcommittee and members noted that full council could overturn any committee decision if necessary.</p> <p>It was agreed that group leaders would bring forward proposals for the subcommittee membership to full council in March, with a suggested committee size of 6 of political balance. Group leaders may want to consider members that currently sat on the Community Services and HACC committees.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>335.2 RECOMMENDED: To recommend the forming of a Grants Sub Committee, consisting of 6 members, to be filled at the discretion of group leaders, to Full Council for consideration</p>
<p>336</p>	<p>Town Council Vehicles</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk and Grounds Manager had been previously circulated.</p> <p>Members were requested to approve the additional vehicle lease provision in principle and agree to the maximum costs contained in Table 2 (1 x replacement lease & 1 x new lease), noting that should a more competitive quote be available, budget savings would be made.</p> <p>The Town Clerk suggested approval in principle, subject to exploration of an electric vehicle option (vehicle 2) as the newly obtained town quarry would give the opportunity for a charging point.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk clarified that the request was for 1x replacement 1x additional vehicle. The current vehicles were not practical and quotes had been obtained with NSC and independently which were more competitive. The vehicle currently used for dog bins was too big and a smaller one would give more scope to access rural areas and pursue further contracts.</p> <p>PROPOSED BY: Councillor Catherine Gibbons SECONDED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan</p> <p>A vote was taken and carried. Accordingly, it was:</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the additional vehicle lease provision and agree to the maximum costs contained in Table 2 (1 x replacement lease & 1 x new lease), subject to exploration of an electric vehicle option (vehicle 2).</p>
<p>337</p>	<p>To Approve the amended Social Value Procurement Policy</p> <p>The report of the former Town Clerk had been previously circulated which recommended the following changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contractors continue to be required to pay the Real Living Wage as a minimum to all people working on all council contracts.

2. The threshold for other social value questions be increased to contracts with a value of £25,000 (from £20,000).
3. Appendix A be adopted as the questions with questions 1, 8 and 15 as mandatory questions to be asked with other questions at the discretion by the procuring committee or officer.
4. The council's Procurement Guide be amended accordingly.

The Town Clerk informed that the report had not been amended since and reported that there has been issues with the tender process being too tough for local businesses to compete. It was requested that any changes to the current policy came into effect after 1st April 2024 and be applied to any new procurement undertaken (it would not apply to current live procurements - as there were 3 large projects currently live which any change could cause complications and then need to restart the process).

Members were in full agreement that the current policy was not suitable, making it too difficult for local businesses to tender and requested that the the threshold for social value questions be increased to contracts with a value of £65,000 (from £25,000).

Discussion ensued regarding real living wage (RLW) and it was confirmed that the difference between national living wage (NLW) and RLW was now 50p. This was a government issue which was being addressed. However, as RLW employer, the council had an obligation to demonstrate this within its policies.

The changes to the policy would give officers the room to manoeuvre on the most relevant questions to apply, relevant to the tender.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Hugh Malyan

SECONDED BY: Councillor Mark Canniford

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

RESOLVED: To approve the recommendations outlined within the former Town Clerk's report, with the amendment to point .2 increasing the threshold for social value questions to contracts with a value of £65,000 (from £25,000).

338 Credit card limits

The report of the Town Clerk had been previously circulated which requested to review recommendations for credit card limits as detailed within the report.

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Tim Taylor

SECONDED BY: Councillor Gill Bute

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

RESOLVED:

1. To note the cancellation of Credit Card to the former Town Clerk with effect from 31.01.24.
2. To approve the reviewed recommendations for credit card limits detailed in the report which include:
 - Increased credit limit to £2,000 for the Town Clerk

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased credit limit to £1,000 for the Assistant Town Clerk • Issue of new temporary card £500 to the Operational Support Manager until such time of the appointment (current vacancy) within SMT (then this should be reviewed). • Approval to pay both Agorapulse and Survey Monkey via credit card (for annual automated renewal – until service is cancelled / no longer required). • Approve the ability for recurring payments to be made via Credit Cards held by members of SMT ONLY. (should other similar needs occur for business operations. This would be only with advanced approval of the RFO and Town Clerk following confirmation that no other means of payment can be made.
<p>339</p>	<p>Surrender of Lease for Grove House and Grove Lodge</p> <p>The Town Clerk verbally reported that the council had given notice to vacate Grove Lodge by 1st March and Grove House by 30th June, surrendering its leases with North Somerset Council.</p> <p>North Somerset Council up until very recently had been very keen to take back both buildings to utilise for themselves. However, contrary to various inspections and surveys undertaken, the council has been advised that there has been a change of feeling and NSC no longer require the buildings, advising that the town council were not at a point of break clause in its lease. Unfortunately, the lease agreement had not been able to be obtained yet and the break clause and remaining term on the lease was unknown. This was not so much a concern for Grove House as the council was on a 99-year peppercorn lease. However, Grove Lodge was a fixed term lease costing the council £5,000 rent per year, with the addition of rates and insurances to consider.</p> <p>Therefore, Grove Lodge would be empty from 1ST March and so the council may want to consider gaining permission to subletting, if North Somerset Council are not willing to take on the building. There had been enquires from tenants for the new building at Waterloo Street that may be better placed at Grove Lodge.</p> <p>The Town Clerk would continue to obtain the current lease agreement to establish the break clause point, noting that it was believed the building was taken on by the town council in 2005.</p> <p>Members agreed that North Somerset Council needed to be pushed on the matter and that any further updates would be considered by Group Leaders.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the update be received and the matter be discussed by Group Leaders.</p>
	<p>There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.16 pm</p> <p>Signed.....Dated.....</p> <p>Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee</p>