

WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL

Minutes of Council held on 20 February 2019 at 4.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Williton

Present:

Councillor B Heywood Chairman
Councillor R Thomas..... Vice-Chairman

Councillor I Aldridge	Councillor B Allen
Councillor M J Chilcott	Councillor M O Dewdney
Councillor S Dowding	Councillor S Goss
Councillor N Hawkins	Councillor I Jones
Councillor A Kingston-James	Councillor K Mills
Councillor P H Murphy	Councillor P Pilkington
Councillor N Thwaites	Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor K H Turner	Councillor D J Westcott
Councillor R Woods	

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer (B Lang)
Head of Localities (B Cleere)
Locality Manager (C Hall)
Strategic Finance Advisor and S151 Officer of Taunton Deane Borough Council and
West Somerset Council (P Fitzgerald)
Special Project Consultant (J Souter)
Case Manager – Democracy and Governance (A Randell)

At the start of the meeting Councillor Roger Thomas was elected as Vice-Chairman for the meeting. This was proposed by Councillor Trollope-Bellew and seconded by Councillor Dewdney.

C49 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Clifford, H Davies, C Morgan, S Pugsley and T Venner.

C50 Minutes

(Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 12 December 2018, circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 12 December 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

C51 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No.	Member of	Action Taken
Cllr I Aldridge	All	Williton	Spoke and voted
Cllr S Goss	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr B Maitland-Walker	All	Carhampton	Spoke and voted
Cllr C Morgan	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Cllr P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr J Parbrook	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr R Thomas	All	Minehead	Spoke and voted
Cllr N Thwaites	All	Dulverton	Spoke and voted
Cllr A H Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Cllr T Venner	All	Minehead & SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

C52 Public Participation

There was no public participation

C53 Chairman's Announcements

20 March 2019	All Councillors were encouraged by the Chairman to attend the final meeting of West Somerset Council on 20 th March.
31 March 2019	All Councillors were reminded of the Commemorating West Somerset District Council Service to be held on 31 st March in Watchet Methodist Church followed by The Phoenix Centre, Watchet.

C54 East Quay Development.

The report, circulated with the Agenda was introduced by Councillor Dewdney and presented by the Locality Manager.

The report updated Members on the recent progress made with The Onion Collective, and sought approval of the lease on part of the land at Easy Quay, Watchet, and approval of a loan to bridge their reducing funding gap.

Each of these aspects supported The Onion Collective in their bid to the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) for up to £5m of the overall development cost of £7m.

This report followed on from an all Member update briefing on the proposed development and bid for grant funding that took place on 12th December 2018.

The Member briefing on 12th December 2018 set out in detail the proposals of how the Onion Collective would develop and operate the site, including a question and answer session for Members to understand all aspects of the development and its mix of uses. Whilst this report focused on the lease a number of the key benefits were been set out:

- 37 new direct jobs on the developed site
- 166 new indirect jobs due to the increased tourism spend to the West Somerset area (valued at £6.7m per annum)
- 17 safeguarded jobs
- 76 construction jobs, for the duration of the build
- Develop and fund the access road to the development and for the remainder of the site. (£300k - £400k)
- Additional business rates for the council that could reach up to £960k over a decade, however this is subject to the occupants of the units.
- Approximately £230,000 in additional parking revenue over a decade.
- Bringing in £5m-£7m in external regeneration funding to the district.
- Delivering multi-layered social benefits to the tune of £3m per annum (wellbeing, culture, aspiration, mental health).
- Creating an arts/cultural and social enterprise development with a national profile, closely aligned with the interests of government.

A lengthy debate ensued and the following main points were raised:

- This was an important development for Watchet and due to the history of the project there could be further lengthy delays if the recommendations were not passed.
- Further information was requested on the activities the onion collective within the last few years. Another project they had delivered successfully was the Minehead Eye.
- It was recognised that further work was required to attract more people into the area and fulfil community ambitions.
- There were some reservations in the approval of the commercial loan and alternative projects that could be funded through this. Councillors requested for the business case to be made available to them.

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- Reported that the statutory duties and due diligence had been done when reviewing the terms of the loan and business case. There was sufficient protections in place due to the loan being secured against a building.
- The development would be the responsibility of the New Council, the successor council would take on any liabilities. There was no insurance premium to safeguard the loan although the risk management was set out in the report.
- The funding would be phased in and there was confidence in the loan being returned, although it was recognised that this was not risk free.

C55 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Proposed by Councillor Heywood and seconded by Councillor Dewdney:-

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the appendices A, B, C and D contained in The East Quay Development Report on the grounds that, if the press and public were present during discussion on these documents, there would be likely to be a disclosure to them of exempt information of the class specified in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended as follows:

The appendices contained information that could release confidential information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It was therefore agreed that after consideration of all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Members duly discussed the contents of the relevant appendices.

Re-admittance of the Press and Public

Proposed by Councillor Heywood and seconded by Councillor Dewdney :-

RESOLVED that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

RESOLVED (1) to agree to the award of the lease under the terms set out in the report upon resolution of the conditions in the confidential appendixes, with delegated authority to Head of Localities in consultation with the Leader of the Council to negotiate the final terms.

RESOLVED (2) to agree to the principle of granting a capital financing loan to The Onion Collective for the sum of up to £1.5m with delegated authority to the Head of Localities & S151 officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council to negotiate the final terms. Provision for such a loan to be included in the Somerset West and Taunton Council Capital Programme for 2019/20.

The meeting closed at 6.04 pm.

