

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council
held on Monday 8 February 2010 at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllr David Banks, Cllr Hazel Bowden, Cllr Paul Chamberlain (Chair), Cllr Sally de Renzy-Martin, Cllr Jenny Hill, Cllr Peter Murphy, Cllr Janet Tapp, Cllr Wendy Turner, Cllr Doug Webber (Vice-Chair), Cllr Dave Westcott, Cllr Loretta Whetlor, Cllr Vincent Woods

In attendance: Sarah Reed, Town Clerk, District Cllr Anthony Knight, County Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Press, two members of the public.

10/97 To receive Apologies: None

10/98 To receive Declarations of Interest:

Name	Minute No:	Description of Interest	Personal / Prejudicial	Action Taken
Cllr Hill	10/105	As a dog owner	Personal	Cllr remained in the room and took part in the discussion and voting

10/99 Town Council Minutes - to confirm and sign the Minutes of the council meeting held on 11 January 2010 (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41(1))

Cllr Chamberlain proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2010 are adopted and signed off as a true and correct record. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

10/100 Chairman's Report - verbal

Cllr Chamberlain reported on the following:

- Cllr Murphy has been working with the Mineral Railway project with various works within the Market House Museum and on the West Quay and also with the Mineral Line footpath between Watchet and Washford which is a newly laid, level surface ideal for walkers, pushchairs, wheelchairs and cycling. This has been a tremendous project for Watchet and Cllr Chamberlain asked Cllr Murphy to pass on the Council's thanks to the relevant people concerned.
- The railway footbridge has been the subject of a large petition raised by Mr Simpson-Scott and this has received the full support of the Council who wish to see the bridge being repaired or a new one in its place.
- The War Memorial Project has now received the full support of Adrian Dyer Executive Director for West Somerset Council to enable us to move forward. This will be dealt with by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

10/101 Reports from Principle Authority Members and to receive questions from the floor:

County Councillor Trollope-Bellew reported on the following:

Watchet Footbridge: The footbridge is not a right of way as it is not included on the definitive map, therefore, SCC have no responsibility to maintain it. He continued that he had looked into possible streams of funding and had forwarded the details onto Steve Watts, WSC with a copy forwarded to the Clerk of Watchet Town Council.

Community Budget: There is approximately £2000 left in his budget, and there are a couple of projects within Watchet which have applied for financial assistance. Although he will assist in any way he can to retain the footbridge, most of his budget is spent and with a lot of SCC budget already allocated he commented that it would not be very easy to get money from SCC.

Rail at the top of Goviers Lane: Funding of the rail was secured and it would be installed by the end of this current financial year.

SCC Budget: This budget is not fixed as such and will need to be passed by full council at their meeting on 17 February 2010. Recommendation for a 0% increase on the SCC Council Tax contribution is anticipated. This, as mentioned, will not mean a 0% increase on the residents' council tax as there may be increases from other factions ie police, WSC and Watchet Town Council etc.

Highways Contract: This new contract will be effective from 1 April 2010 and sees a saving of £5million. The new contract has been awarded to WS Atkins. Six contractors submitted their bids

and no names were given. Money from the £5million savings will be allocated to road repairs, which will see more work done and an increase in quality.

Community Budget: The allocation to County Councillor Trollope-Bellew is no longer available as this is one of the changes to be implemented by SCC. This has occurred as the authority has inherited a debt of £350million and where it is envisaged that a £44million saving can be made, the Community Budget was an obvious cut.

Questions from the floor:

Cllr Hill commented that she thought that SCC was in partnership with WS Atkins.

County Councillor Trollope-Bellew replied that there is not a partnership as such, as WS Atkins are the chosen contractor to deliver the new Highways contract

Cllr Hill commented that the footbridge had been used for over 20 years was it not defined as a public right of way?

County Councillor Trollope-Bellew replied that as the bridge is not included on the definitive map, it is not classed as a right of way. WSC however could chose to dedicate the bridge to be included on the map, but it would have to be repaired first.

Cllr Banks commented that he thought that in relation to the footbridge, there seems to be a 'blame game' operating. He continued that he would like to dispel rumours that Watchet Town Council are in any way to blame. This council has always had a pro-active and supportive attitude towards retaining the footbridge for the benefit of the Watchet people.

County Councillor Trollope-Bellew replied that the facts are the facts and SCC will not give financial assistance to something it does not own. If it was included in the definitive map it would be a different matter.

Cllr Whetlor asked the question if the SCC community budget is gone, does that mean that the community engagement is gone also?

County Councillor Trollope-Bellew replied that no, other sums of money may be accessed for specific things. Unfortunately the financial climate dictates what SCC can afford to do.

Cllr Chamberlain thanked County Councillor Trollope-Bellew for his input.

Councillor Knight reported on the following:

Full Council meeting on 27 January:

- **New Council building:** The chair used his casting vote to ensure the final account for the council building will go to mediation. Cllrs Knight and Hill voted against this as they supported one last meeting with the contractors, councillors and some members of the public with inside knowledge of building works which it was believed would not put extra costs on the council.
- **Dog Fouling:** The council adopted orders relating to dog fouling following amendments made during the consultation process.
- **Core Strategy Options:** This was discussed and council endorsed the resolution of the LDF panel to commence consultation using the prepared options paper.
- The Tourism delivery plan was adopted

The previous week saw Council meet to discuss the Hinkley Point issue and also recommendation re electoral reform. The proposal to opt for 28 councillors was narrowly accepted reducing the number of councillors by three. Minehead would see a reduction of one and the Exmoor/ Brendon Hills area by two Watchet, however will retain its three members

Licensing

Two applications for exemption from part of regulations for Hackney/Private Hire Vehicles.

The regulation reads: *The doors must open sufficiently wide so as to allow easy access to and egress from the vehicle and cause no inconvenience to passengers. Access to and egress from the vehicle at all times be available in respect of each seat without the need to ~~more~~ or adjust any seating.*

Members tested a 7 seat vehicle. Both applications were refused.

In the case of the private hire application, exemption would be approved if the seat nearest the exit door behind the driver was removed to provide clear unobstructed passage.

Cabinet – Empty Property Strategy, Affordable Energy & Fuel Poverty Strategy, Performance Management Framework amongst the 16 item agenda.

"Sort It" and the recycling scheme was discussed and agreed. Aim to implement this in January 2012.

Annual budget and council tax increase of 3% was agreed to be put before full council.

The debate from non-cabinet members enabled Cllr Knight to emphasise our stake in Watchet for farmers' markets and an increase in the use of the Esplanade for markets in general. This would provide increase in rent paid and possible increase in parking revenue. Cllr Downes informed cabinet that a meeting held that day was working towards this.

A question was asked regarding repairs to the Estate. This concerned bids for Capital Resource 2010/11 where one of the sections reads "repairs to the estate" and this included the railway footbridge. Emphasising the issue, Cllr Knight informed members of the petition which had been handed to the Leader, Keith Ross, and how urgent the matter had become and that monies must be found. Executive Director, Adrian Dyer admitted it was "a priority". Having spoken to Paul Conibeare regarding the unused Williton Bridge it was established that this was not an option. Many also supported a level crossing but this was not possible as the Inspectorate would never agree to it.

Questions from the floor: None

Cllr Chamberlain thanked District Councillor Knight for his input.

District Cllr Westcott reported the following:

The current situation in relation to the railway footbridge was that:

The contractors who carried out repairs to the pier at Weston-super-Mare have assessed the bridge with a view to submitting a report. The report will include repair and replacement information. He concluded that WSC have placed this item as a "priority" and area and are very aware of its importance to Watchet.

Questions from the floor:

Cllr Murphy reported for information only that steps were being taken to register the bridge as a right of way and this would be progressed through the Environment & Planning Committee and himself, as the Council designated Parish Path Liaison Officer.

Cllr Chamberlain asked the District Councillors present if this Council could be kept informed of any progress on this matter.

10/102 Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, verbal – no decisions:

Cllr Webber as representative on the **Market House Museum Committee** reported on the following:

- Meeting took place on 12 January 2010
- The newly-appointed committee has been operating for six months and is working very efficiently
- New chairman controls the meeting very competently and has cut the meeting time down significantly, whilst ensuring that all relevant business is addressed
- The Ancient Mariner statue has had the bow damaged. The statue maker has provided the committee with a kit to repair the damaged bow and they are currently attempting to find a local welder to repair it.

Cllr Hill reported as representative on the **St Decumans Trust**:

- Mrs Jean Howe, a new member, has joined the trust
- Decisions are confidential so no information can be given

Cllr Westcott reported as representative on the **War Memorial Management Committee**:

- The committee have been working very hard on improving the interior of the pavilion and have spent a lot of money on installing a new kitchen
- Sports groups are working very hard to maintain the pavilion

Cllr Turner reported as representative on the **Carnival Club**

- The Valentines Dance will take place at Danesfield School on Saturday 13 February 2010. There will be a difference in the layout where the buffet will be set up in the foyer rather than the hall to allow more space in the hall for people.

Cllr Turner reported as representative on the **Friends of Watchet Station**

- The shop is back in operation ready for the start of the trains running at February half term
- The AGM will take place in March

10/103 To receive and sign minutes of the following committees and to adopt the resolutions and recommendations contained therein:

Environment & Planning Committee (14 January 2010)

Cllr Murphy as chair of the Environment & Planning Committee proposed the adoption and the signing of the minutes of the meeting and decisions made as a true and correct record. Seconded by Cllr Woods. Carried.

Matters of Report: None

Finance & General Purposes Committee 18 January 2010)

Cllr Woods as chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee proposed the adoption and signing off of the minutes and decisions made as a true and correct record. Seconded by Cllr Tapp. Carried.

Matters of Report: None

Tourism & Leisure Committee (21 January 2010)

Cllr Westcott as chair of the Tourism & Leisure Committee proposed the adoption and the signing of the minutes and decisions made as a true and correct record. Seconded by Cllr de Renzy-Martin. Carried.

Matters of Report: None

10/104 Verbal reports from sub-committees, working groups, and other outside organisations where Watchet Town Council does not have representation

Cllr de Renzy-Martin as chair of the Market Sub-Committee made the following report:

- Last July the sub-committee made a decision based on lack of resources and minimal stalls to cease running the local produce and craft markets on the Esplanade in the hope of replacing the market with a commercial market.
- In order to progress this, permission was sought from WSC as landowners. WSC however, were reluctant to give a quick decision, due to the fact that no policy was in place to "hold a commercial market on council owned land".
- On 3 February 2010, Cllr de Renzy-Martin reported that she had attended a meeting with Cllr Downes (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development), and Corrine Matthews (Economic Regeneration Manager) to progress this idea
- The WACET traders organisation have given their full support for the commercial market and, like Watchet Town Council, feel that it would be a great benefit to the town.
- The WSC officers did not make a decision based on lack of policy, so Cllr de Renzy-Martin suggested that the Watchet market could be an experimental market on which the policy could be based.
- The sub committee met on 4 February 2010 and all expressed their disappointment that they had been waiting over 7 months and this matter had not been progressed at all by WSC.
- The sub committee agreed to contact Adrian Dyer (Executive Director of WSC) requesting that a decision is made by Wednesday 10 February to allow the publicity deadline of the market manager to go ahead.

Comments from the floor:

Cllr Tapp commented that WSC had allowed a market to go ahead on the East Quay, surely a policy had been in place then

Cllr Banks commented that the sub committee had worked very hard in co-operating and liaising with a well organised and reputable commercial market operator, which would include 15 to 20 stalls operating on the Esplanade and increasing the footfall into the town. He continued that after a 7 month wait, Watchet Town Council needs permission from WSC to move forward.

Cllr Murphy commented that the sub committee had formulated the agreement with the market operator last July and was ready to move forward. WSC said "no" because of lack of policy. He continued that 7 months on and still 'no policy'; WSC must give an answer, as Watchet would benefit from a market on the Esplanade.

Cllr de Renzy-Martin commented that a commercial market would not be in favour of an exclusion of local produce and craft stalls, it has been made clear from the outset that they will be included.

Cllr Knight was invited by the Chair of Council to contribute to the discussion:

He commented that the tentage for stalls was obtained from funding on the back of the Esplanade enhancement scheme and they were not being used for that purpose.

10/105 Extraordinary Meeting in relation to the "Dog Exclusion" Order discussion

The Council considered recommendations made by the Clerk outline in Appendix 1 detailed below:

Recommendations:

1. **Date of meeting:** May I suggest that we have a "period of calm" to allow the office to collate the information received and prepare the councillors' information packs, with a view to initially holding the meeting in the last week in March, called by the Chairman of the Council and depending on venue availability
2. **Venue of meeting:** due to the amount of public interest, a venue larger than the Council Chambers, preferably the Methodist Schoolroom should be considered.



3. **Public Participation:** Our rules for this currently state that this session will last for 15 minutes, again due to the amount of public interest in favour and opposing the proposed "Dog Exclusion" Order then an extension of this session to 30 minutes should be considered. The current regulations for public participation will still apply, ie those wishing to speak must give 24 hours notice and can only speak for a two minute period, providing names and addresses have been submitted to the Council Office prior to the meeting and a list given to the Chair of Council before the meeting.

1. **Date:** Cllr Banks proposed that the meeting is held in the last week of March depending on venue availability. Seconded by acclaim. Carried.

2. **Venue:** Cllr Chamberlain proposed to look at all options available including Knights Templar School and Methodist Schoolroom. Seconded by acclaim. Carried.

At this point in the meeting, Cllr Hill declared a prejudicial interest as she had submitted a letter of objection to the Clerk on the proposed dog exclusion order and as the law stated that she would not be able to take part in the discussion and voting at the forthcoming meeting and tendered her apologies.

3. **Public participation:** After a brief discussion this recommendation was rejected in favour of Cllr Woods' proposal that the length of time allocated per person will be decided on the evening of the meeting and will be managed and decided by the Chair of Council. Seconded by Cllr Bowden. Carried by 8 votes for, 2 votes against and 2 abstentions.

10/106 Matters of Correspondence for Report

The Clerk informed the councillors that correspondence is addressed on a daily basis and filed and this file is available for all councillors to inspect at their leisure.

10/107 Accounts for Payment – To accept the January Accounts, due for payment in February


Cllr Whetlor proposed that the accounts for payment for January 2010 are accepted and paid. Seconded by Cllr Turner. Carried.

10/108 To note matters for the next meeting – no discussion or decisions made

If any progress, the following will be placed on the Agenda:

- To adopt Power of Well-Being
- Job specification for the post of "Town Warden"

The meeting closed at 8.12pm


Signed:

Dated: 8/3/10

