

WATCHET ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Held at the Methodist School Room, Harbour Road, Watchet
on 16 April 2019 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr Benham, Cllr Bowden, Cllr de Renzy-Martin, Cllr Irven (Chair) Cllr Johnson, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Richards, Cllr Westcott, Cllr Whetlor

In attendance: Sarah Reed Town Clerk, Government Electors of Watchet. PCSO Sue Thompson

1. Chairman's Welcome and Address – Councillor John Irven:

It's my pleasure as Chair of Council to welcome you all to the 2019 Annual Town Meeting. I would like to start by welcoming you all here tonight, and by thanking Sarah Reed, Town Clerk, and her staff for making the arrangements for the meeting, which will be recorded as are all Full Council meetings to assist with ensuring that the minutes are accurate. It is good to see so many of you here for this meeting which is aimed to enable the Town Council to inform electors of the work they have been doing during the year, to allow you to ask questions, and to provide a forum for community groups to publicise what they do. We also take the opportunity to present the Best Shop Shield to the business judged as making the best contribution to the retail offer in Watchet during the past year, and to the community group who have made a mark in the town over the last twelve months.

End of Current Term -The Council meets every month except August and has held eleven meetings and two extraordinary meetings in the last year. The Town Council was elected for a four-year term in May 2015 so 2019 marks the closure of that term with elections due in May 2019, for which nominations have now closed. As the number of nominations is less than the number of vacancies, this will be an uncontested election and after May the Council will advertise vacancies. If there is no call for a by-election, the Council will then consider opportunities for co-option to the remaining unfilled vacancies. Please watch out for an announcement at the appropriate time and if anyone is then interested, please contact the Council via the Clerk.

Councillor changes - I would like to thank all the councillors who have served and given the time to the council in 2018. Councillors Ray Waterman and Izzy Silvester stepped down from the Council due to their work commitments, and as these were within 6 months of the May 2019 election a by-election was not necessary. Councillors Benham and Nuttall have decided not to seek re-election in May, and so I would like to thank them on your behalf for their service.

Council Assets- WTC has continued to be responsible for and operate

- Maintenance of Watchet War Memorial Ground for the WWMGC & children's play area
- Henry Davey Sports Ground & play areas
- Closed churchyard
- Cemetery
- West Street Car Park
- Harbour Road toilets which have continued to be maintained since we took over from WSDC
- Council Offices
- Esplanade Bookings
- Maintenance of verges in parts of parish

Community Library Partnership (CLP) - In 2018 SCC announced a strategic library services review. Friends of Somerset Libraries (FOSL) and Watchet Life Friends (WLF) made significant inputs to Somerset County Council (SCC) to ensure rather than just closing libraries, local communities had the chance to establish Community Library Partnerships where they were in danger of closing. Watchet Town Council (WTC) were in the vanguard in working with SCC and decided early that we had to keep the library for Watchet open. The building was gifted originally by L L Stoate in 1951 to 'the people of Watchet' to be held in trust by the then Watchet Urban District Council, leased to SCC to operate the library. In 1974 reorganisation WSDC took over the freehold.

We signed a formal agreement with SCC and from 1 April 2019 we have established a CLP where WTC pays for building operational costs and part of library operational costs, with a level of ongoing SCC contribution to staff costs. SCC continue to provide staffed opening hours of 15 hours per week. The arrangement runs for a minimum of 7 years. However, WTC insisted on the transfer of the freehold and trusteeship back from West Somerset District Council (WSDC). Originally WSDC refused, and we had to obtain legal opinion and support from the Stoate family and trust that it was held in trust for people of Watchet and must be returned to WTC to hold. We took representation to the leaders of WSC and Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) who overturned the decision and agreed to transfer it back to WTC. We are still debating terms of transfer which will be considered by the new Somerset West & Taunton Council (SW&T) after it forms in May/June 2019. The Library is 15 hours a week on same days as currently and has been a seamless transfer. On non-library days we hope to develop other community uses.

Requests for support - During the year, the Council and committees heard presentations from a number of people and groups who explained what they do, some of whom were making requests for the support of the Council in their application to grant funders. As a result, WTC wrote letters of support, and/or spoke in support e.g. WSDC meetings or with grant sponsors for the following

- Support of Bowling Club application for CIM funding for their new facility of wider use by the community
- OC E. Quay development. Passed unanimously by WSDC planning, now funded via grant funding.
- Continued support that Sea Scouts & Local Voluntary groups given waiver for W. Quay slipway fees when it was reconsidered in 2018.
- Supported the partnership between WCCT, WTC, SW&T, SCC OC, for PBSA award – hear later in meeting an update from Georgie Grant.
- Watchet Remembrance project – the new war memorial in Harbour Road was erected 5 years ago, and the organisers who worked tirelessly to achieve it feel it's time to step back and ask WTC to take it on and protect it for future generations. WTC has agreed in principle and are working with the remembrance group on a formal handing over ceremony sometime in June on the anniversary, where we can also acknowledge the work of everyone associated with erecting it. Beyond that point, WTC will become responsible for the memorial and its maintenance, together with requests to arrange ceremonies in its vicinity, similar to how we administer requests to use the Esplanade.

Representations- Several representations have therefore been made to district council on matters of joint interest. WTC proposed that the current PSPO (Public Space Protection Order) was flawed and should only apply to specific areas and relate to antisocial drinking. When introduced to update the old DPPO (Designated Public Place Orders) it had been extended to the whole of Watchet and applied to all consumption of alcohol. WSDC agreed to work to return the scope to the original intention which we hope the new SW&T will soon deliver.

Representing Watchet- In my year as Chairman and Mayor of Watchet, I have carried out the following civic duties, or when unavailable by the Vice Chair & Deputy Mayor Cllr de Renzy- Martin:

- Attended the re-commemoration of the RAF plaque, which was removed from the old council building, and was given on long term loan to the Royal British Legion for safe keeping and display on their wall. The ceremony allowed past WTC members Eileen Woods and Tony Knight who were involved in the original gift and installation to be present, together with members of the RBL and past members who served at the RAF Doniford camp. Kenny Wilson who drew original sign helped unveil the plaque with me.
- Supported the Watchet Dementia Alliance at their third birthday event and the visit by the Lord Lieutenant Annie Maw as main sponsor.
- Attended the Watchet Phoenix presentation of the Queens Award for Voluntary Service by Annie Maw, Lord Lieutenant. A wonderful and thoroughly deserved achievement by one of Watchet's exemplary voluntary groups.
- Attended the annual SCC Community Service at St Mary's Taunton Church
- With chair of T&L new play equipment in kids' playground – supported by Watchet Roots
- Cllr de Renzy-Martin attended KTS to receive a donation of £500 from the mother's club
- Opened the Council Fun Day on the Esplanade as part of Watchet Summertime, then separately a fun organised by Headway Brain Injury Charity in memory of Darren Pine.
- WSR 1940s event. Hosted a visit of King George IV and Winston Churchill to Watchet, together with re-enactors on the Esplanade and around town.
- Started the Elliot's Touch inaugural fun run
- Welcomed King Charles and Queen Catherine to Watchet as part of the opening of the Queen Caturday event
- Taken part in the Remembrance Sunday parade and service and laid a wreath on behalf of the town at the war memorial. This was followed by a dedication at the VC of a ceramic poppy donated to Watchet (in an earlier ceremony) at the Quantock Lodge. The poppy was an original from the 'Tower of London fields of blood exhibition' that many of you may remember. This was particularly poignant as the remembrance and poppy ceremonies were held at 11.00 am on 11th November 2018 – the 100th anniversary of the first armistice on 11/11/1919.
- At the 40th anniversary of the opening of Watchet Market House Museum and re-opening for the 2019 season, Cllr de Renzy-Martin gave a toast and vote of thanks as Deputy Mayor.

2. To adopt the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 17 April 2018 as a true and correct record and matters of report from the minutes – **Sara Summers proposed that the 'minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2018 are adopted as a true and correct record'**. Seconded by acclaim. Carried. They were then signed off by the Chair of the meeting.

3. Reports from Committee Chairs on the Committees' activities during 2018-19:

- **Environment & Planning Committee – Cllr Robin Nuttall**

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee Cllr Nuttall, Cllr Westcott, read out this report on his behalf

The Committee comprises of 7 Councillors, and I would like to thank them all for being so pro-active during 2018-19. During this period the Committee has debated and made decisions on many matters and issues that affect Watchet, and I will now highlight some of them for your information:

Planning Applications: Part of the Committee's remit is to review and make observations on planning applications received from the planning authority relevant to Watchet. The Committee has reviewed over the last year over 34 plans and reported their observations to the Planning Authority for consideration.

Flood Plan: A working group was formed, and they have worked very hard with the Admin Officer and the 'Ground Works' Charity who helped with the drafting the plan and Flood Warden training. The plan has now been adopted by the Town Council. Thanks must go to everyone involved.

West Street Car Park: is owned by Watchet Town Council and is managed by the Admin Assistant. There are 70 spaces for rental and a further 3 spaces available for short stay visitors. The Car park is currently full to capacity, and there is a waiting list. The committee monitors the usages and charges and is responsible for the upkeep of the car park. They also own and oversee the allotments in the same area, and also at Maglands. It is with regret that I have to report that there have been several acts of vandalism at the car park especially over the last 12 months, where the swipe card machine was damaged beyond repair and at considerable cost a new fob system has replaced the former swipe card system. Only last week the car park barrier was stolen and a new one has been sourced and will be installed this week. The Council are working closely with the Police to catch the offender, and the users of the car park are being asked to be extra vigilant in reporting any incidents however minor to the Council.

Wild Flower Project: The Committee agreed for the Conservation Society to trial this project at West Street car park for a 12 month period. The project has seen some success, and the Committee has agreed to a further 12 months subject to a Service Level Agreement with the Conservation Society. The volunteers must be thanked for their efforts and the Committee look forward to seeing the agreed signage being installed soon.

Replacement Lighting at the Liddymore Estate: Watchet Town Council received an email from Western Power Distribution on 3 December 2018 to inform Council that during a scheme to replace all the poles and renew the wires on the Liddymore Estate in Doniford, 2 of the streetlights on Alamein and Normandy Avenue were damaged beyond repair. As Watchet Town Council is responsible for the streetlights on the Liddymore Estate, the Admin Support Officer sourced a quotation on replacing the two lights. The Admin Support Officer contacted the Overhead Line Surveyor at Western Power and discussed the possibility of a contribution towards the cost of the replacements and associated works, as the streetlights fell apart during the pole replacement scheme (It was advised that this was due to them being rusted and in ill repair). On 16 January 2019 Western Power confirmed that they were willing to pay the full balance of **£1481.90** in goodwill. Western Power advised that the street lighting on the whole estate will need to be reviewed as reports following the pole replacement scheme were that almost all lights were in poor condition. The Admin Support Officer has requested from Western power a lighting assessment report outlining how many lights will need replacing within the next 5 years and the Committee are in the process of putting together a financial plan. Thanks must go to Western Power Distribution for their generosity in this matter.

Finance & General Purposes Committee (including the Cemetery) - Cllr Murphy:

The Finance and General Purposes Committee's responsibilities include personnel matters, grants, and donations, administering the new cemetery & closed churchyard, management, and care of council owned assets, and recommending the precept for council approval.

Watchet Town Council, at its Full Council held on Monday 14 January 2019 approved its precept or Council Tax levy for 2019 / 20. The charge for a Band D equates to £2.78 per week which is unchanged from last year. Most households in Watchet will pay less than that since they fall into lower Council Tax Bands. A household in Band B will pay £2.16 a week or £112.49 a year. The Council, as always, sets a balanced budget and will raise £177,257 which is a little higher than last year as new houses have added to the number of households in the town who pay Council Tax. The council has raised funds to set up a Community Library Partnership to keep Watchet Library open as Somerset County Council proposed to close it as part of their review of Library services.

The staff have worked particularly hard this year due to the long-term illness of a member of staff as they needed to cover her work. Much of this fell on the Administrative Assistant and the Clerk and my thanks go to them on behalf of the town and the council for stepping up to the challenge during a difficult time. The Clerical Officer has recently resigned her post and left the employment of the council. Of behalf of the council, I thank her for her service to the town and the council during her employment.

Grants were made by the committee following presentations seeking grant support from several organisations including West Somerset Advice Bureau, Watchet Community Cinema, Clowns, Watchet Summertime and Watchet Carnival Club.

The committee has kept the church path under review and have discussed changes to the cemetery regulations and the cemetery software in order to keep the burial grounds functioning as we would expect. The groundsman and Operational Assistant have kept things looking trim.

At its April meeting, which was held last night, the committee considered grant applications from Watchet Twinning Society and Knights Templar Community Association. Also considered and approved was the advertisement for a new post of Administration Support Officer, which will be coming out this week.

Tourism & Leisure Committee- Cllr Whetlor:

I give this report as Chairman of the Tourism and Leisure Committee for the past 12 months.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Councillor Johnson for his chairmanship before I took over last May and to my fellow Committee members for their work and commitment throughout the past year.

This Committee is hard working and very pro-active and has responsibility for the following:

- Maintaining play areas and the Memorial Ground
- Managing /approving bookings on The Esplanade (on behalf of the District Council)
- Providing the floral displays in municipal areas including 15 hanging baskets along the Esplanade and roadside displays at Brendon Road and Cleeve Hill
- Managing and updating Council website

The following is the work that has been done in these areas this past year:

The Memorial Ground, Henry Davey playing field, Liddymore Estate and the Children's Playground area next to the Memorial Ground have, as always, been kept in great order by the Groundsman and Operations Assistant. The majority of maintenance work has been taken care of by them, except where specialist skills have been needed.

This Committee gave permission for a new stand-up swing to be installed at the Children's Play Area at the Memorial Ground, in liaison with a donation from Watchet Roots, and agreed to make up the shortfall:

The area alongside the tennis courts is a garden and allotments, now managed by Watchet Roots and Seeds of Hope, an organisation who through gardening enable people with mental health problems to experience the therapeutic benefits of gardening and growing food. We gave them permission to erect a storage shed and add 2 more raised vegetable beds. This is a community garden where vegetable etc are grown for anyone to help themselves.

All of our play areas are well used by the residents and visitors to Watchet.

The Committee approved a variety of events on The Esplanade this past year and have provisionally or fully approved many more for the months to come – some new ones and many popular favourites including the Town Council's Wednesday Markets (starting 1st May) Sunday Street Fayres, Watchet Twinning Society, Watchet Summertime (which has on the Friday Town fun day sponsored by this Committee and arranged by the Town Clerk)

Watchet Live events including Wheelbarrow Race and Carnival Day (which this year will be Carnival Weekend taking place around the town and on The Esplanade on Saturday and the Fete on The Memorial Ground on the Sunday). West Somerset Brass Band, Churches Together and 2 new events approved last year which were the very popular 40's weekend and the outdoor Cinema. I am pleased to tell you that the 40s weekend will be taking place again this year in September and I understand that possibly the open-air cinema also will take place.

Please look on the Town Council website and Visit Watchet website for further events.

Future events are listed in the Welcome to Watchet Leaflet which, again, this Committee approved funding to pay the cost of printing.

The new electric supply on The Esplanade continues to work very well. It has been used for the markets, street fairs and many other events.

Last year Niall Watson again did an amazing job with the floral displays and hanging baskets. The new self-watering baskets, mentioned last year by my predecessor, are working well.

On the subject of displays we also approved the watering of the WACET boats and planters on the Esplanade by the Ground staff and our thanks go to the businesses, organisations and private individuals who sponsor them. All of this help to enhance the resident and visitor experience.

The WTC Website is in the process of being re-designed so it can be more easily updated in-house. There have been technical problems which have delayed it going live, and while we continue to fulfil statutory obligation to update information the new website should be available very soon.

In summing up Watchet is a wonderful place to live and visit. My extra thanks go to the Town Clerk and the Council staff for keeping us all up to date with everything, thank you for listening and look forward to the Summer and welcoming more visitors to our lovely town.

Watchet Sub-Committee – Cllr Whetlor:

Last year we held successful Wednesday Markets which were well received by residents and visitors alike. We are re starting these again this year on 1st May and finish on the last Wednesday in September (weather permitting of course). There will be many new stalls and it is hoped that they will all be as successful as last year. We are trialling keeping the market open until 4pm in the hope of attracting more visitors who use the WSR trains. Please come down and support the traders who will be there.

Thanks to be given to our Admin Assistant, Jo Grellier, who has taken on the role of Market Administrator and worked extremely hard to ensure that we have a full complement of stalls. We are also having banners advertising the market.

Watchet Community Centre Management Committee – Cllr de Renzy-Martin:

The Community Centre has had another busy year hosting a variety of regular groups including Tai Chi, Zumba, Watchet Choir, Age UK exercise classes, Legs, Bums and Tums, Stay, Play and Weigh, the long-standing Line Dancing group and Youth Club, to name a few. Also, there have been several 'one off' bookings for children's parties and various meetings, and many will have enjoyed the Watchet Pantomime.

The Youth Club, for which the building was originally built in 1968, meets twice a week attracting 30-50 young people each session. The sessions are made possible by an agreement with Minehead Eye, who employ the Youth Workers, and a financial contribution by this Council who believe that a Youth Club is an important facility for our young people. I would like to point out that Youth Club is not all fun and games and camping trips, the Youth Workers are often the first to know of any problems a young person may have and can point them in the right direction for help with medical problems, job opportunities and help to write CVs etc.

The Community Centre building is a constant challenge. Following improvements in 2017/18 this past year we have, in partnership with Minehead Eye, invested in a pool table trolley in order to save the new flooring. Last spring, due to a generous gift from Magnet and N-Hanced Finishings, new kitchen cupboards and work surfaces were installed. The wi-fi and internet network has been updated. The security system has also been updated so each group leader, on payment of a deposit, is issued with a swipe fob which means that they don't have to remember a code!

A coin operated control system for the heating has just been installed so that users can organise their own heating requirements. The cost remains the same, £1 per hour, and should it get too warm there is an over-ride switch but, sorry, no refunds! Users will be notified when this becomes operational so they can be sure to have their £1 coins!

The Committee has recently considered quotes for painting and re-flooring the Gents and Ladies toilets which have not been redecorated since 1998. As part of this improvement, it is intended to take out the showers, which have been used once in two decades and re-jig the layout to provide much needed storage space.

Externally, the artist who designed and painted the mural on the south wall is being asked to provide signage, naming the building, on the eastern wall, facing Kingsland.

It is very rewarding for the Council to see the building used for its original purpose, as a Youth Club, as well as by the wider community. If it would be suitable for a class you want to run, a meeting or your child's party please contact the office and they will help you.

In conclusion, I must thank my fellow committee members for their considered debates and decisions and thank very much the office staff who take the brunt of day-to-day queries, paperwork and sometimes, even complaints!!

The Chair thanked Committee Chairs for their informative reports.

4. An update from the Police Authority (please note as this falls within the pre-election period, Principal Authority members cannot make a report)

PCSO Sue Thompson gave the following report - further changes to the Neighbourhood Policing of the local area, means we now no longer have "Beat Managers", and the Beat areas are now managed by PCSO's.

Our old NBM's are now called Demand Officers, & they are on hand to backfill when Response Officers are committed. Having said this, PC Jamie MUNRO is still very much committed to the AW052 Beat, but changes in shift patterns now mean we have little contact or opportunity to exchange information which is not ideal. Our Neighbourhood Sgt, Sgt Dan BISHOP covers the whole of the Wellington, Minehead, Williton & Watchet Beat Areas

Over the last year, Watchet & the surrounding rural areas have seen a real spike in non-dwelling/shedbreaks, targeting tools & equipment such as Chainsaws/strimmers etc, with offenders becoming ever more sophisticated in their means. Works vans containing tools have also been targeted, with access being gained overnight to steal tools within.

Working with NHW Co-ordinators, establishing Farmwatch & Horsewatch as a means of exchanging information & gathering intelligence, investigations to establish offenders, & where these stolen items are going, is ongoing.

Two recent events held, one at Williton pet supplies, & the other at an Agricultural merchant in Watchet signed up around 30 people to either Farm/Horsewatch, with over 40 items of horse tack security marked.

We rely heavily on members of the public supplying us with information, & recently executed a very successful Misuse of Drugs warrant locally, seizing a large quantity of cannabis plants. Another successful Misuse of Drugs warrant- again initially brought to our attention by members of the public led to seizure of over 70 mature cannabis plants being found locally in a loft space, & on the back of that, an associated property in Minehead identified another 30 plants also seized.

With such a huge Geographical area to cover, with over 80 NHW Co-ordinators, it is impossible to get round to see everyone, especially as the numbers of vehicles in Williton has been reduced. For this reason, a NHW meeting has been arranged for Sunday May 5th at Bishops Lydeard Village Hall, as an opportunity for our Co-ordinator's to meet the Beat team, exchange ideas & concerns, & to see how we can all best work together.

We continue to work with our Schools & young people, Licencing Authority, Housing Providers, Parish Councillors, Village Agents & Mental Health Professionals and also with the older & more vulnerable within our communities to keep them safe. We were recently able to intercept "cuckooing" of a particularly vulnerable couple within our area. The contact we have from the Community, & the support & engagement we have with them is more vital than ever, particularly with the reduction in our resources.

in summary, our stats show for recorded crime over the last 12 months, an increase in total crime of 1.9%, & ASB related crime- which includes Road Related, Highway disruption, Concern for safety & insecure premises, as being up by 15%.

These statistics apply to the WHOLE of the AW052 Beat Area, NOT just Watchet.

The Chair of Council thanked the PCSO for her report.

- 5. Reports from community organisations on their activities over the past year and future events to note:**
- **Watchet Coastal Community Team-** Georgie Grant, Secretary of the Watchet Coastal Community Team reported on the Place Based Social Action scheme where Watchet won the bid out of 150 applicants and are now one of 10 in the whole country who have been awarded funding to develop social action plans designed to address issues important to the local community. WCCT can now put such a plan in place, which will make a positive difference to the local area, and by collaboratively working bring local people together to improve the town both economically and socially.
 - **Watchet 40's Weekend Organisers-** Mark Mossman, one of the organisers of the Watchet 1940's re-enactment weekend, which was a huge success when it was piloted last year in conjunction with the West Somerset Railway, and will take place on the 13th, 14th & 15th September 2019, it plans to be an event

running parallel with what was happening in World War 2 on the Homefront, with re-enactors in civilian dress and troops of allied forces denominations. There will be stalls with various equipment and display of articles from the 1940's era, including vehicles from the era, and props recreating scenes of what life would have been like in war-time Britain.

- **Knights Templar School Community Action-** Sharon Garcia-Vince from the Knights Templar School Community Action spoke on how the children are the future of the town, and how the group which replaced the former Parents Teacher Association as this traditional model was not working for reasons out of their control, the new group has been formed to work in partnership with the school, parents and children to give the children the best possible start in life and realise their full potential.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their reports.

6. **Presentation of the “Best Shop” Shield for 2018-19-** This was awarded by the Mayor of Watchet to Bernadette Langdon, proprietor of ‘Clathers’ shop together with Rosemary McKay.
7. **Presentation of the “Millington” Shield to a local organisation in recognition of its services to the community in 2018-19 –** This was awarded by the Mayor of Watchet to the Watchet Community Cinema and organiser Anne Harrison received the award.
8. **Open Forum –** registered electors of Watchet were given the opportunity to raise their concerns and ask questions of their elected representatives.
9. **Chairman’s closing address-** Cllr Irven thanked everyone for attending and contributing tonight, for all the presenters for their efforts, and all councillors and staff for their work all year. He concluded that he hoped everyone had found the meeting helpful and been able to see better what Watchet Town Council has been doing and why over the last year, and what a potentially exciting next year ahead beckons.
 - Watchet Coastal Community Team - PBSA programme
 - Onion Collective - East Quay re-development
 - Potentially redevelopment ideas for Watchet Paper Mill site
 - Working with new council SW&T - wishing you a very good evening, and safe journey home.

The meeting closed at 8.52pm

Signed:

Date: