

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
held remotely on Monday 8 February 2021 at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllr Campbell, Cllr Corlett-Shaw, Cllr Ellwood, Cllr Irven (Chair), Cllr Johnson, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Richards, Cllr Terrett, and Cllr Whetlor.

In attendance: Sarah Reed – Town Clerk, County Cllr Davies, and District Cllr Aldridge.

21/236 To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1))- Cllr Irven proposed that '**apologies from Cllr Westcott are accepted**'. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

21/237 To receive any **Declaration of Interests** under Watchet Town Council's Code of Conduct (adopted on 9 July 2012) issued in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 Si No: 1464

Name	Minute No:	Description of Interest	Personal / Prejudicial	Action Taken
Cllr Whetlor	All items	As District Ward member	Personal	Cllr remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting
Cllr Irven & Cllr Murphy	21/245(a)	As a member of Watchet Library Friends (WLF) and Friends of Somerset Libraries (FOSL)	Personal	Cllr remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting

21/238 **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 11 January 2021, (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))
Cllr Irven proposed that '**The minutes from the meeting held on 11 January 2021 are approved as a true and correct record.**' Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

21/239 **Chairman's Report:** – verbal
Cllr Irven reported the following:

- Very little formally on behalf of WTC due to lockdown
- Held discussions on behalf of the Clerical Officer with West Somerset Railway, reported under item 21/247
As EH&S Officer
- Supported a meeting with WWMGMC – update 21/245 (d)
- Undertook an urgent COVID RA for the Police Office/store to allow CCTV engineers access – update under 21/245 (b) and my report on building under 21/248(i)

21/240 **Reports from the Principal Authority Members:**
County Cllr Davies
District Cllrs Aldridge, Davies and Whetlor and to receive questions from the floor

- County Cllr Davies gave the following summary of a report that had been circulated prior to the meeting for members in formation:
 1. Highlighted SCC gritting teams- relayed comments from SCC Cabinet member for Highways & Transport praising the teams for their planning and execution during the pandemic.
 2. Multi million project to upgrade Taunton junction 25 opened on Sunday 17 January 2021, an important new link serving the town and the motorway.
 3. Update on COVID 19 testing sites- Chard, Taunton Racecourse, Bridgwater Town Hall, Cheddar, Street, Frome Cricket Club, Yeovil and Yeovilton. Anyone needing COVID 19 support can telephone 0300 790 6275, open 7 days per week from 8am – 6pm



5. HPC workforce update remote briefing on 9 February 10-11am and 11 February 6-7pm. County Cllr Davies attended the briefing on 28 January 2021. As the HPC workforce is to increase to 8,000, this will bring extra pressure to the area. After contacting SCC senior officers there was a suggestion that people should attend the drop-in sessions. County Cllr Davies suggested that this matter could be placed on a future agenda with a possibility of mitigation.
6. Social Workers in schools launches in Somerset.
7. Food support for families in February half-term.
8. 20mph speed limit in Watchet under the Small Improvements Scheme (SIS) this matter is on the SCC Full Council agenda on 17 February 2021 for a decision on funding.
9. If residents are struggling to find transport to attend the vaccine sites concessionary fares are being offered, if travelling before 9.30am the surcharge will be waived. The Slinky bus out of Minehead is offering a similar service, if bookings are made 24 hours in advance then there will not be a charge. The helpline can organise the vaccine and transport.

The Chair thanked County Cllr Davies for his report.

District Cllr Whetlor gave a verbal summary as follows:

1. Majority of meetings taken up with budget discussions last month.
2. Asked to address the matter of the traffic along Whitehall and the spoil that is being taken and put at the back of the Stoates Mill development site. This has been taken up with SCC Highways, who has responded that this is a Planning issue. Now waiting for a response from Planning department.
3. Damage to steps at West Street beach brought to District Cllr Whetlor's attention by several residents, this is being dealt with.
4. All work is now finished at the East Pier end of the East Quay. Steps have been replaced and renewed. Still awaiting tenders and costs on the Harbour wall.

The Chair thanked District Cllr Whetlor for her report.

District Cllr Aldridge gave a verbal report as follows:

In his view, the main matter affecting Watchet presently and may affect the whole district is the budget being set by SW&T Council. Most members are in favour of a range of budget headings and agree with what the District controlling group want to spend money on. The problem is how the shortfall will be made up by making huge investments in commercial property anywhere in the UK. Naturally there is concern amongst members over making such investments at this time of year, and also concern that as there is no longer access to the Public Loans Board, money will have to be borrowed on the open market which may potentially affect Council tax and the cutting of services.

The Chair thanked District Cllr Aldridge for his update.

District Cllrs Davies and Whetlor both concurred the comments made by their colleague.

Questions from the floor: None

The Chair concluded this item by sending congratulations to SW&T Council from Watchet Town Council for the outstanding work undertaken on the Harbour wall to date.

21/241

Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions

Cllr Terrett as the Council representative on '**Conservation Society**' made the following statement:

"There was a recent post on the Conservation Society face book page which raised some concern as to the impressions given, not only about the role of the Town Council within the community, but also over the transparency of how a Town Councillor is elected or co-opted. Through my role as representative on the Conservation Society, I would like to refer to this post at the next Conservation Society meeting, to ask how the post and confusion arose in order to help address the concerns raised"

Cllr Corlett-Shaw as the Council representative on '**Emergency Town Centre Recovery Grant Scheme Working Group**' reported the following:

- Xmas trees - Provided the towns businesses with a free illuminated Christmas Tree, plus 3 large town centre trees.
- Replace worn out lights with lighting with a minimum of 5 years usage.
- Trees were provided for 90 premises (some were private, and these were paid for separately), all very well received by the traders and town.
- Lights are now stored away for future use.
- Signage for businesses - Wooden signage is being designed by a small group from the working party. A new notice board has been made for the new building on The Esplanade (the bookshop) to replace one that was taken away as old and damaged.
- New flower troughs have been ordered to enhance The Esplanade and plans are in hand for new displays around the town. Planting is arranged for the early Summer.
- A new shoppers' seat has been ordered and will be installed when delivered.
- Bike racks - Talks are ongoing as to where the placement of these will be. Also looking at enhancing the one by the bus stop in Harbour Road.
- Refurbishment of the Christmas Sleigh. This was done and on budget.
- Other items in the plan are being worked on by Working Group members.

Cllr Murphy as the Council Representative on '**Harbour Board**' reported the following:

- SW&T Council continues to work on monitoring dredging and exploring a continuation of the lease – this is ongoing.
- Planning to do work on Harbour walls, liaising with Onion Collective to ensure that any work undertaken does not clash with the opening of the East Quay
- Considered changes to fees/levies for Watchet and Minehead Harbours. Looking at a 3% increase to reflect increases in staffing costs, this must go to SW&T Council for approval. It must be noted that Watchet Sea Scouts are exempt from fees for launching their boats on the slipway.

Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on '**Watchet Coastal Communities Team**' reported the following:

- Building works for the refurbishment of 7 The Esplanade are now completed and have been signed off.
- Heads of Terms now agreed between the Community Bookshop and WCCT. Access will be granted this week so that bookshelves can be assembled. Opening date of the bookshop not confirmed and will be determined by COVID 19 restrictions.
- The three main funders, SW&T Council, PBSA Lottery and Lottery Reaching Communities are pleased with the work to the building.
- Community car in considerable demand and the uptake for use increased due to visits to Minehead by residents for their COVID vaccinations.

Cllr Irven as the Council representative on '**Quantock Foodbank**' reported the following:

The trustees held a Zoom meeting on 28/1/21 primarily to say farewell to Rev Kathryn Flenley chair of trustees. She and husband Ben are retiring to Sussex. Having paid tribute to Kathryn and her role in helping set up the Foodbank the trustees requested and elected myself as acting chair of trustees pending resolving how the vacancy may wish to be filled. With Peter Payne, Chair of Williton Parish Council, as the two external trustees, we provide oversight of the treasurer and financial operation of the foodbank.

A report on activities in last quarter including the holiday period and start of lockdown,

In addition to distributing our standard package of essential donated dried foods, we used financial donations to extend our activities during COVID lockdowns to supply some additional key basic nutritional needs as well as some extras at Christmas.

A new project 'Eat Well to Keep Well' ensured that people in receipt of foodbank parcels were supplied with as many nutrient dense foods as possible. The standard parcels were supplemented by a bag of fresh fruit, vegetables, and eggs sourced from Watchet Veggie Patch. To date, 314 bags of fresh produce have been distributed for over 1300 people.

- A joint project with the Quantock Pharmacy in Watchet to offer those in receipt of parcels a four-month supply of multi vitamins including Vitamin D as per UK Government recommendations.

- At Christmas, to ensure families had some fresh meat in addition to the extra bag of seasonal fare, families in need were given vouchers for their local butcher or delicatessen if vegetarian.
- A joint project with the churches in Watchet and Williton. Fair Trade Chocolate Advent Calendars for every child in Watchet and Williton's first schools and nurseries, 450 calendars delivered to the schools and nurseries. The children were delighted to receive them at the start of Advent.
- Because of building constraints after the masonry fall, we were forced to review our way of working in the Methodist Church. Using the lift to transfer donations from the Foyer to the Schoolroom and parcels from the Schoolroom to Level 1 for delivery.
- Comparison of requirements for food parcels over the last year.

Comparison.	Monthly parcels	Increase from base
Jan 20 pre pandemic	200	0
May 20 lockdown 1	800	x 4
Oct 20 exit lockdown	400	x 2
Jan 21 current lockdown	1100	x 5.5

- 21/242 Request from the Watchet Bowling Club to have a Council representative on their Committee- after a brief discussion Cllr Whetlor proposed that *'the appointment of the representative is deferred until the Annual Council meeting, where the appointment can be added to the list of requested representatives to Outside organisations and appointed under current Council procedure'*. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.
- 21/243 To receive and sign the minutes of the following committees and to adopt the Resolutions and Recommendations contained therein. (LGA 1972, Sch12 Para 41(1))
- Tourism & Leisure Committee (14 January 2021)
Cllr Whetlor as Chair of the Committee proposed that *'the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 are adopted as a true and correct record.'* Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried.
 - Finance & General Purposes (18 January 2021)
Cllr Murphy as Chair of the Committee proposed that *'the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 are adopted as a true and correct record.'* Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.
 - Environment & Planning (21 January 2021)
 - Cllr Westcott as Chair of the Committee proposed that *'the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 are adopted as a true and correct record.'* Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.
- 21/244 Verbal reports from sub-committees, working groups, and other outside organisations, where Watchet Town Council does not have representation:
No notifications received.
- 21/245 Reports from Working Groups: - Any relevant paperwork will be issued at the meeting:
- Library- Update and recommendations** – Cllr Murphy gave a brief verbal update that there was very little to report due to the Library currently being closed under COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, but there will be an update from the CLP Officer on the 1 March 2021 on how and when Libraries will be re-opened. The Working Group has been notified that the Council Solicitor has successfully registered the change of ownership with the Land Registry, but the saga continues regarding the omission of the toilet area.
 - CCTV – Update and recommendations** – Cllr Richards gave a brief verbal report as follows:
 - Contractors engineers were in Watchet in January to finalise the link to Minehead but had problems accessing the Memorial Ground due to adverse weather conditions. The work has now been completed to re-establish the link.

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- Privacy settings and movement of the cameras is scheduled in on the 8 March 2021 when the engineers install the camera at West Street Car Park, it has yet to be established which member/s of the working group will attend on site.
- EH&S Designated Officer, Cllr Irven has attended the Police Office and it is now COVID secure for engineers and staff to use. Cllr Irven interjected with an update that the Risk Assessment has been completed and has been incorporated into the Fire RA.

c. **Climate Emergency – Update and recommendations** – Cllr Ellwood reported on the following: Knights Templar School is beginning its bid to become a Plastic Free School and has launched a number of fun activities for the children to participate in. These include making coral reefs using recycled materials, exploring our beautiful oceans in a virtual way and then finding out some facts and figures about plastic.

The school has formed a Plastic Free School Committee who meet to introduce the project from Surfers Against Sewage and have asked them for ideas as to what children and their families can do to reduce their use of single use plastics. Basing this on the reaction of my daughter who is in Y4, there seems to be a real 'buzz' amongst the children who are excited to get involved in these activities so well done to the school and staff for being so creative.

Council approved at last month's meeting that WTC would be the lead Council for the West Somerset Community Car Scheme bid to the Somerset County Council Climate Emergency Fund. Bicknoller and Sampford Brett Parish Councils are our partners. Council and submitted by the required deadline. It is not anticipated that we will hear whether we have been successful until March.

An update on the purchasing and installation of trees within the Watchet community. The council ground staff have now kindly installed all the purchased trees from Novembers delivery. We now have a visible increase of greenery within the areas of the Cemetery & Memorial Ground with our saplings growing nicely. Hopefully we can continue the project with a view to obtaining a new batch for new locations in the near future.

Another small project under discussion is whether it would be at all possible to add a new recycled plastic council noticeboard on the Liddymore Road. From discussions in the past, it was believed that there was a possibility that a noticeboard in this location could be achieved. The CCWG will look to reignite this project recycled plastic products under consideration & possible locations to be discussed at full council for approval in the near future.

d. **SLA Review between WTC and WWMGMC – Update and recommendations**- Cllr Whetlor presented the following report- a meeting was called on 27 January 2021 to discuss the current SLA between WTC & WWMGMC. A report was circulated prior to the meeting which was compiled by Cllr Irven and Cllr de Renzy Martin two years ago which outlined the historical relationship between WTC and WWMGMC and formed the basis of the current SLA. It was acknowledged by all present as being an accurate account of the current situation in regard to the SLA.

Accounts relating to WWMGMC were presented. Due to Covid restrictions on Team sporting activities in 2020 income generated is significantly reduced for that year. WTC has waived all payments from WWMGMC to date for 2020. This was appreciated by WWMGMC. Council Ground Staff have continued to carry out usual maintenance of the Memorial Ground.

Discussion ensued regarding how to approach the ongoing situation and it was proposed that WTC should continue to waive payments from WWMGMC into the financial year 2021/2022 but review the situation on a quarterly basis. This was agreed and appreciated by WWMGMC.

WWMGMC requested that a full review of the SLA be undertaken prior to the formal review date in 2023. The working group suggested this was not an option.

Further discussion was held regarding dog fouling on playing areas and WWMGMC were advised of measures on the agenda for debate by WTC Tourism & Leisure Committee at their February meeting.

WWMGMC generously offered a one-off payment of £500 to WTC as a goodwill gesture towards ground maintenance costs in 2020. This was kindly acknowledged by the Working Group.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. WTC will review the full SLA on the scheduled review date in 2023
2. WTC will continue with a discretionary waiver of payments by WWMGMC until such time when the COVID situation changes substantially and will review on a month by month (quarterly) basis
3. WTC acknowledge and appreciate the offer of a one-off payment of £500 but will not accept it currently
4. Agree to a payment of £90.00 to cover CCTV operation and electricity used by Council Grounds staff in 2020.

Cllr Whetlor proposed that '**recommendations 1-4 are approved**'. Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried.

21/246 To consider the recommendation from the Finance & General Purposes Committee for Ear Marked Reserves for 2021-22:

- (i) To approve and set Ear Marked Reserves for the period 2021-22 – Cllr Murphy reported that there was a change to the paperwork circulated to members prior to the meeting via **Appendix 1**. As the quotation for new grounds equipment had been revised the allocated reserve was increased to £4,000, taking the total to £101,500. After a brief discussion, Cllr Murphy proposed that '**recommendation is approved**'. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

21/247 Request from West Somerset Railway- Cllr Irven had circulated a report prior to the meeting via **Appendix 2** regarding contact the Marketing Officer at WSR plc had made requesting Watchet Town Council's views on how railway services might best be returned to Watchet when the current COVID lockdown restrictions are eased. WSR are keen to ascertain the Council's views as the relevant local authority about what initial services post lockdown could be considered appropriate and would like to proceed based on what WTC advises is best for Watchet at the present time. Cllr Irven presented several options on a way forward in his report and after a brief discussion proposed that '**WTC agree to work with WSR plc by accepting proposal 3 in principle as follows-*operate a service between Bishops Lydeard and Watchet with 40 minutes for passengers to visit the town before returning to Bishops Lydeard***' - **delegation is given to the Clerk/ Clerical Officer to work with WSR plc to agree protocols for proposal 3 supported by advice from EH&S Officer, Chair of T&L Committee plus one other appropriate Councillor**'. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

21/248 Town Council Assets:

- (i) Issues at the Police Office - a report from the EH&S Officer was circulated to members prior to the meeting via **Appendix 3** relating to there being no sealing cap to the U bend which appears to have been removed and not replaced, rendering the current system unsafe. The following options need to be considered in order to rectify this:
1. Establish the status of the drainpipe within the neighbouring property.
 - a. Is it open ended – no water to be discharged, otherwise we flood neighbouring property, can it be connected to a drain?
 - b. Does it connect into a drain – ok to discharge, but do we have permission.
 - c. Is it blocked off – water would back up into the sink and won't be able to be removed.
 2. What to consider:
 - a. Reconnect sealing cap if drainage can occur
 - b. May need to cap off water supply pipe so no water can be discharged from tap, but lose all water supply into the building.

Cllr Irven proposed that '**the options outlined are explored with the Grounds staff in liaison with the neighbouring property and a solution found and updated at the next appropriate meeting**'. Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried.

21/249 To consider the idea of a 'Job Board' for people in the community affected by the furlough scheme or redundancy- the following report was presented by Cllr Terrett -

After partaking in quite a few discussions over the past couple of months with concerned Watchet community members whose mental and physical health is becoming affected through the COVID 19 pandemic. I found that whether it is due to finding being furloughed by their employers or having the unfortunate issue of being made redundant, it was leaving them

struggling for money or with a lot of spare time leading them down the unfortunate route of depression and excessive vices.

So, I have tasked myself with looking into ways in which we as a council can help the community and also its businesses just a little bit more. With that I would like to put the following recommendation to full council with a view to 'in one way or another' help some of the community members who are hard up in these difficult times to get back on their feet.

With heavy restrictions on worldwide travel and reports of delays in a vaccine roll outs. This tourist season is going to follow a trend similar to that of last year. The town will have to be prepared for a UK holidaymaker onslaught. With that in mind I was thinking about producing a weekly Watchet Town Job Board for the small shops, businesses and projects in the village to get the support they need locally. Whether it is for a permanent vacancy, temporary position to cover the holiday season, cover for an unfortunate COVID leave or just a helping hand to do a few bits voluntarily. It's a chance to get our shops and projects staffing needs out there to more people who need them and not just the people wandering past stores in the high street or on facebook.

Proposal

- I have created the following draft mockup for Councillors review and comment – this was circulated to members prior to the meeting. I ask whether an updated notice could be displayed in each of the council notice boards week by week as well as on the Watchet Town Council Website.
- To have a small advert in the latest edition of Watchet Connects where we can add a point of contact for businesses requiring the service and a referral point for community members interested in filling one of the vacancies.
- Finally, to get a small amount of business cards or leaflets made up stating the contact information required to promote a town vacancy which myself or a volunteer can post through business letterboxes. This can also be passed on to WACET & Plastic Free members to pass around.

After a brief discussion, members were in agreement that this was a great proposal and should be supported. Cllr Terrett proposed that **'the Watchet Job Board is approved and progressed'**. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

20/250 Matters of Correspondence for Report - Correspondence is addressed daily and filed, the file is available for all Councillors to inspect at their leisure.

The Clerk will report on any relevant correspondence – Nothing to report – in file.

- (i) Knights Templar School – Head Teacher, thanking the Town Council for the grant of £2,800 towards replacement of reading materials and the opportunity to extend the range of fiction and poetry collections by contemporary authors. The impact that this will have upon the children will be enormous.

20/251 Accounts for payment – to approve the January Schedule for payment in February
The January Schedule (Payment in February) had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. Cllr Irven proposed **that 'the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid.'** Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

20/252 To note Matters for the next meeting – no discussion or decisions made

- Liaise with the Clerk

Meeting closed at 8.20pm

Signed: 

Dated: 9/3/21