

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
held on Monday 12 October 2020 at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllr Campbell, Cllr Corlett-Shaw, Cllr Ellwood (arrived late), Cllr Irven (Chair), Cllr Murphy, and Cllr Westcott.

In attendance: Sarah Reed – Town Clerk, District Cllr Aldridge, 1 member of public.

- 20/179** To receive **Apologies for Absence** (LGA 1972, section 85 (1))
Cllr Irven proposed that '**apologies from Councillors Bowden, Johnson, Richards, Terrett, Whetlor and County Cllr Davies are accepted**'. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.
- 20/180** 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 Irven	20/185(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
Cllr Murphy	20/185(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

- 20/181** **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 14 September 2020, (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))
Cllr Irven proposed that '**The minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 September 2020 are adopted as a true and correct record**.' Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

- 20/182** **Chairman's Report:** – verbal
Cllr Irven gave the following Chairs report:
- Little formal activity this month, part of which was due to holiday, where I continued to support the Clerk and officers over COVID secure operations.
 - Had a communication from the fund-raising co-ordinator of the West Somerset Railway (WSR) as Clerical Officer reported a press release and newspaper article confirming the award of a £865,000 grant had been printed. The fundraiser contacted the Chair to give thanks for the tremendous support given by the Watchet Community and Watchet Town Council. The government supported the establishment of this fund via DCMS and was delivered via the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Historic England. Applications were subject to full peer review which awarded the West Somerset Railway the full amount if applied for and indicated that in this, the support of local Community organisations such as WCCT together with local authorities and both local MP's was critical in validating the value of the West Somerset Railway to the local economy. The level shown for the West Somerset Railway was the highest demonstrated. This reinforces the value of the partnership approach exemplified by Watchet Town Council. Although there are some restructuring issues within the West Somerset Railway, this was a joint bid by the West Somerset Railway family who hope the future of the Heritage line will be better secured as a result.
 - I make this point because some members queried whether the Clerk had the delegation to get Councils support and some members failed to support sending a letter. I am pleased that Watchet Town Council did, the Council would have looked parsimonious, if we had declined when the two MP's and local authorities did so.



- Finally I would like to reinforce that there have been a number of times when advice from the Clerk and Officers recently have been inappropriately questioned rather than supported and I hope Councillors will remember that it is the Proper Officer who advises members on governance, not the reverse.

20/183 Reports from the Principal Authority Members:

County Council Davies, District Cllrs Aldridge, and Whetlor and to receive questions from the floor. In the absence of County Cllr Davies, the Clerk tabled a report on his behalf, which was summarised as follows:

1. Libraries offer digital help for job seekers from 5 October 2020 and iPads will be available for loan for up to 6 weeks free of charge. Minehead is offering this service.
2. Electric Scooter Experimental Order 2020 comes into force on 15 October 2020 and will remain in force for a maximum period of 12 months. The scooters in the trial can use cycle lanes, cycle tracks and bus lanes within the West Somerset and Taunton District Council Wards. The changes will only apply to electric scooters legally used as part of the trials, for the duration of the trials.
3. Heavy fines for roadwork offences – Somerset County Council prosecuted British Telecom PLC and Wessex Water Services Ltd as part of its commitment to minimising disruption and keeping the public safe. BT pleaded guilty on 3 offences and were fined a total of £14,000, costs of £2,678.33 and a victim surcharge of £181.00. Wessex Water pleaded guilty on 2 offences and were fined a total of £12,000, costs of £2,640 and a victim surcharge of £170.00.
4. October is 'British Black History Month' – Somerset youth parliament is proud to promote and support this and celebrate the strength that diversity brings to our communities.
5. Somerset County Council's improved finances has been recognised by Independent Auditors in their end of year report. The turnaround in 2 years has seen the Council move from 'adverse' Value for Money (VIM) to 'unqualified' in 2019/20, going from a particularly challenging position to top ranking.
6. Unitary – Somerset County Council received an invitation letter from Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State at MHCLG to submit a business case for a single Unitary Authority in Somerset. District colleagues together with B&NES and North Somerset have also been asked if they wish to participate and submit, timescale is until 9 November 2020 to respond.

District Cllr Aldridge was asked to give his report:

Only one issue to comment on and it is in relation to the Citizens Advice Bureau and the information contained within the 6 monthly report which had been sent to him. As there is a good outreach service for the Watchet Community, he wanted to share this information with members:

- 12% clients during lockdown in Watchet
- 66% disability and health related problems led to home visits available from August 2020
- 66% of contact and face to face appointments to March, this decreased to 4% to the end of July
- 37% contact by phone before lockdown increased to 69% and 2% contact via website before lockdown increased to 27%
- The percentage of Watchet people accessing this service remains high and demonstrates what a valuable and worthwhile service it is.

Questions from the floor:

Cllr Irven asked: Has there been an update or feedback from SW&T Council on the Unitary debate?

Cllr Aldridge responded: other than the presentation itself, he has nothing more to update.

Cllr Westcott asked: The large industrial unit recently built on Minehead Seaward Way for the Snazaroo Company, is there a date when the Company will occupy it?

Cllr Aldridge responded: he is aware that there has been a delay in the final fitting due to Covid-19, but as he has not been involved in this he cannot give any further information.

The Chair of Council thanked Cllr Aldridge for his report.

In the absence of District Cllr Whetlor, the Clerk tabled her report and referred to matters not covered by her colleagues:

1. Climate Emergency Strategy – Along with Somerset County Council and the other 3 districts, SW&T Council has been part of the group preparing the countywide strategy and also their own. It is hoped there will be an announcement soon.
2. Splash Point Wall – Work has begun on the final stage of the wall. The first of the concrete box culverts have now been placed onto the rock anchors and filled with quick setting concrete.

Each culvert weighs 3 tonnes. It is all going to plan, and work is likely to continue until late November, early December, weather permitting.

- 20/184 Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions**
(i) Update from governance group Council representative on delivering the **Emergency Town Centre Recovery Grant Scheme of £25,000**
Nothing to report.
- 20/185 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))
- Environment & Planning (1 October 2020)
Cllr Westcott as the Chair of the Committee proposed that **'The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 are adopted as a true and correct record.'** Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.
- 20/186 Reports from Working Groups:** - Any relevant paperwork will be issued at the meeting:
- a. **Library- Update and recommendations** – Cllr Irven gave the following verbal report on behalf of the Working Group:
SCC/WTC initially reopened the library for dropping off items and picking up pre-ordered items, use of the PN computer, but no browsing. An updated amendment to the Watchet Town Council Risk Assessment was produced and approved by me as HS&E Designated Officer and Somerset County Council. It separates PN area from repositioned bookshelves, allows use of mezzanine floor area for children, and one browsing unit at a time i.e. one person plus carer or bubble. This procedure will be reviewed in one month.
 - b. **CCTV – Update and recommendations** – in the absence of Cllr Richards, the Clerk reported that the Watchet CCTV system is now operational, and Cllr Richards is due to schedule a Working Group meeting urgently to discuss the next step in terms of monitoring the system.
 - c. **Climate Emergency – Update and recommendations** – Cllr Ellwood presented the following report on behalf of the Working Group:
Plastic Free Watchet initiative is gaining momentum after a more dormant phase during lockdown. One of the requirements of becoming a 'plastic free' town is for local government to formally pledge support for the plastic free aims. Cllr Ellwood proposed that the following statement for Watchet Town Council's Plastic Free Strategy is adopted:
 - **Watchet Town Council to support the journey to Plastic Free Community status, encouraging the use of plastic-free alternatives, and plastic-free initiatives across the town.**
 - **Watchet Town Council must lead by example by moving toward removal of single-use plastic items from all their premises.**
 - **Watchet Town Council to encourage plastic-free initiatives by individuals, community groups and local businesses, to promote the Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) campaign, and to support plastic-free events.**
 - **A Representative of Watchet Town Council to continue to be a Member of the Plastic Free Community Steering Group - "Plastic Free Watchet"** Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

The Watchet Town Council Climate Change Working Party was considering making an application to the Somerset Climate Emergency fund. There are two windows to make application to this fund, 1 October and 1 December. Applications must be supported by parish and town councils for amounts up to £75K.

After some discussion around the situation in Watchet over the summer when the Covid Support Group was operating, the WSR was not running, there was no charge to use the town's car parks the town was busy with people and traffic. It was last century that there was an investigation into the town's infrastructure and the situation was much different now with the East Quay underdevelopment and the former paper mill site at the outline planning stage for a mixed use development. It was discussed that a bid could be made to commission a planning consultant to look at the vehicle pedestrian interface with specific reference to the potential use of the mill site for additional parking for the town with the possibility of some kind of park and ride service from the site into town.

I have some contacts with traffic consultants and Cllr Murphy was to contact Tameer Homes, the mill site developers to see if they might be interested in engaging with this project.

Cllr Murphy reported that Tameer could well be interested in this proposal. I reported that my contact had advised that P&R services were very difficult to sustain and estimated

operating costs to be in the region of £15 - £20K per season. Perhaps a more targeted approach aimed at the mobility impaired using electric vehicles might be more feasible. A further project for the fund was presented to the working party by local environmental group, Forum 21, the proposal of which I will read for you now.

Councils provisionally involved: Wootton Courtenay, Timberscombe, Dunster, Carhampton, Old Cleeve & Watchet.

The total for which a council can apply from this grant is £75k, this project is asking for Watchet to contribute £10,500 towards their 'share' of the project. It has also been proposed that Watchet Town Council acts as the Lead Council for this project. Although the Project Officer would support each parish involved, this would mean that Watchet Town Council is the accountable body for the grant. This would not, however, disadvantage Watchet the council from applying for projects totaling up to £75k. To be clear, as Watchet's application share of £10,500 would mean we can still apply for further grants of up to £64,500.

Cllr Ellwood proposed that ***'the Town Council accepts the proposal to take part in this shared initiative and accepts the request to be Lead Council and therefore accountable for the grant.'*** Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.

Cllr Murphy, on behalf of Cllr Terrett, informed members that he had contacted the Chair of the Watchet War Memorial Ground Management Committee to ask for support in planting trees on the Memorial Ground, in sites surveyed by the Groundsmen. Any updates can be given at the next meeting.

20/187 Handover of the Memorial from the Watchet Remembrance Project Group to Watchet Town Council – Clerk will report at the meeting:

The Clerk had circulated a letter from the Chair of the Watchet Remembrance Project Group prior to the meeting regarding the hand over date of the Memorial to the Town Council.

The Clerk continued that there are two parts for members to consider:

1. As leaseholders of the area of land on which the memorial stands as part of the asset transfer of the library building, the lease which currently existed with the Remembrance Group was also transferred. To assist in the handover of the memorial into the Town Councils ownership, the Council needs to instruct a solicitor to devise a form of words that the individuals who are named on the lease (under the auspices of the Remembrance Group) are in agreement with in order for the lease to be cancelled and the Council will cover the cost of this.
2. The Remembrance Group has agreed to prepare at their cost, the agreement to transfer the asset of the memorial into the Town Councils ownership.

Recommendations:

1. To note the handover date of 28 June 2021.
2. Instruct a solicitor to devise a form of words to be used for agreement by the Remembrance Group to cancel the lease.
3. To note that the agreement for the asset transfer of the memorial will be drawn up by the Remembrance Group at their cost.

Cllr Westcott proposed that ***'the recommended actions are accepted.'*** Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

20/188 Following the representations made at the remote meeting held on 6 October 2020, from Somerset County Council presenting the proposal of 'One Somerset' and Somerset West & Taunton Council presenting the proposal for 'Stronger Somerset' – Members to consider:

- (i) Agree on the preferred option and submit as a collective response as part of the consultation. A long discussion ensued where members who had attended the remote meeting and listened to representations for both business cases expressed their views:

Cllr Campbell proposed that ***'the Council is not minded to take a decision presently, as despite the presentations there was a not a compelling reason to be supportive of either case. As more information needs to be given on how each business case will deliver the best for Watchet, the Town Council as represented at this meeting is not in a position to decide, but would like to reinforce the points made in the NALC model and the Usher report and support Community working and collaborative partnerships.'*** Seconded by Cllr Ellwood. Carried.

- (ii) Approval of Chair and Vice-Chair of Council to attend future engagement events on behalf of the Council on the agreed model and to report back with regular updates.

Cllr Irven proposed the above with an amendment to include: ***'Chair or Vice-Chair of Council or appointed delegates to report back with regular updates.'*** Seconded by Cllr Murphy.

Cllr Corlett-Shaw proposed an amendment to the proposal that **'all Councillors that wish to attend can, but it will be the Chair and Vice-Chair or appointed delegates who will report back with regular updates.'** Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.

- 20/189 **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.
- 20/190 **Accounts for payment** –to approve the schedule of payments for October 2020 – *The schedule will be circulated to all members during the meeting for their information*
Cllr Irven proposed that **'the schedule of payments for October are approved and duly paid.'**
Seconded by Cllr Ellwood. Carried.
- 20/191 To note **Matters for the next meeting** – no discussion or decisions made
- Liaise with the Clerk

Meeting closed at 8.32pm

Signed: 

Dated: 