

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
held on Monday 11 October 2021 at 7.00pm

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

In attendance: Sarah Reed – Town Clerk

Before the meeting commenced, Cllr Irven, EH&S Designated Officer reiterated the Health & Safety arrangements for holding meetings in a COVID safe way, which had been advised to the Clerk by himself and the Hygiene and Wellbeing Officer and circulated to members prior to the meeting for information.

- 21/331** To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1)- Cllr Irven proposed that **'apologies from Cllr Brake are accepted'**. Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried. It was agreed to note the apologies from County Cllr Davies and District Cllr Aldridge.
- 21/332** 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 a Watchet Ward Member	Personal	Cllr remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting

- 21/333** **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 13 September 2021 (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))
Cllr Irven proposed that **'The minutes from the Council meeting held on 13 September 2021 are approved as a true and correct record.'** Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried with 1 abstention.

- 21/319** **Chairman's Report:** – verbal
Since the last meeting I have celebrated my Golden Wedding Anniversary with family and enjoyed a holiday in the Forest of Dean. Consequently, activities on behalf of WTC as Mayor have been lower than normal.
On Sat 2nd October I welcomed the West Somerset Morris Men to Watchet, together with two visiting teams of dancers on their tour of the area. Although it was inclement, an audience turned out to enjoy the entertainment.

Due to the postponement of the official opening of East Quay I was away for the soft opening but have subsequently enjoyed refreshments at the café and enjoyed the displays in the art gallery, especially Watchet Bottles and the Sound experience put on jointly with the people of Pendle.

On 7th October I attended the Parish/Town Councils' conference on the impact of the new unitary authority, which will be covered under its agenda item.

Jo Grellier -I am sure the whole council will wish to join me in offering formal congratulations to Jo Grellier our Clerical Officer for successfully passing her recent, CiLCA qualification which tests whether the candidate has a broad knowledge of all the aspects of a clerk's work – roles and responsibilities, the law, procedures, finance planning and community involvement. Our ongoing support for Jo continuing to develop her skills, qualifications and experience leading to career progression opportunities.

In a similar vein, our groundsman, Niall Watson will shortly reach a milestone with his 20 years dedicated service to WTC, and the clerk based on advice from SALC, will shortly be

55

communicating to members some ideas for consideration as to how we should appropriately recognise this achievement.

21/335 Reports from the Principal Authority Members:

In the absence of County Cllr Davies, his report was circulated to members prior to the meeting, the following items that could affect Watchet were summarised:

- Carhampton Road closure – bus services no 28 and Exmoor Coaster service, it is confirmed that from 11 October 2021 the A39 will be closed for 3 weeks Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3.30pm, open weekends as usual. Watchet to Taunton no.28 service will operate to the normal timetable between Watchet WSR Station and Taunton with buses turning and waiting time at the WSR Station stop. Outside closure times service 28 will operate as normal over the whole route. Exmoor Coaster service (Doniford to Lynmouth) route will be cut back during the hours of the road closure to operate between Minehead Butlins and Lynmouth only. Bridgwater and Taunton and Richard Huish College have been advised the no 28 will be operating as normal at the start and finish times of the college day, but if students are planning to travel from the section of the route beyond Watchet to arrive at college later or leave college earlier they will need to amend their travel plans to travel to and from college.
- EDF Community bus- still awaiting confirmation of their route submissions, it is County Cllr Davies understanding that it will only operate between Watchet to Bridgwater only during the road closure.

In the absence of District Cllr Aldridge, his report was circulated to members prior to the meeting, the following item that could affect Watchet was summarised:

- A questionnaire relating to the 'Taunton Bus Station Study' was circulated to a list of consultees from the Somerset Bus Partnership. Watchet Town Council were not consulted, and questions should be asked why they were omitted. It is not clear who drafted the list of consultees, Somerset Bus Partnership SW&T Council or SCC, but enquiries should be made on why Watchet Town Council were not on the list of consultees and will there be an opportunity for the Town Council to answer the questionnaire before the final 'Bus Improvement Plan' is published.

The report from District Cllr Whetlor was circulated prior to the meeting for members information, Cllr Whetlor highlighted the following points:

- Members paid their respects to former CEO Adrian Dyer who had just passed away
- Planning meetings have been reduced due to the phosphates issue but are now starting to filter through
- The CEO has now resigned and is leaving at the end of October. A new person will be put in post in the interim before Unitary takes place.
- E-scooters and bicycles were brought up by a member of the public in public session and how elderly people are frightened by them as they are ridden on and off the pavement and should be restricted to the road as they are motorised vehicles.

Questions from the floor:

Cllr Murphy made the following observations: With regard to the 3-week road closure of the A39, mentioned in County Cllr Davies report, the information and advice supplied by Somerset County Council was totally inadequate and a request was made that this matter is addressed at the next Environment & Planning Committee meeting. The Clerk confirmed that this item would be included on the agenda.

Regarding District Cllr Aldridge's report, and the recognition that Watchet Town Council were not consulted on the 'Taunton Bus Station Study' needs to be addressed together with why the Town Council is not on the list of consultees, a request was made for this matter to be added to the agenda of the next Environment & Planning Committee agenda. The Clerk confirmed that this item would be included on the agenda.

Cllr Irven thanked District Cllr Whetlor for her report and asked that members note the contents of all principal authority members reports.

Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions

Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on '**Watchet Harbour Advisory Committee**' had circulated a report to members prior to the meeting, with a summary as follows.

- Update from the Marina Operator that dredging was to resume soon and was broadly on target to bring water to all areas at low tide.
- Update on the marina wall repair – the roadway needed finishing off, the pickings cut off and railings fitting short of edge.
- Concern expressed about unauthorised vehicles driving onto the East Quay and the potential conflict with pedestrians using the area as the East Quay building was now partly open, all parties working to find a solution.

Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on '**Watchet Coastal Community Team**' had circulated a report to members prior to the meeting, with a summary as follows.

- A consultation meeting was held with members on 27 September 2021 to discuss the bid submitted for £120K (£40K pa for three years) for Phase 3 of the Place Based Social Action funding. The members present supported the bid. Information on this will be circulated to Town Council members via the Clerk.
- Members co-opted a new Director who is the representative of the Watchet Boat Owners Association – Martin Stevens. He will lead a working group focused on the Economic Plan drawn up by WCCT and will lead engagement with the Marine Group.

Questions from the floor:

Cllr Whetlor asked: will WCCT members be involved in the process of drawing up the economic plan or is it just Directors?

Cllr Murphy responded: the Economic Plan needs to be revised, if working group, WCCT members and other parties show interest in being part of the process this can be further explored at the members meeting in November.

Cllr Ellwood as the Council representative on '**The Bickwatch Project**' had circulated a report to members prior to the meeting, with a summary as follows.

Bickwatch Community Electric Vehicle -This project, which is a collaboration of efforts between Bicknoller Parish, Sampford Brett Parish and Watchet Town Councils, is soon to launch. The electric vehicle has been collected and inspected by the group and a Community Vehicle Coordinator has been appointed. This role has received full funding for one year and will employ an individual for 15 hours a week to oversee the day-to-day operations of both the existing Watchet Electric Community Car and the new Bickwatch vehicle, which is a larger, accessible EV. This vehicle will be available to all members of the community for an affordable tariff, and subsidised rates will be offered to those in possession of a valid travel pass.

Cllr Ellwood as the Council representative on '**Plastic Free Watchet**' had circulated a report to members prior to the meeting, with a summary as follows.

- The project continues, currently with the help of the Plastic Free Communities in West Somerset alliance that has been formed. A Supermarket Mass Unwrap is being planned in Minehead and a water refill campaign is underway to try and reduce the number of plastic water bottles that are purchased by making more free water refills available.
- There is a Facebook site for the group that has lots of handy hints, events and actions so please do follow the group:

<https://www.facebook.com/plasticfreecommunitieswestsomerset/>

Cllr Irlen as the Council representative on '**Quantock Foodbank**' had circulated a report to members prior to the meeting, with a summary as follows.

- A trustee meeting was held by ZOOM on 29/9/21 and reported progress. As the country was progressing to the 'new normal', at the end of Lockdown in June we removed all the stock from the Methodist schoolroom and squeezed it back into the annexe; consequently, the shelves are currently very full.
- Covid volunteers have returned to their normal lives and those with us now, work Monday and Thursday mornings as these are our main days for collection of donations. The change in activities since our founding in 2018 is illustrated by the huge increase due to COVID from 2019 to 2020/2021 triggered by Lockdowns equating to 10,083 parcels delivered over 3 years – a graph was circulated showing the figures.
- We work with a large number of agencies who refer people to the Foodbank based on their need for help with free food parcels during times of crisis, supporting over 10,000 people and providing fresh fruit, vegetables and eggs to over 4,000 people since the 'Eat

Well to Keep Well project" started last November as an addition to our normal operation during COVID.

- Recently a new venture has begun. Operating from the Methodist Church Schoolroom in Watchet every Thursday from 9:45 until 12:15, the Food Pantry aims to:
 1. Bridge the gap between total dependence on free food parcels and total self-reliance
 2. Encourage clients to take the first steps towards independence, responsibility and self-reliance
 3. Support agencies by offering another option for their clients.

It utilises a referral system similar to the Foodbank, but without requiring means assessment. Clients pay a small financial contribution towards the costs of running the project such as room hire and receive a nutritionally balanced bag of foodbank items including some fresh produce. The items will change over a six-week period to provide variety. The Pantry will run alongside the Foodbank, which will always be there for those in crisis. We have executed with the Church Commissioners the renewal of the licence to occupy the Annex for a further year, and our external examiner has signed off the annual accounts which are now being submitted to the Charity Commission as required from a CIO.

Although Cllr Richards is not the Council representative on the WACET organisation, he wished to give an update of which the Chair granted. A bid of £11,500 on behalf of all the businesses in Watchet was submitted to the 'Welcome Back Fund' an EU funding pot delivered through SW&T Council. This bid has been successful and approved. The funding will provide:

- X4 new tourism seats, including seating at the West Pier and a seat donated to the Town Council to be sited at the Henry Davey playing fields.
- 55 Hanging baskets
- Watchet Shoppers Guide
- Troughs
- Christmas Events

Cllr Corlett-Shaw as the Council representative on the '**Emergency High Street Fund**' gave a verbal report as follows- the group continues to work on its indicative plan, and all is going well. There were some issues with the flag poles and these are being addressed.

The group has agreed that the Watchet App is no longer viable, and the group is approaching SW&T Council to amend the plan. This has to be done formally and the group is working on presenting an amended plan to them.

This will include the following:

- Free Christmas trees for all business premises that usually have them. Large trees outside church, museum and East Quay
- Caturms Event
- QR codes on buildings to denote their history, with a trail guide to be put in the Visitor Centre.
- Changes to current flag poles

Further information will be in a report next month after approval from SW&T Council has been gained, together with a financial breakdown.

Questions from the floor:

Cllr Murphy asked: why didn't the High Street Emergency Fund working group include bins on the Esplanade when the High Street Fund plan was submitted?

District Cllr Whetlor responded: bins on the Esplanade were not in the initial indicative plan submitted, but she was aware that SW&T were currently doing a review of bins and replacements, which she thought included the Esplanade.

Cllr Murphy requested that this matter is addressed at the next Environment & Planning Committee meeting. The Clerk confirmed that this item would be added to the agenda.

21/337

To receive and sign the minutes of the following committees and adopt the Resolutions and Recommendations contained therein. (LGA 1972, SCH12 Para 41 (1))

- Tourism & Leisure (16 September 2021)
Cllr Whetlor, Chair of the Committee, proposed that '**the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2021 are adopted as a true and correct record.**' Seconded by Cllr Johnson Carried.

- Watchet Community Centre Management Committee (23 September 2021)
In the absence of Cllr Brake Chair of the Committee, Cllr Irven proposed that **'the minutes of the meeting held 23 September 2021 are adopted as a true and correct record'**. Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried with 5 votes for and 1 abstention.
- Environment & Planning Committee (23 September 2021)
Cllr Westcott as Chair of the Committee proposed that **'the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 are adopted as a true and correct record.'** Seconded by Cllr Johnson Carried.

21/338 Verbal reports from sub-committees, working groups, and other outside organisations, where Watchet Town Council does not have representation:

Notification received by the Clerk from Cllr Irven who had attended the conference for Parish & Town Councils on Somerset Unitary plan on 7 October 2021. A report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Cllr Irven requested that members consider the following:

1. Unitary is coming so over the next 18 months the Town Council needs to start preparing and discuss ideas on how to engage, with a view to developing a strategy around what the vision for Watchet will be
2. Further sessions for Councillors are planned.
3. Specific training courses for Clerks available
4. Recommended that the Mel Usher report is read, already circulated to Councils outlining opportunities

21/339 Reports from Working Groups: any relevant paperwork will be issued prior to the meeting

a. Climate Change –update and recommendations –

A report giving an update on the progress of Bickwatch Project was circulated to members prior to the meeting. This included a photograph of the Electric vehicle and a list of proposed tariffs for travel.

21/340 Legal Matters:

- (i) To approve the draft lease for the Watchet Market House Museum – *deferred to the next meeting due to lack of information or communication from the Orchard Wyndham Estate*

At this point Cllrs Johnson and Murphy declared a Personal interest in this item as Trustees of the Market House Museum and Cllr Whetlor who is a committee member (Cllrs remained in the meeting and participated in the discussion and voting).

The Clerk reported that the agents for the Orchard Wyndham Estate had been in contact and the trustees and family members were looking to agree a lease at the meeting held on 18 October 2021. The Clerk would keep all members updated on this matter.

21/341 Closure of Audit:

- (i) To note the closure of audit notice and External Auditors report- circulated to members prior to the meeting via **Appendix 1** - Cllr Murphy, Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee commended the Clerk for her work in recognition of the External Auditors certificate stating that there are no matters to address regarding the Town Councils financial and accounting systems. Cllr Murphy proposed that **'the closure of audit notice and the External Auditors certificate is noted'**. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

21/342 Queens Platinum Jubilee:

- (i) Suggestions by members on how to celebrate the event- after a brief discussion it was agreed to refer this matter to the November Tourism & Leisure Committee for consideration.

21/343 Opening up Safely and Reconnecting Communities Fund that SALC are administering on behalf of Somerset County Council:

- (i) If bid submitted is successful, discuss criteria for allocating funds to local groups-a brief discussion ensued whereby Cllr Johnson proposed that **'how grant requests are administered and the process to follow for community groups to apply is referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee to adjudicate'**. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

88

- 21/344 Re-introduction of Standards Committee by Somerset West & Taunton Council**
(i) If members are interested in being put forward as the two non – voting members – information on this process was circulated to members prior to the meeting via **Appendix 2- there was no interest from members.**

21/345 Police Office:

- (i) Use by the Avon & Somerset Police – The Clerk presented the following report- the Avon and Somerset Police have an annual agreement in place with Watchet Town Council to rent the space of the Police Office on the Esplanade for Police use to include storage and to hold beat surgeries. The agreement has expired and due to lack of use by the Police during the pandemic the Police were contacted recently about reinstating the agreement for the forthcoming year. Recently the Clerk informed members via email that the Police no longer wished to rent the space and arrangements were made for a clean and disposal of any furniture owned by the Police no longer needed and the removal of signage from the exterior of the building. There seemed to be some miscommunication between the Estate Manager and the Police Crime Commissioner and Chief Inspector who have both expressed in emails the wish to retain the Police Office for Police use.

After a brief discussion Cllr Johnson proposed that ***'the following recommendation 'continued use of the Police Office by the Police at nil cost is approved on the proviso that assurances are given that all signage remains in situ on the exterior of the building. This is subject to an annual review' is approved.*** Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried.

- 21/346 Matters of Correspondence for Report** - Correspondence is addressed daily and filed, the file is available for all Councillors to inspect at their leisure.

- 21/347 Accounts for payment** – to approve the September Schedule (paid in October) circulated to members prior to the meeting. Cllr Westcott proposed that ***'the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid.'*** Seconded by Cllr Richards Carried.

- 21/348 To note Matters for the next meeting** – no discussion or decisions made
- Liaise with the Clerk

Meeting closed at 8.27pm

Signed:


Dated:
