

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting**  
**held on Monday 6 December 2021 at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllr Brake, Cllr Campbell, Cllr Irven (Chair), Cllr Johnson, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Terrett, Cllr Westcott, and Cllr Whetlor

**In attendance:** Sarah Reed – Town Clerk

- 21/377** To formally resolve to suspend standing order 1(z)- to allow the meeting to take place on the first Monday of the month due to the Christmas period proposed by Cllr Irven and seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.
- 21/378** To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1)- Cllr Irven proposed that '*apologies from Cllrs Bowden, Corlett-Shaw, Ellwood and Richards are accepted*'. Seconded by Cllr Terrett. Carried with 6 Votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention. Apologies from District Cllr Aldridge and County Cllr Davies were noted for the record.
- 21/379** 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	of 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

- 21/380** **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 8 November 2021 (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))  
Cllr Westcott proposed that '*The minutes from the Council meeting held on 8 November 2021 are approved as a true and correct record with amendments.*' Seconded by Cllr Brake. Carried.

- 21/381** **Chairman's Report:** – verbal  
I was grateful to Cllr brake for representing WTC on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November remembrance event when I was away from Watchet, and I was pleased to be able to attend with several colleagues representing WTC at the Sunday service. Large attendances demonstrated Watchet's continuing commitment to supporting this event.

As Mayor, on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November I had the pleasure to attend the Orion Collective opening event at East Quay, when a fine speech was given by Jess Prendergrast to the assembled guests. It was a wet and blustery night, but the high winds did not dampen the enthusiasm shown for the tremendous success achieved in delivering this facility for Watchet, although inspection of the higher-level terraces and pods was somewhat curtailed. We wish the group every success with the new venture.

On Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November I attended Watchet Coastguard station with County Councillor Hugh Davies, to present the SCC Chairman's award for community service to Watchet Coastguard team. Hugh had stepped in at the event to receive the award when the Coastguard team were not present and asked me to help present on the 29<sup>th</sup>. WTC did endorse the nomination but like others were unaware of the ceremony in Taunton.

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The Coastguards were commended for their selfless service to the community since their establishment in Watchet in 1881. They operate 365 24/7 for emergency duties, and I confirmed on behalf of WTC and the Town that we consider their emergency service an invaluable contribution to Watchet, from their Esplanade location at the centre of Watchet. Especial thanks to Hugh for stepping forward and 'saving the day' over the slight miscommunication about the awards ceremony and rearranging a successful local presentation at short notice.

On Sat 20<sup>th</sup> Nov, in a break with tradition, as Mayor I was not invited to be part of the Caturus event welcoming Queen Catur and King Charles to the Town.

#### Other matters

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov I was contacted by District Cllr Ian Aldridge about a grant application to Western Power for grant monies to alleviate fuel poverty and improve fuel efficiencies. He indicated that the deadline was 5pm Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. Although the initial response from both Williton and Watchet clerks was that it might prove difficult to get their council's approvals to any bid that could be prepared in time, Ian did the impossible. He liaised with Somerset Citizens Advice and Village Agents and identified that the need in Williton and Watchet was very high and that they would be willing to act as partners delivering aid if the councils of Williton and Watchet could submit bids – they could not do this themselves. Ian produced a template which he shared with me, and I helped customise this for Watchet. Because Sarah had been alerted by Cllr Whetlor about the fund, she was able to work with myself and Ian on the Monday to ensure that a bid for £10,000 was submitted by Watchet under her delegation as proper officer, with Ian submitting with the Williton Parish clerk a bid for Williton. I was able to mention the existing SLA we have with CA, our work during COVID working to support local voluntary groups and agencies e.g., local Quantock Food bank, and WCCT coronavirus help group, Good Neighbours and Meals on Wheels as part of our demonstrating our track record. As it was rushed, we may or may not be successful. We will know the result by Dec 14<sup>th</sup>. After we know we can identify how we engage with Village agents and CA and on financial governance. A really good example of cooperation between Williton and Watchet and help from district ward members, so an especial thank you to Ian.

Watchet Library, SCC were contacted by the UK Health and Safety Executive who have statutory duty to enforce EH&S legislation in the workplace. They required to undertake a spot check of the EH&S status of Watchet Library particularly whether relevant UK legal requirements were being followed. Even though many COVID restrictions have been lifted, even before the latest tightening with OMICRON variant, there remain requirements for ventilation, cleanliness and personal hygiene, both for staff and public. Although SCC are responsible for EH&S risk assessments for staff and public, WTC is responsible for the facility, with joint responsibility for public liability. Following many unsuccessful attempts by the Library staff to get advice on how to address this, I was volunteered as contact to undertake the HSE review on behalf of both organisations. Fortunately, I was able to go through all the relevant questions HSE had by means of a virtual inspection, rather than real site inspection. HSE were completely satisfied and have marked us down for no further action. Failure to participate would have led to a formal site visit and potential enforcement action. HSE randomly select organisations where they choose to make such an assessment. It is possible they may wish to do this with other WTC facilities, but hopefully not now we have satisfied them over the library and that we have a competent EH&S approach.

To note that the OC Christmas market over the Dec 3-5 weekend was approved by SW&T, with WTC E&P having indicated support. Next weekend on Friday it's the WACET late opening, and I encourage everyone to attend.

#### **21/353 Reports from the Principal Authority Members:**

In the absence of County Cllr Davies, his report was circulated to members prior to the meeting for information, as was a report from District Cllr Aldridge. Both reports were noted.

An update report was circulated by District Cllr Whetlor prior to the meeting relating to a meeting she had attended with the Parking Officers (SW&T) and she summarised the following points from her monthly reports as follows:

- Further discussions with District Officers confirm that no formal decision has been made with regard to Market Street toilets.

- The first draft of a sign to be put up at the entrance of Swain Street Car Park was presented to Town Councillors for comment (attached). With regard to re-lining a quote is currently being sought.
- With regard to EV charging points in Watchet, SW&T Council are awaiting the results of a feasibility study before any decisions are made as to where they may be located.

Questions from the floor.

*Cllr Irvén asked:* could clarification be given on the Unitary elections and when they will be?

*Cllr Whetlor responded:* Elections for Parish/Town Councils have been brought forward one year to 2022 and the Unitary elections will also take place in May 2022. The new Unitary Authority will replace Somerset County Council and Somerset West & Taunton Council. It will be created on a continuing authority basis from the current Somerset County Council and run alongside SW&T Council until April 2023 when SW&T Council will be abolished. Elected parish/Town Councillors will serve for a 5-year term, then back to a 4-year term after that.

*Cllr Murphy asked:* Has the asset list for Watchet been sent to the Clerk?

*The Clerk responded:* the list has been received and it is advised that this is progressed in the first instance with the F&GP Committee at the December meeting in line with ear marked reserve discussions, which will be recommended to Full Council at the January meeting.

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**Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions**

Cllr Terrett as the Council representative on 'Watchet Conservation Society' and 'Watchet LIVE CIC' circulated reports prior to the meeting, of which members noted. Cllr Terrett commented that Watchet LIVE would like to thank the Town Council for the grant awarded of £3,500 towards the 2022 carnival parade, as this was omitted from the report.

Cllr Irvén as the Council representative on 'The Quantock Foodbank' had circulated a report to members prior to the meeting, with a summary as follows:

Rather than on ZOOM, on Dec 1<sup>st</sup> the Trustees held a first real meeting since the lockdown. Somerset Community Foundation have just issued a report entitled 'Hidden Somerset Food Poverty' which is a series of short reports looking at aspects of life in Somerset that are often hidden from view. By lifting the lid on the experience and insights of frontline grassroots charities that work at the heart of our communities, it aims to stimulate debate and understanding across a wider audience, helping to inspire new and more impactful philanthropy. One of the reports is from the Quantock Foodbank- available to Councillors.

Foodbank activity has returned more towards pre-lockdown levels, but demand is expected to continue build again as winter bites, with the combined effects of food, fuel and transport poverty. After referral from agencies, to alleviate urgent need, free food parcels are provided and delivered locally as a short-term solution. The new food pantry scheme is aimed at moving people from free food parcels ultimately through to self-sufficiency. It is operating well one day a week from the Methodist church, supporting approx 50 people, who for a contribution of £3.50 towards the scheme overhead costs have access to a nutritious food package worth approx. £20.

The meeting discussed that as the need for expanding pantry schemes across the Quantock foodbank area (Watchet, Williton and Quantock villages) increases, are other fixed pantry sites required or is there potential for a mobile transport system? In the new year engagement with agencies and stakeholders is planned to explore options which may also be of interest to WTC.

Cllr Johnson as the Council representative on 'Citizens Advice West Somerset' had circulated a report containing some stats on the organisation and their outreach services to Watchet, he enlarged by commenting that a helpline funded by Somerset County Council offering £200,000 per year for 2 years covering the whole of Somerset has been set up and this has been organised by the Citizens Advice, they provide a vitally important service to the community.

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:

This project, which is a collaboration of efforts between Bicknoller Parish, Sampford Brett Parish and Watchet Town Councils, launched on Tuesday 2nd November 2021. Cllr Murphy as the representative from Watchet Coastal Community Team has a full update for the Town Council separate to this.

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:

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- 21/385 Verbal reports from sub-committees, working groups, and other outside organisations, where Watchet Town Council does not have representation: No notifications received.
- 21/386 Reports from Working Groups: any relevant paperwork will be issued prior to the meeting  
a. Climate Change –update and recommendations – no update given
- 21/387 Legal Matters:  
(i) To approve the draft lease for the Watchet Market House Museum – *Updates from the Clerk – following on from the report made by the Clerk at the last meeting: at a meeting held on 18 October 2021 between the family and trustees of the Orchard Wyndham Estate, a lease for the Museum was approved. The Clerk having chased this matter, has been informed that a draft copy will be in the possession of the Town Council in the very near future, as the copy is currently being drafted by the Estates legal team.*  
The Clerk reported that despite chasing there has been no response from the agents of the Orchard Wyndham Estate. Members agreed that if there is no update within the next month then, the Clerk sends the letter of complaint already drafted.
- 21/388 Request by WACET organisation:  
(i) Re: Late night opening on 10 December 2021, to sponsor the event and waive the charges of x2 gazebos - Cllr Whetlor clarified that the wording was incorrect, as the event was being paid for by funding from the 'Welcome Fund', it should read that the gazebos are sponsored. After a brief discussion, Cllr Murphy proposed that *'the request is declined as WACET has received specific funding allocated for this event, and if this were granted, then a precedent would be set for other community groups to make the same request'*. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried with 6 votes for and 1 abstention.
- 21/389 Matters of Correspondence for Report - Correspondence is addressed daily and filed, the file is available for all Councillors to inspect at their leisure
- 21/390 Accounts for payment – to approve the November Schedule (paid in December) circulated to members prior to the meeting. Cllr Johnson proposed that *'the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid.'* Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.
- 21/391 To note Matters for the next meeting – no discussion or decisions made
- Liaise with the Clerk
  - To set the 2022-23 precept and ear marked reserves

Meeting closed at 7.52pm

Signed: John Jones

Dated: 11/1/22