

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting  
held on Monday 14 March 2022 at 7.00pm**

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

**In attendance:** Sarah Reed, Town Clerk, District Cllr Aldridge

**22/427** To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1)- Cllr Irven proposed that '**apologies from Cllr Bowden are accepted**'. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.  
Apologies from County Cllr Davies were noted for the record.

**22/428** 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
Cllrs Whetlor	All items	As a Watchet Ward Member	Personal	Cllr remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting

**22/429** To take a formal resolution in support of the people of Ukraine- Cllr Irven proposed that '**the following statement is endorsed by members and the Ukrainian flag is flown from the Town Councils flagpole in support - Watchet Town Council wish to express support to all the people in the Ukraine in their struggle against the war currently being waged against them. We salute the courage, fortitude and stoicism of all the Ukrainian people and wish to stand firmly with them against the oppression and terror that they currently face. We will support humanitarian aid to them in their time of need**'. Seconded by Cllr Ellwood. Carried with 10 votes for and 1 abstention.

**22/430** **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 14 February 2022 - (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))  
Cllr Irven proposed that '**The minutes from the Council meeting held on 14 February 2022 are approved as a true and correct record.**' Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.

**22/431** (i) **Chairman's Report:** – verbal  
On 17/2/22 I attended a Zoom meeting for updates on the Somerset plans for the unitary authority. However, there was little further update from that I presented at the February meeting focussed on local community networks.

On Monday 21 Feb I tested positive for COVID 19 via a PCR test and therefore missed planned day procedure at Musgrove Hospital, rescheduled for later in March. I isolated for 10 days as required, testing negative continuously after day 6. I was asymptomatic throughout. As a result, I was unable to attend several committee meetings.

At the first WCCT Street Fayre of the season on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March, I was asked by the organisers to speak at a session that was aimed at demonstrating public support for the people of the Ukraine, especially to raise funds for humanitarian relief. I would like to say how pleased I was that this arose from requests by WCCT members and the public, was facilitated by WCCT and enabled because WTC had already approved the Esplanade use for the street Fair, and the event was able to be held within its remit. The fair also donated funds to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and I am sure the WCCT representative, Cllr Murphy will give an update in his report.





The clerk submitted a request to Western Power supported by data provided by Citizens Advice, Village Agents, Cllr Johnson and myself to extend the programme from its original end date of 31 March to 31 May so that we had enough time to deploy funds. I am pleased to report that WP agreed to the request, which illustrates the professional approach of the Clerk and partners in meeting all the financial and data protection requirements of due diligence in delivering the programme.

I have been invited by Michelle Cusack, Director Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning at SCC to attend a session this coming week with the CCC (Climate Change Committee) who advise the UK Government on achieving carbon zero. Because SCC and SW&T came out top in recent surveys of UK Councils the CCC have requested a visit to Somerset to understand what is being done here and the challenges of zero carbon in a rural setting. The original plan was to bring the committee including Lord Deben, the Chairman and Chris Stark the CEO to Watchet during the visit to see some of the initiatives here across local authority and community activities. For example, WTC/WCCT community electric vehicles, Quantock Foodbank mobile pantry programme, and WTC Western Power programme addressing fuel poverty. Unfortunately, due to travel schedule from London and the rural road network, they are no longer able to visit Watchet, but I have been asked to attend to participate in working sessions. I have negotiated one other WTC representative to attend from our Climate Change workshop, and Cllr Ellwood will be making a recommendation in her CC report about her attendance to cover WTC CC work and to share her knowledge of Somerset wide community transport. Final details of date and schedule are not being widely published to maintain security for the VIP attendees. This is a great opportunity for Somerset and for Watchet to have been asked to participate alongside other attendees.

(ii) **Clerks report** – the Clerk referred to information already circulated to members relating to the 'Pre-Election Period' and the regulations. The Clerk is seeking advice from SALC about how this affects the Annual Town Meeting and members will be informed if there are any changes to the meeting being held on Tuesday 12 April 2022. The Clerk reminded those members wishing to stand in the forthcoming election of the election timetable.

#### 22/414 **Reports from the Principal Authority Members:**

In the absence of County Cllr Davies his report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting, and members agreed to note it.

District Cllr Aldridge gave the following verbal report, expressing his concerns on the implementation of the Local Council Networks, which will be set up as part of the new Unitary model. He has reservations on how they will affect Watchet and other parishes regarding membership. He then referred to questions he would like answered as follows:

- How forward are plans with setting up LCNs?
- Are the areas covered by each known?
- By what mechanism will parish and town councils deliver services?
- What formula will be used to calculate the funding of services delivered by parish and town councils ie will it be 100 %?
- What part will LCNs play in the process of delivering local services via parish and town councils?

Cllr Aldridge concluded that there would be a site visit of members and officers only to the proposed Cleeve Hill development site, date yet to be confirmed.

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

- Regularly attending LGR session on Unitary, with the main topic being LCN's and the powers they will have, at the moment there seems to be more questions than answers.
- Budget has been set with an increase of 2.95% which equates to £5 per annum on a Band D property.
- Many concerns from residents have been raised regarding construction traffic at the new Liddymore Farm and breaches of planning conditions, the lorries continue to go through Maglands and out onto Doniford Road and up Rydon Hill, this is being investigated. These and other concerns were referred to the Enforcement Officer who has been very competent in dealing with these matters very swiftly.



Questions from the floor:

**Cllr Irven asked:** can Watchet Town Council be informed of when the site visit to Cleeve Hill will take place?

**Cllr Aldridge responded:** the Town Council can write to the Planning Clerk and request to be informed when the date is confirmed.

**Cllr Richards asked:** where do the new LCN's fit into the current Quantock panels?

**Cllr Aldridge responded:** Those panels maybe preserved beyond the elections as SW&T Council will not disband until the vesting day of the new Unitary Authority on 1 April 2023. However, those panels were specific to the district council areas only.

22/415

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

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

- The first Street Fayre of the season was very successful with over 40 stalls. A stall was invited to promote solidarity with Ukraine. Sunflower seeds were sold, and donations invited to the Disasters Emergency Committee collecting monies for Ukraine which would be matched by the government. With the surplus from the fayre also being donated to Ukraine, over £1800 was raised.
- WCCT has admitted a new member, Elliot's Touch.
- WCCT has decided to join the Hidden Disabilities Campaign
- Following the resignation of the Community Car Co-ordinator, a replacement has been advertised.

Cllr Murphy as Council representative on '**Watchet Advisory Committee**' had circulated a report prior to the meeting and summarised the following points from the meeting held on 1 March 2022:

- Harbour Matters – replacements of the brass fittings from the top of the lighthouse which had blown off in the recent bad weather, have been sourced and a budget identified.
- The location of a new barrier at the of the slip has caused some concern, note that Coastguards and Sea Scouts have access details.
- Some maintenance issues being picked up including a West Pier light and minor cracks in the pier.
- Access to East Quay and unregulated parking still an issue- investigations as to a solution are ongoing.
- Power generated replacement still awaited, cost proving problematic.
- Marine matters – Dredgers return w/c 6 April 2022, held up by contracts elsewhere, refitting and bad weather. Should be two in service that week to help completion of initial dredge. A third dredger is to be purchased.
- There have been issues with the lock gates, now resolved.
- To get everything ready for the summer season, there have been some replacements of marina fittings, B section hammerhead carried out and some pontoons expected to be replaced this winter.

Cllr Murphy concluded by informing members that the next 'Harbour Board' meeting would take place on Tuesday 15 March 2022, where some points raised in this report would be taken forward.

Cllr Ellwood as the Council representative on '**Bickwatch**' reported that the name of the project following feedback has been changed from 'Bickwatch' to 'EVIE Here4YOU' ('EVIE' to represent the **E**lectric **V**ehicle). Funded by SCC's grant for projects that tackle climate change, this is a collaboration between Bicknoller Parish, Sampford Brett Parish and Watchet Town Councils and provides a community car scheme with a large electric vehicle.

Since its launch in November 2021, membership and volunteer driver numbers are growing, and there is an ongoing discussion to formalise the fare system.

Cllr Ellwood as the Council representative on '**Plastic Free Watchet**' reported that the most recent meeting was held on 2 March 2022. We hope to join a partnership between the other Plastic Free groups in West Somerset and will need a new community lead to drive the project forward. The next beach clean and litter pick is planned for 02 April at 2pm.

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 Brake as the Council representative on the '*Friends of the Flatner*' summarised the activities of the Boat Museum during the period of January to March 2022 as follows:

- The Boat Museum was closed during the first 2 weeks in January 2022, planned painting of the roof has been postponed until warmer months.
- The Boat Museum re-opened in the third week of January 2022 on Thursday, Friday & Saturday, in line with the Visitor Centre opening hours.
- The lights under the mezzanine level which have proved problematic for the last 6 months, were replaced and the work completed in February at a cost of just in excess of £1,000.
- A local resident expressed interest in displaying a selection of finds from Helwell Bay and West Street Beach, after looking at photographs of the cleaned-up items, it was agreed that an area under the mezzanine could be made available for the display, in display cabinets kindly donated by a Watchet business owner.
- During the half term holiday, the Boat Museum was open all week and offered rope making facilities which proved very popular.
- On the 8 March there was a special opening for 15 home schooled children with their parents, who were able to explore the history of the Flatner, make a length of rope, complete a museum trail, and make origami boats, which was also very successful.
- The Boat Museum looks forward to being part of the Maritime Madness event in May and the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022.

**22/434 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 Committee (17 February 2022)  
Cllr Whetlor, Chair of the Committee, proposed that ***'the minutes of the meeting held 17 February 2022 are adopted as a true and correct record'***. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.
- Finance & General Purposes Committee (21 February 2022)  
Cllr Murphy, Chair of the Committee, proposed that ***'the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2022 are adopted as a true and correct record.'*** Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried
- Environment & Planning Committee (24 February 2022)  
Cllr Westcott, Chair of the Committee, proposed that ***'the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 are adopted as a true and correct record.'*** Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried

**22/435 Verbal reports from sub-committees, working groups, and other outside organisations, where Watchet Town Council does not have representation:**

- (i) Notes of Market Sub-Committee meeting held remotely on 16 February 2022 – Cllr Whetlor, Chair of the Sub-Committee proposed that ***'the notes are approved'***. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried.

**22/436 Reports from Working Groups:** *any relevant paperwork will be issued prior to the meeting*  
**Climate Change** – following on from the Chair's introduction highlighting the visit from the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), Cllr Ellwood proposed that ***'she accompanies Cllr Irven to the visit to discuss active travel, community transport and our other climate change initiatives that are taking place in Watchet'***. Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried.

**22/437 Legal Matters:**

- (i) Draft lease for the Watchet Market House Museum – *update from the Clerk*  
The Clerk reported having chased up Savills and receiving the following response, nothing has progressed – *'the current lease of the Museum is a secure tenancy and one that has not ended and will continue until either party serves notice on the other. The landlords notice requirements are strict and limited, mainly if the tenant defaults on the terms of the lease agreement or the building is required for redevelopment. The Council wish a new agreement which is outstanding, and Savills have asked for this to either be expedited or a simpler way of doing this is a simple minute of agreement agreeing to an extended term of the existing lease under the same terms as requested'*

**22/438 Long Term Projects for Harbour Road Toilets:**

- (i) To approve refurbishment budget and works, circulated to members via **Appendix 1-** A brief discussion ensued regarding the proposed refurbishment works. In relation to the proposal to replace the waterless urinals with water flow urinals on an automated flush system, it was the consensus that as this Council has declared a climate emergency, it would be a backwards step to go back to water flushing urinals. Members recognised that there are problems with the current waterless urinals and want to try and find a solution within the climate change strategy.



Cllr Irven proposed that **'the budget of up to £6200 is approved and an earmarked reserve set to complete the refurbishment works, the potential problems with the waterless urinals are fully researched and a solution found within the climate change initiative set out by Somerset West & Taunton Council'**. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

**22/439 Former Taxi Office-** to discuss options or future use – in light of **recommendation 1** approved at the last meeting-

**Recommendation 1** - Agree to a rental cost of up to £2,000 per annum for the small office (former taxi office) for the period of 1 May 2022 - 31 April 2023 with the aim of assessing if this arrangement is mutually beneficial to both parties. Further negotiation to be delegated to the Clerk who was asked to explore with Onion Collective comparable Watchet market rents for office space and any implications of shared space usage.

A research report was circulated to members prior to the meeting via **Appendix 2** and included data and advice from a commercial agent and business owners on rental charges in and around the Watchet area. After a long discussion Cllr Johnson proposed that:

**'It is advisable that the Town Council request that evidence is sought from the Onion Collective's valuer on how the figure of £21 per sqft is substantiated and calibrated, as it is stated that he was 'unable to find any direct comparable sales of small freehold offices'. If the Town Council wish to demonstrate best value in spending taxpayer's money, then they should seek further negotiations with regard to the rental charge, with the aim to seek a compromise that is beneficial to both parties.**

**To offer to pay a rental charge of £1000 per annum = £10.92 per sqft, and £83.33 per month rather than the proposed £166.66. This is slightly above average but demonstrates that the Council wish to work amicably in securing the space.**

**If this is not accepted by Onion Collective, then review in 3 months' time. If the space is rented out to a third party, then the Council can revert back to posting a new receptionist in the Visitor Centre, if the space is not rented out, then further negotiations maybe forthcoming with Onion Collective CIC on the Town Council not only seeking an independent valuation, but also come to an agreement on an acceptable rental charge'.** Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Unanimously carried.

**22/440 Membership of the Rural market Network:**

- (i) After a trial period free of charge, to consider whether to renew- after a brief discussion it was the consensus of members that this membership benefitted larger markets operations and market towns and through a proposal by Cllr Richards agreed **'not to renew the membership'**. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

**22/441 Ear Marked Reserves:**

- (i) Recommendation from the Tourism & Leisure Committee to set a reserve for the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations of up to £3,500 – Cllr Whetlor proposed that **'the reserve is set at up to £3,500 for the event'**. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried with 10 votes for and 1 abstention.
- (ii) Recommendation from the Environment & Planning Committee to set a reserve for a tidy up and creation of new parking spaces in West Street Car Park of up to £7,000 –

At this point Cllrs Campbell and Johnson declared Personal interests as paying tenants in the car park (Cllrs remained in the meeting and participated in the discussion and voting)


Cllr Westcott proposed that **'the reserve is set at up to £7,000 for the approved works to West Street Car Park'**. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried

**22/442 Matters of Correspondence for Report** - Correspondence is addressed daily and filed, the file is available for all Councillors to inspect at their leisure. Nothing to report.

**22/443 Accounts for payment** – to approve the February Schedule (paid in March) circulated to members prior to the meeting. Cllr Whetlor proposed that **'the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid.'** Seconded by Cllr Brake. Carried.

- 22/444 To note **Matters for the next meeting** – no discussion or decisions made
- Liaise with the Clerk

Meeting closed at 8.22pm

Signed: ..... 

Dated: ..... 