

Minutes of the Environment & Planning Committee
held on Thursday 14 April 2022 at 5.30pm

Present: Cllr Irven, Cllr Murphy, and Cllr Westcott (Chair)

In attendance: Jo Grellier, Deputy Clerk

22/195B To receive apologies for absence: (LGA 1972, section 85 (1)-
Cllr Irven proposed '***that the apologies given by Cllr Johnson and Cllr Campbell are accepted***'.
Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

22/196B To receive any Declaration of Interests: None to declare

22/197B Traffic Analysis Working Group:
(i) Update and recommendations –

Cllr Murphy presented a verbal report from the Watchet Town Council Traffic Evaluation Working Group following a virtual meeting on Friday 8th April 2022 with the Major Projects Officer at SW&T Planning Department, and Watchet Town Council Traffic Evaluation Working Group, chaired by Cllr Irven, together with Cllr Brake and Cllr Murphy. The main points raised were:

- Two developments were discussed during the meeting, the Tameer Homes development on former Wansbrough Paper Mill, and the proposed housing development on Cleeve Hill, Watchet.
- Watchet Town Council welcomed the offer of exploring a joint discussion between the Mill site developers, SW&T, and Watchet Town Council to consider options which might better meet community desires.
- The Traffic Evaluation Working Group felt that the pedestrian routes proposed by the developer were not safe, and as a consequence would generate extra traffic movement around Watchet. As requested by WTC, SF had written to the Somerset CC Transport Authority about the various transport issues that we had raised about Cleeve Hill, including the matter of SCC's objection to excess traffic related to the Mill site, but not to the proposed Cleeve Hill development when the grounds were potentially similar.
- It was explained to the Major Projects Officer that Town Council had secured the services of an independent expert traffic/environment consultant to advise them, because of the poor engagement that the council had received with the Somerset West and Taunton Planning dept and Somerset County Council Highways, and that we had ongoing concerns about failures to follow planning and highways policy requirements. The town council has used the advice of this independent expert to help us to devise our management for the objection to the development.

Following the verbal update report and recommendation offered, a long discussion ensued, and Cllr Westcott proposed that '***as recommended by the working group, if a meeting with The Mill Site developers is offered, this should be accepted***'. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried. Cllr Westcott thanked the working group for their efforts in moving the case forward.

Cllr Irven presented and tabled to members an email of support from the Leader of Somerset County Council. A long discussion ensued. Cllr Irven proposed that '***a letter is sent to the Leader of Somerset County Council following the sharing of his email in opposition to the Cleeve Hill development, pointing out the deficiencies in Somerset County Council highways approach and request answers and constructive engagement going forward***'. Seconded by Cllr Westcott.

Further discussion ensued and Cllr Irven proposed '***an additional letter is drafted thanking the SW&T Planning officer for a positive meeting with the working group but highlighting the concerning issues of subsidence at West Street Car park, due to be discussed in item 22/198B to support our objections for the development geologically***'. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

22/198B West Street Car Park:

(i) Subsidence affection allotment plots 3 & 4 – **(see Appendix 1)** – report from the EH&S designated officer, circulated to members prior to the meeting

Cllr Irven presented **Appendix 1**, a detailed preliminary report for local Geologist company, Geckoella, and covering email. Cllr Irven stated the main recommendations made:

- The situation is serious. The extent of the area of cliff failure is much more apparent from the drone flight and aerial images than is visible or appreciable from the ground.
- The overall arcuate form of the slipped areas here is completely typical and characteristic of cliffs composed of the geologically soft, red mudstones (Triassic Mercia Mudstones). Slips and cliff failures in this lithology result from a combination of factors: the inherent weakness of this type of mudstone and geological structures, erosion and weathering by the sea and salt spray, drainage and groundwater movement and percolation of rainwater etc in the cliffs themselves.
- The slumped blocks seaward of this blue line has little coherence and exhibit numerous tensile fractures. They could completely fail and slip seaward within a very short timescale with little warning, possibly as the result of a single weather event. (The land beneath the 'sunken shed' in one of the western allotments appears to have slipped a further 30cm since we first visited the site last week).
- For practical purposes, the area delineated by the blue line in Figure 2.2 (annotated orthophoto) should now be regarded as the new cliff line.
- The appearance and movement of slump blocks in the cliff appears to be migrating eastwards. The present status of the area of cliff immediately east of the horsetail splay fractures (Figure 2.2) and west/north-west of the pigeon house is unclear without further monitoring and investigation. However, the pattern of cliff top vegetation observed in the aerial images may be consistent with ground movement here also (scrub does not grow with straight edges) and this area does form the 'natural RHS' of the arcuate failure pattern I refer to in Point 1 above.
- The presence of rock armour and the sea wall here will not prevent potential further cliff top movement or failure in this area. Rock failures above, and accumulations of mudstone scree on top of, the existing rock armour boulders is clearly evident.
- Given the overall situation, we strongly and respectfully advise that consideration should be given to a) closing at least part, if not all, of the allotments and b) cordoning off a section of the beach in the vicinity of these cliffs.

Cllr Irven gave gratitude to Geckoella for their extensive report and recommended to members that they consider the immediate closure of the 2 allotments either side of the two already closed. Further work is to be done to assess the stability before closing off the final allotment. Allotment tenants are to be alerted of the hazards and informed immediately of their closure.

A long discussion followed.

Cllr Brake arrived at the meeting at 6.02pm

Cllr Westcott proposed that **'members accept Cllr Irven's recommendations to close all allotment plots on the site apart from the end plot, refund the full allotment fee to tenants affected, and inform them that Watchet Town Council will be actively seeking an alternative allotment site, when this is secured, they will be given first refusal on a new tenancy. Letter sent to Geckoella thanking them for their initial studies and requesting details of the cost involved in further studies on this section of land and a letter sent to SW&T alerting them to the need to cordon off and erect signage on the beach and ask whether they might co-sponsor the further studies if considered appropriate'**. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

22/199B Direct bus to Taunton at peak times - update

The Deputy Clerk reported that an email has been sent to the Public Transport Manager, SW&T. We are awaiting a response.

22/200B Footpath at Seaview Terrace - update

The Deputy Clerk reported that the agents who act on behalf of Orchard Wyndham Estate who own the footpath have been chased up, they last stated they were seeking quotes for repairs. No further update.

22/201B Anchor Street Car Park:

(i) To consider the purchase of a new bin - (see **Appendix 1**)

Members discussed the recommendation outlined in the report. Cllr Murphy proposed that **'reply to SW&T informing them that as the previous bin removed belonged to District Council, the Committee anticipate that they pay for the full costs of replacing the bin and emptying. If the bin is an enhanced improvement on the previous bin the Committee may consider a contribution to the cost of purchase'**. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.

22/202B To address items received from the planning authority requiring attention prior to the next Somerset West & Taunton / Somerset County Council / planning meetings: Nothing to report

Planning and plans to be discussed:

3/37/22/003 – Replacement of flat roof with mono roof. Watchet Community Centre, Doniford Road, Watchet, TA23 0TE

Noted, no comments to be made

22/203B Matters for the next meeting

- Liaise with the Clerk
- Direct bus update
- Allotment subsidence update

Meeting closed at 6.25pm

Signed: 

Date: 