

**Minutes of the Environment & Planning Committee  
held on Monday 23 May 2022 at 6.45pm**

**Present:** Cllr Campbell, Cllr Irven, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Westcott, Cllr Whetlor

**In attendance:** Jo Greflier, Deputy Clerk, and Dr Andy King, Director & Principal Geologist Geckoella Ltd

**22/01B To elect a Chair of Committee**

Cllr Campbell proposed *'Cllr Westcott be elected as the Environment and Planning Committee Chair'* Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried. Cllr Westcott accepted his nomination

**22/02B To receive apologies for absence: (LGA 1972, section 85 (1))**

Cllr Westcott proposed that *'apologies given by Cllr Moss are accepted'*. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor Carried.

**22/03B 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

Cllr/s	Item No.(s)	Personal/Prejudicial	Action taken
Cllr Campbell and Cllr Johnson	22/05B	Personal – association to West Street car park	Councillors remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting
Cllr Whetlor	22/05B, 22/06B, 22/08B	Personal & Prejudicial – Member of the SW&T Planning Committee	Councillor exited the meeting and did not take part in the discussion or voting

**22/04B To appoint 1 member to join the Chair of Committee onto the Asset Management Committee – by formal proposal**

Cllr Irven proposed that *'this item is deferred until the next meeting due to all members present already appointed members of the Asset Management Committee'*. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.

Due to the meeting starting early Cllr Westcott as Chair, proposed that *'item 22/07B is brought forward for discussion, whilst the Committee await the arrival of the Geckoella Representative'*. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.

**22/07B Cleeve Hill Weight Limit – information circulated to members prior to the meeting via Appendix 4**

Cllr Westcott gave a brief outline of appendix 4. A discussion ensued between members. Cllr Murphy proposed that *'a letter is sent to Somerset Highways asking for more background information regarding the decision for the temporary weight restriction and clarification on their future plans to make the weight restriction permanent and their process going forward'*. Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried.

Dr Andy King, Director & Principal Geologist of Geckoella Ltd arrived at the meeting at 6.55pm

Cllr Whetlor, having declared a personal & prejudicial interest in this item, left the meeting at 6.57pm

**22/05B West Street Car Park**

**(i) Subsidence affecting allotment plots update reports - circulated to members prior to the meeting via Appendix 1**

Cllr Irven, as Watchet Town Council EH&S Officer gave the following verbal report:

Directly as a result of the recent subsidence at West Street, at E&P April my recommendations to write letters as follows were accepted.

- Geckoella re quote for ongoing work
- SCC re highways
- SW&T EH&S officer re subsidence warning of dangers
- SW&T planning re subsidence in opposition to Cleeve Hill and offer to show planning committee when they site visited Cleeve Hill provided it was EH&S supervised due to severe risk
- No SW&T reply received to our invitation about the site visit

- WTC discovered day before due that a visit was planned but with no communication or agreement with WTC
- I had to arrange last minute cover via Cllrs Campbell & Murphy with Dr King in support, and I am grateful for their considerable help in this matter ensuring a properly supervised visit, which was reported as being very helpful for members of the committee

Cllr Murphy summarised the report on a site visit held with SW&T Planning Committee to view the recent slippage at the West Street Allotments on 11 May 2022 included in appendix 3. He thanked Cllr Campbell and Dr King (Geckoella) for attending. A discussion ensued.

Cllr Irven expressed his disappointment that Watchet Town Council's letter of invitation to inspect the Allotment site slippage with the attendance of the EH&S officer was ignored. The Clerk was made aware that a visit was due to take place on 11 May 2022 and was able to make arrangements to ensure suitable Health & Safety members were in attendance. A member of the Council provided access for planning officers onto West Street Car Park without Council authority. Following the meeting an email was received from a resident stating incorrect information and naming Cllr Irven as offering statements to the visitors during the meeting when he was not present. The email had been sent to SW&T planning officers and the leader of council. Cllr Irven issued corrections in which he also requested that WTC EH&S procedures are followed. As the responses from SW&T Officers were considered inappropriate, Cllr Irven in consultation with the Clerk clarified the matters to WTC's satisfaction. Through further emails, Cllr Irven has advised he is not taking this matter further but requested that the Council endorse that if the council has made a decision, that all members of both SW&I and WTC follow the correct procedures. Cllr Johnson proposed *'the committee must endorse Cllr Irven's request'*. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.

Cllr Irven reported that he had attended an appointment on the allotment site with a former tenant to ensure that the tenant was able to remove belongings from their plot safely, following Health & Safety guidelines. Cllr Irven recommended as EH&S officer that another letter is sent to allotment tenants to recommend that they do not enter this area and accepts no liability if our instructions are not followed. He also recommended that the WTC insurance policy cover for West street car park and allotments is checked.

(ii) **Geologist report and monitoring quotation – Director of Geckoella in attendance to answer any questions from members, information circulated to members prior to the meeting via Appendix 2**

The Committee Clerk introduced Dr King of Geckoella Ltd to members. Cllr Irven gave a background to the need for the project scope and quotations being offered by Geckoella and handed over to Dr King who reported, in brief, the following:

- Without surveys, WTC would have no substantive or quantitative data on which to judge when or where cliff failure might occur, or on what scale - and what the 'knock ons' could be: e.g. how adjacent areas of cliff may behave, future weaknesses (affecting landward areas such as the edge of the car park) and what H&S implications may be, provide evidence for judgement of risks, potentially what area should be managed (e.g. possible areas of beach closure).
- Unlikely to be simple failure - looks incremental to the east, separate blocks which together give the classic arc-shaped failure slope we would anticipate in these cliffs (as seen at Blue Anchor)
- Potentially slips occur at timed stages giving terraced effect. Therefore, no data = don't really know where, what or when. This includes land towards the pigeon house
- Development of the next (landward) set of fractures will likely already be commencing subsurface and/or at ground surface. No data = don't know to what extent or implications of these, e.g., for car park, or for blocks to the east and west of the current 'allotment block' [which is why Geckoella suggested that if the surveys were to be undertaken, it would be worthwhile to include these adjacent areas]

**Questions from the floor:**

Cllr Westcott asked, *'is the slippage effected by the tide or from rainwater?'*

Dr King responded *'the tide has some effect on the cause of slippage or subsidence but in this case the cause is mainly from water pecculation into the cracks on the surface'*

Cllr Campbell asked *'with regard to earth movement, what does stepped rocks mean?'*

Dr King responded, *'bedrock is geologically soft, weathered rocks on a series of different impervious layers, when ground splits it opens a crack allows more water in'*.

Cllr Westcott thanks Dr King for his informative presentation.

At this stage Cllr Irven & Cllr Murphy expressed a personal interest in item 22/0513 (a) as co-directors along with Dr King of The Coastal Communities Team.

Cllr Irven proposed that *'a further letter is sent to the allotment tenants to recommend that they do not enter the allotments and WTC accept no if our instructions are not followed. We endorse the recommendation of the clerk to accept the amended scope and contract of up to 6 surveys up to the value of £3555.00 and seek permission from the neighbouring properties to extend the data collection area to include neighbouring properties at Watchet Town Council's cost totalling an additional £360.00, WTC to write to the owners to obtain permission for drone flights as a result'*. Seconded by acclaim. Carried.

*AW*

As a matter to note – Cllr Irven's recommendation to check WTC insurance policy cover for West street car park and allotments has been achieved by the Finance & Staffing Committee.

Dr King suggested a follow up presentation after the first two surveys once new data has been collated  
Thanks, given by members for the attending the meeting  
Dr King left the meeting at 7.35pm

**22/05B Cleeve Hill Development:**

- (i) Update – *Circulated to members prior to the meeting via Appendix 3*  
Members noted. Cllr Irven proposed that *'the Council write to the new Somerset Unitary leader, similar to the letter sent to the leader of Somerset County Council so they are aware of the current situation and raise the Council concerns'*. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.
- (ii) To appoint a representative to attend the SW&T Planning meeting when the Cleeve Hill planning application is scheduled to be discussed  
Cllr Westcott proposed that *'Cllr Irven is appointed as the Council representative to attend and speak at the Cleeve Hill planning application meeting'*. Seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried.

**22/08B Traffic Evaluation Working Group:**

- (i) Update and recommendations  
Due to the departure of Cllr Brake, Cllr Campbell expressed an interest in being part of the working group, and members approved this.

**22/09B Footpath at Seaview Terrace – update by the Clerk**

Members noted that an email response had been given from the land owners and will await a follow up report after their meeting in early June.

**22/10B Anchor Street Car Park:**

- (i) new bin update - *Circulated to members prior to the meeting via Appendix 5*  
Members noted.

**22/11B** 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.*

**Plans received for discussion**

**3/37/22/004** - Change of use of storage container to preparation kitchen, erection of storage building to the rear with summer serving kitchen within the courtyard and display of information signs fixed to fencing about the town's maritime history and paper making history  
East Quay, Harbour Road, Watchet

**3/37/22/005** - Display of 22 No, non-illuminated Information boards fixed to marina fencing describing the town's paper making history and maritime history  
East Quay, Harbour Road, Watchet

Members considered both applications and gave the following comment.

There appear to be three parts to the proposed plans across the two separate applications, but which are all contained only within the documentation provided for 3/37/22/004. The Committee acknowledge additional information received from Onion Collective regarding the display boards but as this was not part of the formal application it could not be considered.

We would be minded to support the storage area detailed in 3/37/22/004. In respect of the summer kitchen and display boards, however, we feel additional information and clarification is required for both, to be able to consider and/or make comment

Therefore, we suggest the application is resubmitted in clearer format which address these points.

**22/12B Matters for the next meeting – verbal, no discussion**

- Liaise with Committee Clerk
- Approval of Minutes from the previous meeting
- Update on request to Somerset highways to monitor Anchor Street junction
- Cleeve Hill Development
- Update on Cleeve Hill weight limit restriction
- Update West Street Car park/Allotment subsidence
- Update Footpath to Seaview Terrace
- Traffic Evaluation Working Group

Meeting closed at 8.07pm

Signed..... *O. S. West*

Date..... *23.6.22*

*O. S. West*