

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting**  
**held on Monday 13 February 2023 at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllr Campbell, Cllr Irven, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Moss, Cllr Richards, Cllr Terret, Cllr Westcott and Cllr Whetlor

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

Before the commencement of the meeting two members of the public who had given notice to address the Council during the Public Participation session, spoke on the impact the closure of the B3191 is having on trade in the town. A statement was forwarded onto the Clerk for the Council to address.

**23/106** To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1)- Cllr Campbell proposed that '**apologies from Cllrs Ellwood, Johnson, Summers and Ward are accepted**'. Seconded by Cllr Terret. Carried. Apologies from County Cllrs Davies and Woods were noted for the record.

**23/107** 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 Cllrs Irven	All items 23/113a	Watchet ward member Member of FOSL and WLF	Personal Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.
Cllr Murphy	23/109(ii)	Trustee of the Market House Museum	Personal	
	23/113a	Member of FOSL and WLF		

**23/108** **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 9 January 2023- (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))  
Cllr Campbell proposed that '**The minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 January 2023 are approved as a true and correct record.**' Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried with 7 votes for and 1 abstention.

**23/109** (i) **Chairman's Report:** – verbal

- Attended Somerset County Council Chair's Awards for Service to the Community on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at Taunton Rugby Club, accompanied by the Councils nominee, Marlene Mason on behalf of the Quantock Foodbank. It was a very successful event.
- Attended a photo shoot with members of the Esplanade Club for the re-siting of the defibrillator machine on the outside wall of the club. The Chair attended as the Town Council had contributed £350 towards the new outer cabinet.

(ii) **Clerks Report-update on previous matters:**

- The Market House Museum is seeking accreditation and have been advised by the SW Heritage Trust the following: *SW Heritage Trust has advised that in their review of the last Forward Plan that the attempt to keep an open dialogue with the landlord is demonstrated. The clerk has sent the following report to the Market Museum Chair 'the Town Council which holds the lease, started negotiations for a new long-term lease on 12 December 2018 after a request by the Market House Museum Committee to intervene as the lease expired in September 2018 and a renewal was not forthcoming. The Town Council was working towards a lease renewal being in place by 31 December 2018 for a lease of 25 years.*



The Town Council has tried to keep regular and open communication with the landlord, with the last correspondence dated 26 October 2022, where the agent for the Landlord informed the Town Council that they had been advised by their current solicitors that due to the age of the original lease that we can't simply provide a minute of agreement or deed of variation to reflect the proposed new term to the lease. A new lease will have to be drafted at the landlord's cost, and they are seeking alternative advice in connection with this and hope to be back to you later next week (3 November 2022). There has not been a follow up email to date. The Clerk has chased this up as a matter of urgency on 8 February 2023.

A long discussion ensued whereby Cllr Richards proposed that '**the Town Council agree to pay the cost of £1,500 for a new 12 year lease based on an annual rent of £455 per annum**'. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried with 6 votes for and 2 abstentions.

- Since contacting several interested parties i.e., Marina and West Somerset Railway (WSR) to enquire if they would consider a financial contribution towards the excessive quotation from ADT of £5,727.97, which has probably expired, and forwarded on by SW&T Council, no responses have been received. Cllr Irven interjected and referred to a paper he had asked the Clerk to circulate in advance of the meeting from the WSR relating to potential discussions with the developers of the former Mill Site regarding mitigation to make the pedestrian railway crossing safe and to explore further the reinstatement of the CCTV- camera 8, which will include the cost of a new camera, ongoing maintenance and the cost of who monitors the system. After a brief discussion, Cllr Irven proposed that '**delegation is given to the Clerk to explore this matter further with SW&T Council and the developer, together with the potential of the Town Council contributing in the short term a sum of up to £3,000 to reinstate camera 8**'. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.
- a. **Local Community Networks-** Clerk has been attending fortnightly remote meetings for Clerks with Alyn Jones, SCC Lead. There is a lot of information to collate, so unfortunately this matter will have to be deferred as my report is not completed. So noted.
- b. **Decoration of the Town Clock** – quotation circulated via **Appendix 2b** the Clerk reported that she had been working with the Operations Assistant for the last 12 months to fix the town clock and this is proving challenging as there is a fault with the internal mechanism, which we are trying to find a solution to. This aside, pre- covid, a request from the occupier of 5 Swain Street was received to redecorate the clock house and a quotation was sought. This has now been raised again by several residents, so the decorator was contacted, and he has honoured his quotation from that date. The quotation should therefore be considered for approval. A brief discussion ensued, whereby Cllr Irven proposed that '**delegation is given to the Clerk to seek quotes from a clock specialist in an attempt to have the clock in full working order in time for the Kings Coronation, together with the approval of the quote of £492 for redecoration**'. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

#### 23/110 Reports from the Principal Authority Members:

- Reports from County Cllrs Davies and Woods were circulated prior to the meeting and were noted by members.
- District Cllr Whetlor submitted a report which was circulated to members prior to the meeting, she commented on the following:
  - (i) Attended the New Somerset Council Constitution and asked how Planning will operate under the new authority, other Parish Councillors and the CPRE had raised the same query. As a result, this matter will be revisited on the 14 February 2023 where it is hoped that some changes will be made, an accompanying report relating to Planning matters had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.
  - (ii) As Chair of the Task & Finish Group for Public Transport along with Marcus Prouse, Scrutiny Support Officer, a report was presented which will be addressed by SW&T Council Executive on the 15 February with a recommendation for the Executive to consider its contents.

#### Questions from the floor:

**Cllr Murphy asked:** with reference to County Cllr Woods report outlining the Directors for the Unitary Authority, can a letter of congratulations from the Town Council be sent to Chris Hall, in his new role of Executive Director- Community Services and Mickey Green, new role of Executive Director- Climate and Place.

**Cllr Murphy asked:** with reference to District Cllr Whetlor's report, could a copy of the report presented by the Task & Finish Group for Public Transport be circulated after the Executive meeting.

**District Cllr Whetlor responded:** She would arrange this.



**23/111 Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions**

- Cllr Irven as the Council representative on the '**Quantock Foodbank**' circulated a report prior to the meeting summarising an activity report which had been presented with graphical data to a recent Trustees meeting outlining the total number of food parcels distributed since its formation in 2019 being 15,000. What is significant is that demand in 2022 has now doubled again as a direct result of the cost of living crisis but also demonstrates how crucial the Food Bank, Food Pantry and mobile pantry is in meeting an ongoing need in Watchet.
- Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on '**WACET**' reported that a meeting had been arranged for Wednesday 15 February to address concerns raised by traders following the closure of the B3191 and the impact on trade, he would be attending. He concluded that it was very unfortunate that banners installed on the railway bridge by WACET had been stolen.
- Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on the '**WCCT**' reported 4 members recently attended a get together with other recipients of the 'Place, Based Social Action' funding to compare notes. The next members meeting will be held in the Phoenix Centre on Tuesday 21 March at 7.00pm.
- Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on the '**Harbour Advisory Committee**' had circulated a report of a remote meeting which had been called by the Chair in response to an offer by Chris Odling Smee (Marine Group) to respond to points made in several emails from John Richards, WACET Chair. The emails made various allegations about the financial position of the Marine Group, of which the Marine Group comprehensively refuted, and also raised points about the failure of SW&T Council to consult with the Committee about changes to the lease as required under the Harbour Revision Order. SW&T Council also refuted the allegations, claiming that there had been a discussion of the new lease at the September 2022 meeting of the Committee.
- Cllr Whetlor as the Council representative on the '**Market House Museum**' circulated a report prior to the meeting with the main topic being the lease renewal. The AGM will be held in the Methodist Schoolroom on the 8 March 2023.

**23/112 Verbal reports from sub-committees, working groups, and other outside organisations, where Watchet Town Council does not have representation:** (Notification to the Clerk prior to the meeting) – no notifications given.

**23/113 Reports from Working Groups:** *any relevant paperwork will be issued prior to the meeting.*

- a. **Watchet Library** – Cllr Irven reported that although the group had not met, there were plans afoot to organise an event to commemorate 70 years of the Library.
- b. **Wheeled Park** – in the absence of Cllr Ellwood, the Clerk presented the attached notes of the wheeled park second public consultation event held on the 25 January 2023, hosted by Maverick Skateparks. The Clerk also presented the final designs to members at the meeting for their information. After a brief discussion, Cllr Richards proposed that '**the final designs are approved and the planning stage progressed**'. Seconded by Cllr Terret. Carried with 7 votes for and 1 abstention.
- c. **Climate Change** – no update as the group has not met.
- d. **Kings Coronation** – the group has met briefly, and a report and recommendations will be presented at the Recreation & Tourism Meeting held on 23 February 2023.

**23/114 Councillors Surgery – update report by Cllrs Summers and Whetlor as the Councillors in attendance at the surgery held on Saturday 3 February 2023 - The Councillors surgery on Saturday 4 February was successful.**

- Two traders attended on behalf of the shopkeepers who are struggling to maintain their businesses due to the closure of the B3191. This is a desperate dilemma for these people. We are in danger of losing some businesses if the road closure is as lengthy as is being stated. They cannot survive. The diversion of the free EDF bus was discussed at some length, and it was suggested that County Councillor Davies is contacted and asked to investigate this. It was suggested by members, that the traders approach the Town Clerk to speak in the public session of the Full Town Council meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023, so that their concerns can be raised, and the Town Council made aware. Cllr Whetlor discussed with them an email she had written to Cllr Mike Rigby at Unitary/District regarding the closure and some ideas that she had put forward. This will be reported in Cllr Whetlor's District Report on Monday.
- Another member of public voiced his concerns regarding potholes near the level crossing at Goviers Lane. He had some photos which we asked him to forward to the Town Clerk. We discussed other areas in Watchet where there were more potholes and advised that we would bring this to the attention of the Environment and Planning committee. He also made reference

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to the road closure, and we advised that the Town Council were in discussions with SW&T Council and that the public would be made aware of any further reports as soon as they were available.

It was agreed that an update from the surgeries are posted on the Councils face book page each month together with an attendance register.

The Chair thanked Cllrs Summers and Whetlor for their report.

- 23/115 Matters of Correspondence for report** – correspondence is addressed on a daily basis and filed- *The Clerk will report any relevant correspondence.*
- 23/116 Accounts for payment** - to approve the January schedule for payment in February. Cllr Campbell proposed that ***'the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid.'*** Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried with 7 votes for and 1 abstention.
- 23/117 How to manage a recent complaint-** *Clerk will update members at the meeting* – at this point Cllr Campbell proposed that ***'due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, Standing Order (1d) is invoked, and the public are instructed to withdraw'***. Seconded by Cllr Terret. Carried.

Please see Excluded notes **23/07EX**

The Clerk had received 5 written complaints and 1 verbal complaint from Councillors and 1 written complaint from a member of the public regarding a Town Councillors recent conduct. The Chair had used her discretion to exclude the public from this matter, as information of a sensitive nature would be disclosed.

Cllr Campbell proposed the ***'re-admittance of the public to the meeting'***. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.

- 23/118** To note **Matters for the next meeting** – no discussion or decisions made.
- Liaise with the Clerk

Meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed: ..... *L. A. Whetlor* .....

Dated: ..... *13<sup>th</sup> March 2023* .....