

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

Present: Cllr Ellwood, Cllr Irven, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Moss, Cllr Richards, Cllr Terrett, Cllr Westcott and Cllr Whetlor

In attendance: Sarah Reed, Town Clerk, County Cllr Woods

In the absence of Cllr Campbell, Chair of Council, Cllr Whetlor, Vice- Chair presided over the meeting.

- 23/119** To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1)- Cllr Whetlor proposed that '**apologies from Cllrs Campbell, Summers and Ward are accepted**'. Seconded by Cllr Terrett. Carried. Apologies from County Cllrs Davies were noted for the record.

- 23/120** 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	All items	Watchet ward member	Personal	
Cllrs Irven & Murphy	23/126a	Member of FOSL and WLF	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.

- 23/121** **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 13 February 2023- (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))
Cllr Murphy proposed that '**The minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 February 2023 are approved as a true and correct record with amendments.**' Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried with 8 votes for and 1 abstention.

- 23/122** (i) **Chairman's Report:** – no report

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

- a. **The Market House Museum Lease** - email and letter sent 16 February 2023

Thank you for your email. Please find attached a formal request by the Town Council to seek a 12-year lease, with the £1,500 legal costs to be borne by the tenant, based on annual rent of £455. Please update me after you have taken the proposal to the Trustees meeting on the 24 February 2023.

Chased up on 6 and 9 February as yet, no response received.

- b. **Reinstatement of camera 8- CCTV** The report considered by members at the last meeting relating to the WSR pedestrian crossing and the potential of Tameer Homes contributing to a new CCTV system was communicated to a SW&T Council Officer, who put the Clerk in contact with a Sedgemoor Officer who has CCTV under his remit.

RESPONSE:

We are in a position whereby as a service we are looking to move forwards with improving the CCTV system in West Somerset. This process is likely to start around April as we become a unitary authority and we also have several ongoing projects to oversee prior to then. I would need to familiarise myself with the locations, as would my team and we are looking this as we speak.



My first questions would be, do you know how long the development is likely to take? And is there a column already in place? If the column is there, as Scott has mentioned, we could potentially put a camera in on a temporary basis and get it working for a minimal cost (depending on the infrastructure in place). This would not be a long-term plan though. If we can establish what is already in place, I could come up with a cost.

Without doubt the best long-term option would be to get the developers to put a new camera in, which most will agree to when they look at the bigger picture of profits etc, in comparison the cost of CCTV is minimal. We can quote for this, but to give you a rough idea, a new camera is £2500, a column is approximately £7000 and there would then be BT costs which can all vary. If a column isn't needed this would of course reduce the costs dramatically.

Action:

The Clerk has sent a photo of the camera pole that is still in situ which used to house camera 8 and is awaiting a response on any progress.

RESPONSE:

The procedure itself is straightforward providing the relevant cabling is still situated within the column. We have cameras available also. The issue preventing me from being able to give you a date or time is the fact that I cannot do this until we have taken over the system.

In order to do this, we need to be able to bring all footage back to Bridgwater House so that we are able to access and monitor all the cameras. Until that point, I can't instruct our engineers to install a camera on a system that is not ours or controlled by us.

This process is underway, with funding available but will not happen before April when we become one authority as we have a number of outstanding jobs bringing together and upgrading our current system in the lead up to local government reformation.

Report on Local Community Networks (LCN's) – report circulated via **Appendix 2** giving a background to the formation of the network groups including the resolutions passed. The Clerk has been attending fortnightly remote meetings facilitated by the Local Government Reorganisation Programme (LGR) and led by the LGR Programme Director Alyn Jones.

The LGR are working hard on service delivery for the new council, but have emphasised for continuity purposes, very little will change within 12 months from the vesting day of the 1 April 2023, regarding Planning and other officer contacts for our district. It is only the senior level of officers/directors for the new council who have been appointed at this stage.

The LGR programme led by Alyn Jones has held remote meetings with Clerks and some Councillors who wished to attend to keep an open dialogue and address any queries or concerns that Parish/Town Councils have raised and will continue to raise. This has been a very informative process and will continue after vesting day.

Progress to date:

The LGR Implementation Board was set up and held its first meeting in August 2022. The purpose of the Board is to meet every 6 weeks and its terms of reference is to deliver an implementation plan in relation to:

- Community Governance
- Risk update
- Local Community Networks
- Review strategic objectives to keep the plan fit for purpose.

At a meeting held on 27 September 2022, the Implementation Board resolved:

- Endorsed the emerging phases to create the LCN's
- Endorsed an approach to engagement and consultation on the LCN's
- Approved the setting up of a LCN working group, whose findings will be reported to the LGR Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Board

At a meeting of the Executive Committee (SCC) on 16 November 2022 it considered and agreed several recommendations and principles relating to further work on the LCN development, including how LCN areas should be drawn up. The recommendations are listed fully in **section 11.1 Background** (attached) which outlines recommendations relating to function, form, and financing, (resourcing) to enable the implementation of arrangements for LCN's.



At a meeting of the Executive Committee (SCC) on 18 January 2023, the attached decisions were approved, and the accompanying paperwork is attached for your information.

With reference to decision 5 – it has been noted that resources across 5 areas is costly, and it is envisioned that the 300K has been allocated to get the LCN's started and over the line, and there will be other resources available in the future.

23/123 Reports from the Principal Authority Members:

- Reports from County Cllrs Davies was circulated prior to the meeting and was noted by members.
- A report from County Cllr Woods was circulated prior to the meeting and in the meeting, she made the following comment that she was impressed with the town's efforts to try and resolve the situation concerning the closure of the B3191.
- Cllr Whetlor gave a brief verbal report as follows – recently as we head towards vesting day, meetings have been more about the LGR and the formation of the new 'Somerset Council'. On February 23rd there was a meeting online with SCC Highways regarding the road closure at Cleeve Hill. This was attended by officers from Highways, District and County/Unitary councillors from across West Somerset. Some very good ideas were put forward. District Cllr Whetlor did ask for signage that did not display the words 'no' and 'closure' as these are negatives and we need to promote a positive message that Watchet is still open for business. A meeting has been arranged at the Phoenix Centre on March 23rd from 4-7pm. This is to be a drop-in session where people are invited to go along and give their opinions.

It is now 18 days before vesting day of the new 'Somerset Council'. There seems to be some teething problems with IT, but we are assured that these will be rectified before the 1 April.

I would like to thank Watchet Town Council for inviting me to give my reports at your meetings over the last 4 years. Its strange times we live in when a Council which was created in 2019 meets its demise in 2023.

Finally, it has been my privilege and honour to work on your behalf at District level , and I wish the new Somerset Council well and hope Watchet is looked after in the same way.

Watchet Town Council thanked District Cllr Whetlor for her work on behalf of Watchet.

Questions from the floor. None received.

23/124 Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions

- Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on the '**WCCT**' informed Councillors that there was a members meeting on Tuesday 21 March 2023 at the Phoenix Centre starting at 7pm, all are welcome.
- Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on the '**Harbour Advisory Committee**' had circulated a report prior to the meeting and asked if there were any questions. There were none received. He did comment that it is unclear when the new 'Harbour Board' will meet.

23/125 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.

23/126 Reports from Working Groups: *any relevant paperwork will be issued prior to the meeting.*

- Watchet Library** – Cllr Irven reminded those in attendance of the Library Re-dedication ceremony to be held on Friday 5 May 2023 from 3.30pm-5.00pm.
- Wheeled Park** – nothing to report.
- Climate Change** – no update as the group has not met.
- Kings Coronation** – Cllr Whetlor reported that she had met briefly with the working group and the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting gave an outline of the work undertaken to date. After a brief discussion Cllr Terrett proposed that the '**total costs for the commemorative gifts to be presented to the school children are approved at £877.89**'. Seconded by Cllr Moss. Carried with 8 votes for and 1 abstention. Cllr Whetlor concluded that she would like a note of thanks recorded to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for their hard work to date.

District Cllr Aldridge arrived at the meeting at 7.20pm.

e. **Watchet Task Force**

Cllr Murphy reported that the Watchet Task Force (WTF) met on Thursday 2 March and the notes, together with a subsequent press release, are tabled separately.

There was a WACET meeting held on Wednesday 8 March where the Council was represented by Cllr Campbell, deputising for Cllr Murphy, the representative to WACET, and by Cllr Terrett, Chair of the WTF upon invitation by John Richards, chair of WACET.

As a result of the above meetings, Council is asked to consider the following recommendations:

- 1 **Cllr Irven be asked to contact West Somerset Railway to discuss the possibility of enhancing the service from Blue Anchor to Watchet, perhaps through the introduction of a reduced fare promotion for that journey.** Proposed by Cllr Murphy and seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried with 8 votes for and 1 abstention.
- 2 **Somerset West and Taunton Council and Somerset County Council be approached to consider closing off the entrance to Swain Street car park from Swain Street initially on a temporary basis. The purpose would be to create an unloading bay for lorries in the space now occupied by the entrance road. This would be an initial move to enhance the separation of vehicles from pedestrians in the high street.** Proposed by Cllr Murphy and seconded by Cllr Moss. Carried with 8 votes for and 1 vote against.
- 3 **Cllr Terrett and Fiona Payne be asked to continue their initial work to prepare signage and explore locations in conjunction with WACET to better inform traffic about the attractions of Watchet.** Proposed by Cllr Murphy and seconded by Cllr Johnson. Carried.
- 4 **Council to pursue the other suggestions from the meetings including ideas about a transport service for residents (and visitors) to the west of Watchet to bring them into the town.** Noted and agreed.
- 5 **Cllr Whetlor be asked to research and provide a report to the R & T Committee to enhance floral displays in the season.** Proposed by Cllr Johnson and seconded by Cllr Moss. Carried.
- 6 **That Council create a Road Closure Projects earmarked reserve of £15,000. This reserve to be accessed upon the recommendation of full council or its committees or by the clerk using her delegation and advised by the Council representatives to the RCTF.** Proposed by Cllr Irven and seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.
- 7 **That the Clerk, advised by the Council representatives to the RCTF, be delegated to pursue other research suggested by the RCTF as from time to time seems prudent.** Noted and agreed.
- 8 **The Council is represented at the Somerset County Council Highways drop in at the Phoenix Centre on Thursday 23 March, 4 - 7pm. (NB R & T Committee commences at 6pm and E & P Committee commences at 6.45pm)-** noted that anyone can attend.
- 9 **The Council holds a formal conversation with the owners of the former Mill site to explore parking facilities and costs on the site during the tourist season.** Proposed by Cllr Richards and seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried

County Cllr Woods left the meeting at 8.13pm.

At this point, the Chair invited District Cllr Aldridge to speak to the meeting. He commented that he had attended his last meeting as a District Councillor, and it had been an honour and a privilege to represent the Watchet ward with fellow Councillors Davies and Whetlor. He concluded by wishing County Cllrs Davies and Woods good luck with the continuation of looking after Watchet's interests.

The Chair thanked District Cllr Aldridge from Watchet Town Council.

District Cllr Aldridge left the meeting at 8.35pm

23/127 Councillors Surgery – update report by Cllrs Campbell and Whetlor as the Councillors in attendance at the surgery held on Saturday 3 March 2023 –

Three visitors on the day

1. A local gentleman, unfortunately was unhappy with everything.
2. Peter Jackson who came in to update us on potholes on crossing stated that they have been repaired by persons unknown. He also mentioned the state of Church Fields path. He asked us to report this. We have been given photos.



3. Helen Chave who with her husband Roy manages The Esplanade Club handed us a petition signed by traders, residents and businesspeople in the town. We agreed to present the petition at Full Council. The petition was noted.

23/128 Matters of Correspondence for report – correspondence is addressed on a daily basis and filed-
The Clerk will report any relevant correspondence.

23/129 Accounts for payment - to approve the February schedule for payment in March. Cllr Whetlor proposed that **'the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid.'** Seconded by Cllr Ellwood. Carried.

23/130 To note Matters for the next meeting – no discussion or decisions made.
• Liaise with the Clerk

Meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed: 

Dated: 17/4/23