

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

Present: Cllr Brake, Cllr Campbell (Chair), Cllr Ellwood, Cllr Irven, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Moss, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Richards, Cllr Summers, Cllr Terrett, Cllr Westcott and Cllr Whetlor.

In attendance: Sarah Reed, Town Clerk, Somerset Cllr Davies, Jo Grellier, Deputy Clerk, 9 members of the public & Press

Before the meeting commenced, a member of the public having given to notice to speak during the public participation section, made a statement relating to agenda item 23/81.

Cllr Campbell as Chair proposed that ***'the order of business on the agenda is changed and agenda item 23/81 is considered after 23/73'***. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

23/71 To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1))- **none received**.

23/72 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	23/78a	Member of WLF	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.
Cllrs Irven & Murphy	23/78a	Member of FOSL and WLF,	Personal	
Cllrs Johnson, Murphy & Whetlor	23/74 (1)	Trustees, Market House Museum	Personal	
Cllrs Irven & Murphy & Summers	23/82(i)	Directors of WCCT	Personal	

23/73 **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 9 October 2023- (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1))
Cllr Campbell proposed that ***'The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 9 October 2023 are approved as a true and correct record.'*** Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried. with 9 votes for and 3 abstentions.

23/81 **Current untenable situation with Watchet Marina – report circulated from Cllr Richards via Appendix 4-** the Chair asked Cllr Richards to summarise his report, whereby he gave his view on the current situation and asked the Council to support the Watchet people who have had enough by approving a no confidence vote in the Marine Group to run an effective marina. Before considering the proposals outlined in the report, members were invited to give their views. Cllr Whetlor in her capacity as Council representative on the Watchet Harbour Advisory Committee (WHAC) and Chair of WHAC, proceeded to read out a statement outlining the position of WHAC who do not share the view of Cllr Richards on this matter. She continued to clarify the current position by reading a statement formulated by Somerset Council, and the Marine Group giving assurances that all of the concerns raised will be addressed, but the lease is subject to a refinancing process of which the Marine Group has no direct control of time. However, progress is now well advanced, and the confirmation of timescales will be shared in due course. A long discussion ensued whereby Cllr Irven proposed that ***'the Council are not prepared to accept the report presented by Cllr Richards in its current form but do support the scheduling of a meeting between Watchet Town Council, Somerset Council Officers, the Marine Group and WHAC to address both sides of the argument and formulate a way forward***

prior to any new discussions being made with regard to the lease'. Carried with 8 votes for, 2 votes against and 2 abstentions.

7 members of the public and the press left at 7.40pm.

23/74

Chairman's Report:

- Cllr Whetlor, Deputy Mayor stepped in to represent the Council and laid a wreath on behalf of the Town Council and the community for the fallen of Watchet at the Service of Remembrance on 11 November 2023 at 11.00am. She also attended St Decumans Church on 12 November at 10.45am to lay a wreath on behalf of the Parish of St Decumans and parishioners for the fallen of Watchet and paraded at 2.45pm, in the company of other councillors and townsfolk in memory of the fallen in Watchet.
- Highways officer dealing with flood management has requested a meeting with the Chair under her capacity as the Flood Warden to have a walk about town to highlight risk areas.

Clerks Report:

- (i) **Lease for the Market House Museum** – the Market House Museum Committee has reviewed the lease and expressed the following wishes, of which I have forwarded onto the Councils Solicitors as follows:
- The Market House Museum Committee has reviewed the draft lease and are happy for the Council to sign it, as are the Town Council however, the address of the Town Council is no longer Council Chamber, Swain Street and needs to be changed to: Watchet Visitor Centre, Harbour Road, Watchet, TA23 0AQ.*
- The Committee has expressed the request for the term of the lease to be longer than the 10 years on offer, as it has taken 3 years to get here, so we wondered if you could enquire with Foot Anstey, if this is a possibility, but there is no wish to hold things up to address this request, and no more budget can be allocated to this.*
- In discussion, the Committee also expressed the view that Council may wish to put in place some sort of letter of understanding (or some such document) to give security to the Museum Committee that they would continue to pay the rent and discharge the Council's responsibilities under the lease. Could you please advise on whether this is needed or not? Just want to cover all bases, as this has been a long journey to get here. If its not necessary, this is fine and I can report back to Council on this. If Foot Anstey could produce the lease with a changed address and a longer term, (we know this may not be possible) the Proper Officer will sign it.*
- (ii) **Assets – Front Office:**
- I have contacted the three valuers recommended by Somerset Council:
- Greenslade Taylor Hunt – I sent a scaled plan of the area as they have worked with the Council when the new offices were built and are fully aware of the area. They have valued it on square footage as between £15,000-£17,000. I have this valuation in an email, but if the Council want a more detailed report (not a full spec), this will cost £500.
 - Vickery Holman – can do a full spec valuation including site visit for £1,500 (this may be required as a professional valuation for comparison purposes with Onion Collectives valuation).
 - Alder King – declined to do a valuation.

The Chair of Assets has been in contact with the District Independent Valuers office and is currently trying to seek a comparable valuation.

Recommendation:

To appoint a mutually acceptable independent valuer (acceptable to both WTC and OC) to undertake a full spec onsite valuation of the front office at a budget of up to £1,500 and the Clerk in liaison with the Chair of Assets present a report at a future Council meeting'.

Cllr Irven proposed that ***'the recommendation is accepted'***. Seconded by Cllr Summers. Carried.

(iii) **Somerset Council Disposal of Assets Policy:** SLCC has challenged some areas of the draft policy and I wanted to make you aware of these. However, this has moved on quickly and all the suggested changes were incorporated into the final policy, so there is little point in noting them, as the policy has now been adopted on 8 November by Somerset Council, and the adopted copy is to be noted by the Asset Committee at their meeting in November, together with the letter from the Leader of Council. When recommendations from Assets come forward in a future meeting, all Council members will be furnished with a copy, so they are fully briefed.

(iv) **Scam** – the Clerk was saddened to report that the Council has fallen foul of a scam for the purchase of a grounds trailer for the sum of £1,950. The Clerk and Grounds man are following many avenues with Action/ Fraud, Trading Standards and the Councils bankers and insurers to recover the

goods or the funds. From this discussion came the following proposal from Cllr Murphy '**Finance & Staffing Committee to seek an urgent review of Financial Regulations to ensure all financial safeguards are in place to prevent this occurring again on the future**'. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried.

23/75 Reports from the Principal Authority Members:

Members noted the generic report from Somerset Cllr Woods.

Report from Somerset Cllr Davies was circulated prior to the meeting and noted. He highlighted the following matters:

- LGA Independent Group announced that households flooded between 17 October and 16 November can apply for £500-£1,000 and 3 months rate relief. Small businesses can apply for £2,500 from the Business Recovery Grant and up to £5,000 is available to make homes and businesses more resilient in future under the property flood resilience repair scheme.
- Briefly mentioned the press release 'Unitary Council steps up response to financial emergency' – stating that the District Councils who formed the Unitary must take some financial responsibility for the financial state as their debts were taken on in good faith. He concluded by asking members to be patient and supportive.

Questions from the floor: none

The Chair thanked Somerset Cllr Davies for his report.

23/76 Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions

(i) To consider the appointment of a representative on the Knights templar Swimming Pool Committee – Cllr Whetlor proposed that '**Cllr Terrett is appointed**'. Seconded by Cllr Brake. Carried.

- Cllr Irven as the Council representative on the '**Local Community Networks** – (report circulated prior to the meeting) - reported that a meeting was held on 19 October 2023. Attendees were split into groups and asked to work through the themes that had been identified as areas of priority at the inaugural meeting. There were 11 topic areas in no priority order. Attendees were then asked in turn to rank their top 3 highest priorities. There was some difficulty in communication at this point and as a result the facilitator agreed to collate the priorities and report back on these at the next meeting.
- Cllr Summers as the Council representative on the '**Dementia Action Alliance**' (update report from the Lead Person had been circulated prior to the meeting) – Cllr Summers summarised the report as follows: concerns have been raised following the withdrawal of funding to Dementia Friendly Communities from the Alzheimer's Society and ways will have to be looked at on how to meet the shortfall. The acting treasurer reported on the financial situation and how the group relies on donations, fundraising and occasional grants. Thanks, were given to the Town Council in permitting the free use of a stall at the Wednesday market in Dementia Action week each May. There were discussions on future activities such as a memory walk, and a tea dance during Dementia Action week, but these would require funding.
- Cllr Whetlor as the Council representative on '**SALC**' reported that the CEO has resigned from his post to move onto pastures new. At a recent Board meeting it was agreed that she will become the Deputy Chair until the AGM which is on the 2 December. At the AGM the board will vote in a new Chair and Vice Chair. Also, at the AGM Cllr Whetlor will be re-appointed as a Director of SALC Limited as the Directors are uncontested.
- Cllr Whetlor as the Council representative on the '**Plastic Free Watchet Steering Group**' - reported that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2023 were circulated prior to the meeting, together with the notes from the Community Leads meeting held on 16 October. Cllr Whetlor asked if there were any questions from members, there were none.
- Cllr Campbell as the Council representative on the '**Watchet Conservation Society**' stated that there was not very much to report, the recent meeting discussed the minutes of the AGM and amendments, but the Society continues to do great work in the community.

The Chair thanked all representatives for their reports.

23/77 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 received.

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

- a. **Watchet Library** – the notes from the CLP meeting held on 26 October were circulated prior to the meeting, Cllr Whetlor had attended the CLP event at Taunton Library, when the minutes are issued, the Clerk will circulate them.
- b. **Wheeled Park** – Cllr Ellwood circulated a report prior to the meeting and summarised the main points as follows:
To enable the project to access a larger range of grants, it may be necessary for the Council to set up a Wheeled Park Working Group within an already established community group, that will then be disbanded upon the delivery of the Wheeled Park. Suggestions from members for suitable groups would be welcomed. If any groups are interested in partnering with the Council for this project, a discussion with the Full Council on which community group is most appropriate will take place before establishing a working group. Cllr Ellwood proposed that ***'that members approve for the council to invite local organisations to consider the forming of a Wheeled Park Working Group'***. Seconded by Cllr Terrett. Carried.
- c. **Climate Change** - no update
- d. **Watchet Task Force** – Cllr Murphy reported that WTF met on Monday 13 November and an update report had been circulated prior to the meeting, which was summarised as follows:

- The red sign which was obscuring the directional sign on the approach to the town has been removed.
- No through road signs on the Brendon Road either side of the bridge have been agreed with supplementary wording in similar format to the sign outside no8 Market Street which say: "No access to Blue Anchor or camping / caravan sites".
- A date is awaited from the contractor for work to start on the realignment of the road at The Cross.
- Four "bids" for the Urban Design work in the Action Plan have been received and WTF will conduct an evaluation of them prior to recommending one to Council.
- A PR had now been agreed following the meeting with the MP, SC and WTF facilitated by Watchet Coastal Community Team.
- Two further bids for "New Event" funding were discussed and welcomed. They were referred back for reformulating and further information.
- Noted WACET contribution of £500 towards Social Media work now received by Watchet Town Council.

Cllr Murphy proposed that ***'the two recommendations are approved'***.

1. ***Watchet Town Council are asked to support the installation of up to two webcams on the Visitor Centre building which would provide live streams of activity on the West Somerset Railway. The running costs and Wi-Fi would be borne by Onion Collective. The Council are asked to allocate a budget of up to 2K from the road closure mitigation earmarked reserve.***
2. ***Refer wording "No access to Blue Anchor or camping / caravan sites" mentioned in the second bullet point above, to E&P with recommendation to sign off.***

Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried with 6 votes for and 3 abstentions.

- e. **EH&S Policies** – report circulated prior to the meeting- Cllr Irven reported that the working group met on the 7 November to discuss a plan to review and update where necessary current EH&S policies, procedures and risk assessments, which will be adopted at a future Council meeting.

23/79 Councillor Surgeries – update report by Cllrs Campbell and Moss who attended the Surgery held on Saturday 4 November 2023 with 5 attendees:

- Property privacy laws discussed.
- Resident suggested an alternative route for the B1391- this was referred to the Environment & Planning Committee via the Watchet Task Force.
- Concerns raised over the removal of a 'dressing' of a grave- this had been addressed by the Assets Committee.
- Concern raised over the rumours of the removal of the 28-bus service- advised that whilst there may be a reduction in the frequency, the service will not be withdrawn.
- Request for a dog waste bin at the top of Liddymore Road – this is under the remit of Somerset Council and this request would be forwarded on.

- 23/80 **Review of 'Terms of Reference' for Committees – report circulated via Appendix 3-**
The discussion revolved around the recommendation to disband the Recreation & Tourism Committee and incorporate its responsibilities into the remit of existing Council Committees. Members expressed their views on this. Cllr Richards proposed that **'the Committee is retained until the Annual Council Meeting in May 2025, whereby terms of reference of Committees can be reviewed and if agreed the Committee disbanded'**. Seconded by Cllr Moss. Carried with 6 votes for, 2 votes against and 4 abstentions.

Deputy Clerk left the meeting at 9.00pm.

- 23/82 **Community Ownership Fund:**
(i) Potential bid by Watchet Town Council (WTC) and Watchet War Memorial Ground Management Committee (WWMGMC)– Cllr Irven reported that a meeting with an advisor had been arranged on Tuesday 14 November, to assess whether the Town Council qualified for enhanced support in compiling their funding application. Representatives from WWMGMC and Cllrs Irven and Campbell would be in attendance.

- 23/83 **Matters of correspondence for Report** – Correspondence is addressed daily and filed. *The Clerk will report any relevant correspondence.* The Clerk brought to the attention a letter from the Watchet & Williton 5G Safety Committee. It was agreed that the request to present at a meeting would be referred to the Environment & Planning Committee.

- 23/84 **Accounts for payment** - to approve the October schedule (paid in November).
Cllr Richards proposed that **'the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid.'**
Seconded by Cllr Terrett. Carried.

- 23/85 To note **Matters for the next meeting** – no discussion or decisions made.

- 23/86 **Exclusion of the public:**
"That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw" (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

Cllr Campbell proposed that **'due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, Standing Order (1d) is invoked, and the public and press are instructed to withdraw'**. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.

Somerset Cllr Davies and 2 members of the public left the meeting at 9.12pm

- 23/87 **Update and recommendations from the Personnel Committee:**
(i) To note the appointment of the Town Clerk & RFO- congratulations were given to Jo Grellier, Deputy Clerk on her new appointment.
(ii) To approve the employment pack for the Deputy Clerk's position – *circulated via Appendix 6-* so approved.

See Excluded notes 23/17EX

Meeting closed at 9.19pm

Signed: L. A. Whetley

Dated: 4th December 2023