

**Minutes of Full Council Meeting  
held on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7.00pm**

**Present:** Cllr Brake, Cllr Campbell (Chair), Cllr Irven, Cllr Moss, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Richards, Cllr Terrett, and Cllr Westcott

**In attendance:** Jo Grellier - Town Clerk, 1 member of the Public

24/102 To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1) –  
Cllr Campbell proposed that **'Apologies given by Cllr Whetlor & County Cllr Davies are accepted'**.  
Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried

24/103 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
Cllrs Irven & Murphy	24/109a	Members of FOSL & WLF	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting
Cllrs Irven & Murphy	24/111	Directors of WCCT	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting

24/104 **Town Council Minutes** - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 4 December 2023 (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1) *circulated prior to the meeting via Appendix 1*  
Cllr Moss proposed that **'the Full Council minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 meeting are a true and accurate record'**. Seconded by Cllr Brake. Carried with 3 abstentions.

24/105 **Reports:**

- Chair- verbal

Cllr Campbell as Chair gave the following verbal report:

- Saddened by the news of the sad passing of Cllr Summers, a very valued member of the Council. Funeral plans are in progress and the Council will be updated when confirmation of the date and time is given.
- Cllr Ellwood has resigned from Council. Her contribution to the Council, especially the Skate Park project will be missed. The Chair read out the following farewell statement from Cllr Ellwood:

***Happy New Year to you all.***

***I wanted to send a quick message because my decision to leave the council came quite quickly and over the busy Christmas period so I wasn't able to offer any explanation or goodbyes. My reason for leaving is purely practical: both my children now have sports clubs they attend on Monday evenings in different towns which clash with town council meetings. So I wanted to say thank you to council members and staff for years of support and learning opportunities since I joined in 2019. It has been an honour to work for Watchet alongside so many dedicated and knowledgeable people and I'm sorry I can't continue my role with the council at this time.***

***Wishing you all the best for 2024***



- The Chair hopes that Cllr Ellwood will consider taking up the role as Councillor again in the future.
- The Clerk will be advertising the two new Councillor vacancies within the next two weeks.
- The Council held a retirement send off for Sarah Reed, where cards and gifts were given to show our appreciation for the 20-year service given. Later in the week there was an unveiling of her name on the floral boat at the top of Brendon Road. Sarah's expertise and experience will be missed. We welcome the new Clerk, Jo Grellier, into the role and will be here to support her.
- The replacement Deputy Clerk, Annie Robinson will be joining us from 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024.
- In the absence of Cllr Whetlor, the Chair shared the news that Cllr Whetlor has been appointed as Chair of SALC.

- See Clerks report – See **Appendix 2**

The Clerk gave the following report:

1. Lease for the Market House Museum – *update*  
The lease is completed and due for signature. Members noted the legal fees as follows:
  - Foot Anstey – Solicitors for the Orchard Wyndham Estate - £1500.00
  - Risdon Hosegood – Solicitors acting on behalf of Watchet Town Council - £1500.00
 A total of £3000 spend.
2. Assets- front office – *update and recommendations*  
The Clerk and Chair of Assets are working with the Onion Collective to agree an independent valuer and agree a suitable valuation cost – this is ongoing. The approved Commercial Surveyor from Greenslade Taylor Hunt attended the office today to assess the building and reception area and will be providing a valuation as soon as possible.

The Clerk thanked Council for the opportunity to take on the new position as Town Clerk and hopes she will be able to continue the high standard of operations from the recently retired, Sarah Reed.

#### 24/106 Reports from the Principal Authority Members:

Somerset Council, County Cllr Davies and to receive questions from the floor.  
Members noted the written report from Somerset Cllr Woods circulated to members prior to the meeting.

- Questions to be forwarded to Cllr Woods in writing: **None.**

In the absence of County Cllr Davies, The Clerk reported the following:

- Somerset Council has secured £9.6m of Government funding to deliver phosphate mitigation measures which will unlock the delivery of new homes across the area and provide for long term nature recovery.
- Somerset West Lottery is taking part in a new bolt-on prize draw-the monthly Super Draw with a bumper £1.000 prize. Everyone who signs up to buy one or more tickets between Sunday 24 December 2023 and Saturday 27th January 2024 will be in with a chance to win a £1.000 getaway to the destination of their choice. There is also the option for the lucky winner to choose a £1000 prize cash alternative, courtesy of the external lottery management company Gatherwell. All tickets bought from 24 December to 27 January will automatically be entered into the bonus prize draw as well as being in with a chance to win up to £25.000 in the weekly lottery run by Somerset Council. The Somerset West lottery offers registered good causes the opportunity to raise income for their organisation by selling tickets to members of the public. It gives 50p from every £1 ticket sold to local registered good causes with 10p going into a fund that charities are eligible to apply for.
- Somerset Council has received £1.5m in external funding which could be used to deliver the next phase of a cycling and walking route on the A39 between Carhampton/Minehead. The ring-fenced grant is from Active Travel could see the the route completed if the scheme can be feasibly delivered with minimal disruption. The project would be a huge benefit for school pupils in Carhampton where there is no dedicated cycling provision. The existing shared path has restricted width due to vegetation.
- Somerset residents will soon be able to dispose of some DIY waste free of charge at somerset recycling sites—but they need to book ahead. Following a recent change of legislation, from 1st January 2024 current charges for disposing of construction and demolition materials including asbestos, plasterboard, hardcore and rubble from household DIY projects will be removed.
- Changes to waste collection days are on the way. Look out for your letter is the message from Somerset Council as recycling and rubbish collection days change for more than 120,000 households in Western parts of the county in February 2024. New collection routes are being introduced in the former Sedgemoor/ Somerset West and Taunton areas and small parts of South Somerset. This means many homes in this area will have a change in collection day from the week beginning Monday 12/02/24. Other changes for rest of County later in the year.
- Questions: **None.**

Cllr Westcott wished to acknowledge the sad passing of Eileen Woods and the tremendous work she did for Watchet and Watchet Town Council.

Cllr Murphy concurred with Cllr Westcott's comments adding that Cllr Woods was Chair of Council twice and was awarded an MBE.

Cllr Irven endorsed the comments and acknowledgement made.

Cllr Richards informed Council that the funeral is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024, time to be arranged. He will inform of confirmed details when they have been agreed. Cllr Campbell, as Chair advised she would like to attend.



24/107 **Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations, Verbal – no Decisions**

- (i) To appoint a Council representative on 'Friends of the Flatner'  
Cllr Campbell proposed that **'Cllr Richards is appointed as the new Council representative on The Friends of the Flatner'**. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.
- (ii) To appoint a Council representative on 'Dementia Action Alliance'  
Cllr Irven proposed that **'Cllr Campbell is appointed as the new Council representative on Dementia Action Alliance'**. Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried.

Cllr Richards declared a personal interest in the next item as a member of the WHAC. Cllr Richards remained in the meeting but did not take part in the discussion and abstained from voting.

- (iii) To discuss the membership of the Somerset Council Harbour Management Advisory Committee' – **see Appendix 3**  
A discussion between members took place following a response from Leader of Somerset Council, Bill Revans after a request from WHAC to be considered for a place on the Somerset Council Harbour Management Advisory Committee. Cllr Murphy proposed that **'the Clerk write to the Somerset Council leader requesting that as a harbour Town Statutory body, Watchet Town Council, Bridgwater Council, and Minehead Council be invited to have a seat on Somerset Council Harbour Management Advisory Committee. Contact is made with Minehead & Bridgwater Council to inform them of the action we have taken'**. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried with 1 abstention.

24/108 **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)

- Cllr Terret as the Town Council representative on **'Knights Templar Swimming Pool Committee'** reported the following:
  - Meeting held today, starting to see good progress
  - The effects of COVID and increases in energy costs are threatening swimming pools at all levels. Most swimmers start their swimming journey in small grass-roots pools.
  - Swimming is the only potentially life-saving activity; we are proud to have offered it to our community for the last thirty years.
  - Our pool has been and remains an outstanding success, with a number of former swimmers subsequently competing at County, Regional and National level.
  - Our pool has enabled elderly and disabled to access therapeutic exercise and given local families many hours of healthy exercise in an area devoid of such facilities.
  - Continuous use over the last 30 years has led to some deterioration in the fabric and several pieces of equipment needing repair or replacement. We are keen to ensure our pool can continue to provide this service to ensure that every child and family can continue to access this community resource. For the last 30 years, we have managed to do this without call on outside funding, but now we need some help.
  - Government recognise West Somerset as a deprived area; until recently we were a Rural Development Area and are currently bottom of the Social Mobility index for England. This is compounded by the loss of all industrial employers.
  - Hire charges are reviewed annually and the new on-line booking system has resulted in over £2,000 increase in monthly bookings. The cost of maintaining the fabric and complex machinery can no longer be met purely by the booking fees as fuel costs have continued to rise.
  - The Committee want to engage with WTC and Community Groups
  - Need letters of support that can be used for future funding applications.

Cllr Moss proposed that **'Watchet Town Council approve the submission of a letter of support to help future funding bids'**. Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried.

- Cllr Irven as the Town Council representative on **'Watchet War Memorial Ground Committee'** reported the following:
  - A meeting was held on Friday but he will defer the report and cover it under item 24/111

24/109 **Reports from Working Groups and appointed representatives:** - Any relevant paperwork will be issued prior to the meeting:

- a. **Watchet Library – Update and recommendations**  
Cllr Irven reported that correspondence has been received to inform that a report on potential savings being considered on 15 January 2024 by Somerset Council Exec. Committee. We will await an update on this. There is a 7 year fixed contract in place so should not affect the Community Library Partnership.
- b. **Wheeled Park – Update and recommendations**  
The Clerk informed Council that due to the resignation of the appointed representative, Cllr Ellwood there is a position available to help support the Clerk. The Clerk will be contacting the Skatepark contractors to discuss a smaller scale project which could possibly build into a larger project when funding is available. Cllr Terrett proposed that **'Cllr Johnson is appointed, if he accepts, as the replacement representative to support the Clerk'**. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.
- c. **Climate Change- Update and recommendations on de-carbonisation action plan**





Cllr Campbell informed Council that there will be a Watchet Winter beach clean and litter pick starting from West Beach slip at 11am on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

d. **Watchet Task Force – Update and recommendations**

Cllr Murphy, as Council representative gave the following update:

- The Committee have not met this month to date.
- The Committee are pleased to see that the Harbour Rd/Swain Street Rd markings have been completed by Somerset Highways. The Committee consulted with the public on the realignment at the Watchet Street Fairs throughout the Summer and once the new layout had been approved by Somerset Highways this was endorsed by Watchet Town Council.
- With the sad news of the passing of Nick Cotton, the Committee would like to acknowledge his contribution to Watchet and his commitment to the WTF. His funeral is to be held Taunton Crematorium on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January at 11.20am.

e. **EH&S Policies – Update**

Cllr Irven gave the following update:

- The Admin Support is working to collate several hundred historical H&S documents to identify any missing or outdated documents/policies
- Risk management policy will be reviewed at F&S this month.
- Office workstation questionnaires are being arranged by the Clerk – this is ongoing.

24/110 **Councillor Surgeries – update from Cllr Brake & Whetlor who attended the Surgery held on Saturday 6 January 2024 and any matters arising.**

*Written report and appendices were circulated to members prior to the meeting*

Cllr Brake began by thanking Cllr Johnson for stepping in at short notice to cover Cllr Whetlor who was unable to attend. reported the following:

- Husband and wife from West Street concerned that the new junction layout on West/Swain Street will cause a serious accident, they also enquired as to who gave permission for the alteration. Also concerned about the possible closure of the Swain street car park entrance and what will happen if there is an incident blocking Swain Street
- Liddymore Road Resident concerned about several issues within Watchet. Requesting debate by Town Council to give the relevant response to issues raised - . – **This will be added to the E&P agenda for January for further discussion.**
- Holm View resident visited on behalf of himself and numerous other residents of Holm View. Concerns regarding dog walkers and antisocial behaviour on the former Hellwell Bay park site. Requesting WTC contact the landowners/liquidators request a gate is installed to prevent access.  
A discussion ensued. Cllr Moss proposed that **'delegation is given to the Clerk to establish who the new owners of the land are and write to them to raise the concerns of the residents'**. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. carried
- West Street resident concerns over Swain Street/Harbour Road junction lay out. Requesting further information.

The Clerk addressed the first and last query as one, with the following update for all members to note:

- WTF approached Somerset Highways to request that the Harbor Road/Swain Street give way be altered so Swain Street was no longer the main through road due to the closure of the B3191. Somerset Highways conducted thorough investigation including a road safety review and once this was completed the plan was approved by Somerset Highways. WTF conducted public consultations on the amendments at the Watchet Street Fairs throughout the Summer. WTC endorsed the amendments following Somerset Highways approved sign off. This is a Somerset Highways concern.

Cllr Irven as EH&S Officer added that Somerset Highways Authority has a statutory responsibility for the Highway Risk Assessments and Health & Safety. Cllr Irven proposed that **WTC write to Somerset Highways informing them of the resident concerns raised and request a statement that can be offered to those with concerns in future'**. Seconded by Cllr Moss. Carried.

Cllr Richards declared a personal interest in the next item as a member of the WWMGC. Cllr Richards remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.

24/111 **Community Ownership Fund:**

- (i) Potential bid by Watchet Town Council (WTC) and Watchet War Memorial Ground Management Committee (WWMGMC) – *verbal update by Cllr Irven*

Cllr Irven informed Council that a meeting was held with the WWMGC on Friday and huge progress being made. There has been a new co-opted member on to the Committee who is very proactive in providing ideas and support with the pavilion project. The Committee are agreeable to more community events on the grounds including a Flower Show and Dog show. Cllr Irven Continued to give a verbal update on the background and current position of the COF funding bid. He advised Council that as delegated, Cllr Irven, submitted a bid for £9.88k, which although focussing on covering the professional architect and surveyor costs for preparing a fully justified capital bid for the building renovation to RICS and full tender/quotation standards, allows for developing a business plan for the revenue part of the programme. A new WWMGC committee member is collaborating in developing this with us and as outlined in appendix 1 of the report circulated.

The bid was approved by COF as in appendix 2 of the report circulated. In January this will be progressing between WTC and WWMGC as well as scheduling a consultancy support visit from Locality to help advise on

*Am*



how to finalise the bid for submission in the March/April 24 window. If successful, grant award would be notified by July with work in autumn prior to next winter. In the meantime, emergency repairs are being undertaken, costing approx. £2.5k, to make the building weatherproof for winter 2023. Having been assessed as worthy to receive this enhanced support grant, we expect a high probability of achieving a successful award for the full bid, provided WWMGC can demonstrate wider community use and backing via a robust final bid and business plan. Cllr Campbell proposed that **'Council fully endorse and approach including the preparation and process for the bid'**. Seconded by Cllr Moss. Carried.

Cllr Irven recommended that approval is given for delegation to the Clerk and Cllr Irven to execute the spend of the £9880 as set out in the offer letter. Cllr Murphy proposed that **'the recommendation is approved'**. Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried.

Cllr Irven further recommended that WTC confirm endorsement of £10k matched funding from the 2024/25 Earmarked Reserves and unallocated reserves are used to underwrite the cashflow requirement until monies are paid by the relevant source including COF and WWMGC. Cllr Campbell proposed that **'the recommendation is approved'**. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried with 2 abstentions.

Cllr moss proposed that **'WTC endorse the requirement that the ground is made more dog friendly and requires a whole review'**. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried with 1 abstention.

Councillors commended Cllr Irven for his invaluable time and commitment to this project.

#### 24/112 Recommendations from the Environment & Planning Committee:

(i) Urban Design Framework for Watchet – **See Appendix 4**

Cllr Murphy presented the background information and update report on the Urban Design work approved by the Watchet Task Force, also provided to WTC E&P Committee at their December meeting. The E&P proposed the following recommendation for Full Council approval:

1. Full Council endorse the process carried out by WTF to select an Urban Design Partner for Watchet.
2. Full Council approve the selection of FERIA to be the Watchet Urban Design Partner.
3. Full Council note the use of the Task SC grant allocation for Urban Design work for the above purpose.
4. Full Council approve the use of the Watchet Town Council allocation of up to £2K for Urban Design work to support the contract with FERIA should it be required.

A discussion ensued. Cllr Irven proposed that **'the recommendations from the E&P committee as detailed, are approved'**. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried.

#### 24/113 Joint statement from all parties in attendance at the meeting held on 6 December 2023:

(i) To approve the statement, circulated as **Appendix 5** and agree a budget for printing an insert to be included in the New Year edition of the Watchet Connects Newsletter.

The Clerk informed Council that a closed meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> December to discuss the current situation of the Harbour Marine group where Chris Odling-Smee updated members on the work that is taking place to rectify the current situation of the Watchet Harbour. At this meeting it was agreed by all members in attendance that a joint statement to explain the current situation is released into the public domain through an insert in the Watchet Connects magazine, with the cost of the print being borne by the Town Council. To date no formal statement has been agreed by all parties so will be deferred until further information is provided by Somerset Council and The Marine Group including the agreement for a printing budget. It is hopeful that a statement will be ready for approval at the February Full Council meeting where this can be approved, and printing costs agreed. This item is ongoing.

A discussion ensued. Cllr Irven at this stage declared a personal interest as the Finance officer for Watchet Connects. Cllr Irven remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion but abstained from voting.

Cllr Campbell proposed that **'WTC agree a budget of up to £250.00 for printing the statement in the Watchet Connects magazine, if required'**. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried with 2 abstentions.

#### 24/114 Dispensations:

(i) **Dispensation to set the Town Council Precept** – Under the Localism Act 2012, members who have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in land in the Watchet Parish will need a dispensation in order to participate in the business of setting the Town Council's precept. The Clerk having received the completed Dispensation Forms from members by noon on Monday 8 January 2024 will grant the dispensation to all members accordingly (*forms sent out with the agenda*)

The Clerk informed Council that all members in attendance at the meeting had returned their completed and signed Dispensation forms and dispensation has been formally agreed.

#### 24/115 Exclusion of Press and 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)

At 8.41pm Cllr Campbell, as Chair, proposed that **'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'**. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried.

*in Ar*



**24/116 Financial Matters:**

To consider the recommendations from the Finance & Staffing Committee for the 2024-25 Precept to approve the Staffing Costs – **(See Appendix 6a) – circulated to all members prior to the meeting.**

Cllr Murphy as Chair of Finance & Staffing Committee presented the Staffing costs for the 2024/25 Precept. Cllr Murphy proposed that **'the recommended 2024/25 precept for staffing costs is approved'**. Seconded by Cllr Moss. Carried.

See Excluded notes **24/21EX**

At 8.45pm Cllr Campbell, as Chair, proposed that **'That the public be permitted to return to the meeting'**. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried.

**24/117 To consider the recommendations from the Finance & Staffing Committee for the 2024-25 Precept:**

- (i) To approve the Running Costs, Committee Budgets and Project Costs - **(See Appendix 6b) circulated to all members prior to the meeting.**

Cllr Murphy as Chair of Finance & Staffing Committee presented the 2024/25 Precept and gave the following statement:

- Because of the increase in staffing costs, we have attempted to reduce the running costs which we have dine by 25% or £6,710. The reserves are at a healthy level so any unforeseen expenditure required - such as for elections - can be funded by earmarking a reserve when and if the need arises. The detail is in the attached report appendix xx
- Committee budgets have been approved by the respective committees and have not been changed by F&S Committee. They show a small increase. Of note is the increase in the F&S grants budget by £500 to permit more groups to apply for support in these difficult times following the closure of the B3191.
- In conclusion, the Finance and Staffing Committee commend this budget to Full Council for approval as we feel we have done everything possible to reduce the burden to the Watchet tax payer that is commensurate with providing a good level of service to them at the local level. The Council continues to have an ambition to provide services at the most local level and hopes to take on assets from Somerset Council this year in order to do this.

Cllr Richards proposed that **'the 2024/25 precept as presented is approved'**. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

Cllr Terrett thanked Cllr Murphy and the Clerk for their hard work on producing the 2024/25 precept.

**24/118 Matters of Correspondence for Report** - Correspondence is addressed on a daily basis and filed- **The Clerk will report on any relevant correspondence.**

The Clerk informed Council that a letter had been received from West Quantoxhead Parish Council inviting WTC to quote on cutting/maintaining small verge areas in West Quantoxhead between March & November. A discussion ensued. Cllr Westcott proposed that **'the Clerk respond to inform that at present WTC ground staff do not have the capacity to help, so will not be able to provide a quotation at this time'**. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.

**24/119 Accounts for payment** – to approve the December schedule (paid in January) – **The schedule circulated to all members prior to the meeting for their consideration.**

Cllr Richards proposed to **"the Payment Schedule is approved, and the invoices duly paid"**. Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

**24/120 To note Matters for the next meeting** – no discussion or decisions made-

- Liaise with Town Clerk
- Earmarked Reserves

The meeting closed at 8.56pm

Signed by..... L.A. Whetlor

Date..... 12/2/24